



# STRAPPED FOR CASH

K.L. HIER

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## C H A P T E R 1

Mickey Tamerlane counted the money in the greasy wad that had been handed to him and found it wanting.

That was going to be a problem.

He looked to his partner, Duncan Gill, standing beside him and shook his head.

“What’s wrong?” Duncan asked.

“This isn’t enough,” Mickey said, narrowing his eyes as he put the money back on the table.

“No?” the man seated in front of them asked.

“Maybe you can’t count,” jeered another man standing behind Mickey. “Try again.”

“You got cancer or something?” the first man taunted. “Maybe all that chemo is messin’ up your brain.”

“He looks just like a buff Uncle Fester, right?” The jeering one laughed. “Isn’t it crazy?”

The two men were members of the Luchesi family, the criminal organization that ran all of Strassen Springs. Mickey had been hired by them to take out a local politician who was becoming a problem.

That’s what he did.

For the right price, he was a problem solver.

Thanks to several long summers out on his grandfather’s farm outside of the city, Mickey had discovered he had a unique affinity with firearms at a very young age. He’d set up targets along the fences out in the fields and run as fast as he could to see how far he could go and still be able to turn around and hit his marks.

He’d gone clear across the entire farm and never missed.

The summers ended when his grandfather’s health failed, and he had to sell the farm and move in with Mickey and his mother. Mickey had never known his father, and he lost his beloved mother to an unexpected aneurysm before he started high school.

Without her, his world began to unravel quickly.

Years in and out of juvie set him up for an unstable life, and his grandfather persuaded him to find structure in the military. Mickey received incredible training to enhance his already impressive proficiency, but his temper landed him a dishonorable discharge after only two years.

It didn't take long for the city streets to reclaim him when he couldn't find a job to pay for food or his grandfather's medicine. He fell back on the one thing he was good at, taking his first life from over five hundred yards away before his twenty-first birthday.

He was quick, he was quiet, and he had rapidly gained a reputation as being a very dependable problem solver.

Duncan, a fellow delinquent who had also turned to crime to put food on the table, had helped with that. He was the one who found the jobs, arranged the meetings, and made sure everything went smoothly—especially getting paid.

Such a level of service came with a handsome price, and the Luchesi family had the coin to spare. This wasn't the first time Mickey and Duncan had worked for them, but it was the first time there had been an issue with payment.

As far as Mickey was concerned, it had the potential to be the very last, with the way these bastards were behaving.

"This isn't enough," Mickey said again, clenching his teeth. He was being toyed with, and he hated it.

"This isn't even half," Duncan chimed in. "This is not acceptable."

"Aw, come on," the first man said. His name was Tony Luchesi. "I'm sure we can work something out. Why don't I see if I can get you guys some coupons for Lucky's?"

"Yeah," the other one agreed, laughing nastily. He was Robert or Richard or something, another Luchesi. "Go get lucky at Lucky's, right?" He snorted, eyeing Mickey. "But then again, I hear *you* wouldn't be into that kinda thing."

"Oh? He's one of *those* types," Tony said, pulling a face. "Soft in his heels?"

Mickey worried he might be in danger of cracking a molar now.

"Now, now." Duncan smiled nervously. "We don't really need to talk about that, do we? That has nothing to do with Mickey's quality work—"

"What's that other place called?" Robert Possibly Richard asked. "Slick Rick's? Got those dudes up in cages? Yeah, I think that'd be more your style."

Ah, there it was.

This was exactly why Mickey hated working with the Luchesis; they were all a bunch of narrow-minded pricks. Mickey made no secret about who and what he liked, and it infuriated him endlessly he was gonna have to stand here and take this abuse if he wanted to get paid.

"I want my money," Mickey said firmly, not allowing how his temper was boiling over to show. He could sense Duncan silently pleading with him, and he knew he had to stay calm. "Now, *please*."

“You want a piece of me, sweet cheeks?” Tony offered, blowing him a kiss and cackling. “Come on. If I let you blow me, can we call it even?”

Oh, that was it.

Mickey grabbed the money from the table and turned to storm out of the little seedy bar. He could hear Tony and that other idiot, whatever his name was, laughing at him as the door slammed behind him.

He’d had enough of the disgusted whispers and underhanded comments, behind his back or to his face. He had been able to ignore the cheap cracks at his hairless appearance and sexuality and let them roll off his back because he always got paid.

But now...

Not being paid was a problem, a big one.

And Mickey was very good at solving problems.

“Mickey! Wait!” Duncan had come running after him, waving for him to stop.

Taking a deep breath, Mickey ignored Duncan and tried to center himself as he got behind the wheel. He drove a piece of shit sedan, and it did him no favors to drive angry. He let the rage wash over him and slowly exhaled, finally turning the key.

“Mickey!” Duncan banged on the window. “Hey! Will you stop?”

Mickey rolled it down. “What?”

“You can’t let those assholes get to you! Come back inside so we can finish—”

“No,” Mickey replied shortly. “I’m done with them.” He counted out some of the money, passing it over. “Here’s your cut, partner.”

“Mickey, what the fuck are you going to do?” Duncan demanded. “You’ve got that damn look on your face...”

“I’m going to handle it,” Mickey said. “Stay out of my way... and probably don’t come back to the bar today. Maybe not ever.”

“Mickey, wait! No! You can’t—”

He sped out of the parking lot before Duncan could talk him out of this. He had to be smart because what he was planning to do was very, very stupid.

Mickey lived with his grandfather in a dingy apartment near the Strassen Springs Pork Plant. It was small, filthy, and cheap. It was barely within the city limits and even on good days, the air reeked of death and rotten chemicals.

After parking his car, he headed to his front door. He lived on the second floor, and he quickly ran up the stairs. He processed how much time he had, and he knew this was going to be cutting it close.



It was just a few minutes after four o'clock, and Tony Luchesi's crappy little bar officially opened for business at six o'clock. Right now, it would only be Tony, Robert, the bartender, plus the two thugs in the back protecting the stash of money they didn't think Mickey knew about.

He would kill them all, take the money, and burn that shithole to the ground.

Duncan was going to be furious with him, but Duncan could piss right off. He didn't have to deal with the bigoted bullshit like Mickey did.

"Michael...?" A weak voice called out to him as soon as he stepped into the apartment.

"Yeah, Pops?" Mickey locked the door up behind him, heading into the bedroom to find his grandfather.

The apartment only had one bedroom. Mickey slept on the couch.

"You workin'?" Pops asked, furrowing his thick brows as he struggled to focus. He was propped up in bed by a thick nest of pillows, and he looked so very small.

"Yeah, Pops." Mickey hovered next to him. "You need somethin'?"

"Soup? I gotta take my meds. Hurtin'."

"Okay. I'll make it for you, but then I gotta go back to work."

"Thanks, Michael."

Mickey went into their tiny kitchen and opened the barren cabinet to find the soup. It was the cheap dehydrated kind in a styrofoam cup, and he removed the outer packaging to add the water. He put it in the microwave, set the timer, and headed over to the couch.

A large, padlocked trunk served as their coffee table, and he cleared the trash on top of it to open it up.

It was full of guns, ammo, and equipment, and he quickly began to arm himself. He chose two sleek pistols with silencers, a few extra clips of ammo, and a shoulder holster to wear beneath his coat.

He was ready to go by the time the microwave dinged.

Back in the kitchen, he took a fork and stabbed the side of the styrofoam cup to drain out the water. He then poured the noodles sans broth into a small bowl to take to Pops.

The old man wouldn't eat it any other way.

"Thank you," Pops said, eagerly accepting his bowl of soup.

"You need anything else?" Mickey glanced around the cramped bedroom. "You got your juice? Your meds?"

"I'm fine. The nurse came by this morning. She said we're behind on payin' the bill."

"I'll take care of it. Don't worry about it. I'm expecting a big bonus today." Mickey paused. "Anything else?"

“I’m all set. Go on.” Pops waved at him. “Don’t be late getting back to the office.”

“Okay, Pops,” Mickey said, well aware they both knew he wasn’t actually going to any office. “See ya later.”

They had never explicitly discussed the nature of Mickey’s work, and Mickey was happy to keep it that way. Pops had never asked where the money came from, and Mickey wouldn’t have told him anyway.

Pops didn’t need to know what kind of man he was. It was better like this.

Mickey drove back to the bar, his breathing calm and steady despite the flow of adrenaline making his skin tingle. He was running through the many violent scenarios ahead of him. He could see them playing through his mind like a reel of film, anticipating all the various ways he would attack.

The door would open, and he would take Tony and Robert first. They wouldn’t see it coming. Two shots in the head each.

Four bullets, leaving twenty-six.

By then the bartender would be up, unloading the shotgun he kept beneath the counter, and Mickey would take him down too.

Two bullets for him, twenty-four left to deal with the men in the back, plus the two extra clips he had with him. That made for a potential total of fifty-four bullets to finish solving the problem, and Mickey wouldn’t even need half that.

Taking a deep breath, he felt a familiar and eerie calm settle over him. It was comforting, letting his mind begin to shut down to focus on a singular task—killing every person inside the bar.

He knew openly attacking the Luchesi family was as good as suicide, but he couldn’t take the abuse for another second. Duncan would have to understand. They could always go to some other city and set up shop again.

That is, if they lived long enough.

When Mickey arrived, he noticed a car parked out front that hadn’t been there before. It was a black El Camino with gray and white flames painted on the sides.

Definitely didn’t belong to anyone he knew.

Mickey reset his mental plans to include ducking behind the bar for cover in case—  
Gunshots.

At least ten, all rapidly popping off in quick succession.

“The fuck,” Mickey hissed. He pulled his guns from their holsters and busted in through the front door.

Tony and Robert were on the floor dead, and the bartender was trying to crawl away toward the front door, headed right for Mickey.

Two young men were standing over Tony, and they stared Mickey down, guns pointed right at him. One was nicely dressed in a three-piece suit with a fedora and the other, who was roughly the size of a house, was wearing torn jeans and a t-shirt that read 'Bucky's All-U-Can-Eat Wings'.

Mickey had a gun pointed at each of them, and he tried to figure out his next move. None of his planning could have prepared him for this. The men he wanted to murder were already dead.

Well, most of them.

He glanced down at the bartender, firing off a quick shot to his head to finish him.

The nicely dressed man started to speak, but the door in the back suddenly swung open.

It was the men guarding the money, and they were armed. Mickey could see their guns about to fire, and the nicely dressed man and his companion tried to turn to defend themselves.

They were too slow.

Mickey was not.

He fired two shots, each landing neatly in the would-be assailants' heads and dropping them to the floor before they could attack.

The nicely dressed man arched a surprised brow, and he seemed to be thinking something over as he looked back at Mickey.

Mickey took aim at him and his companion, trying to weigh his options. He could kill them, but they'd done him a bit of a favor killing the Luchesi men. That itself was most curious.

He couldn't think of anyone crazy enough to openly attack members of the most powerful family in the city.

Well, other than himself, of course.

"You're Mickey Tamerlane," the man said, finally lowering his gun and motioning for his companion to do the same. "The Shadow."

Mickey flinched.

Before he could comment on how this man knew who he was, Tony rolled away from his puddle on the floor and groaned loudly.

"Still alive," the big man grunted. "Tough ol' bastard."

"Hey, hey." Tony dragged himself up to paw at the nicely dressed man's shoes, gurgling weakly. "Come on, Roddy! Please! Fuckin' please! We're like fuckin' family? Didn't I look out for you and your little sister?"

The man visibly flinched at the touch, roughly kicking his hands away with a scowl. He then kneeled down to look Tony right in the eye.

"Please, Roddy...?" Tony whimpered.

“Perhaps you should have looked harder,” the man said, eerily calm as he suddenly pressed the barrel of the gun beneath Tony’s chin.

“Roddy! No!”

Bang.

Tony dropped, and the man stood abruptly.

The big guy offered him a stained handkerchief to clean up.

“Damn,” Mickey laughed. “That was cold.”

The man smirked.

That’s when Mickey knew exactly who this well-dressed stranger was. He almost couldn’t believe it, and it sounded insane to even think it.

He was standing in the presence of a mob legend.

Though he wasn’t a made man because he lacked the proper Italian heritage and was rumored to have obscene sexual interests, this man was a notorious murderer and served as a captain to the Luchesi family. It was said he’d been killing for them since he could crawl, and he was a heartless fiend. So feared for his merciless and swift wrath, no one even dared speak his name.

He was only known as Cold.

“You’re Cold,” Mickey whispered in awe.

“Roderick Legrand,” the man said with a tip of his hat. “This is my associate, Julian Price. Jules, say hello.”

“Hey,” the big man grunted.

Mickey’s mind began to race. This didn’t make any sense. Cold worked for the Luchesi family, but he’d just killed some of their own. He didn’t understand what was going on.

“That was quite some shooting,” Cold praised. “You’re very fast. I’m impressed, Mr. Tamerlane.”

“How do you—”

“Know your name?” Cold cocked his head. He was so relaxed for someone who had killed a man moments ago, and the smallest little smile curled his lips. “It’s my job to know everything, Mr. Tamerlane. That includes knowing our city’s blossoming death dealers.”

“Heard you’re a hit man that don’t miss,” Jules said.

“Not yet,” Mickey said warily.

“You also have a reserved table at Legends,” Cold said, “and you’re known to frequent Slick Rick’s.”

“Oh, yeah?” Mickey challenged. “And what’s that to you?”

“Nothing much, except you and I have more in common than you might realize.”

“Sorry. You’re not my type.”

Cold snorted. “My point is that you and I are looked down on by the family for the same reasons. I imagine that’s why you came here looking to kill Tony Luchesi? Perhaps over some disagreement fueled by his ever-so-charming homophobia?”

“So, it’s true.” Mickey ignored the questions. “You’re gay.” He looked at Jules, smirking. “What about you, big boy?”

“Nope,” Jules rumbled. “Sorry to disappoint you.”

“Yeah, it’s a real shame,” Mickey said dryly. “Always wanted to get it on with a Sasquatch.”

Jules actually laughed.

“You two can flirt later,” Cold scolded. “Business first.”

Mickey flinched. “Business?”

“Mr. Tamerlane, I’m wondering if you’d be interested in working for me.” Cold took a seat at the bar, and he waved Jules over.

Jules stepped up behind the counter to serve him, stepping over some blood as he reached for a bottle.

Cold gestured for Mickey to join him.

Mickey hesitated. They weren’t in the best part of the city, so the chances of the cops showing up here were slim, but he never liked hanging around his own handiwork for too long. It was risky. Cold didn’t seem concerned, and Mickey was curious to hear what he had to say.

Fuck it.

“If you can afford me.” Mickey sat down, watching Jules pour very carefully. He didn’t know if he could trust these men yet. “I require half now, half when the target is handled.”

“I had a more permanent position in mind.”

“You offering me a job?” Mickey scoffed.

“What I’m offering is a piece of the city.” Cold neatly folded his fingers in his lap.

“How is that?”

“Because it’s going to be mine,” Cold replied.

Mickey couldn’t help laughing.

Cold didn’t seem bothered by Mickey’s reaction. He turned to accept a drink from Jules, taking a small sip while he waited for Mickey to stop laughing.

Jules passed Mickey the other drink, and he took a gulp straight from the bottle. “You shouldn’t be laughin’, kid. Ain’t nothin’ funny.”

“Right.” Mickey took the glass and raised it in a toast. “Because you’re somehow gonna take out the entire Luchesi family and rule Strassen Springs. You, a gay man.”

“Yes,” Cold replied simply.

“Yeah, and with what army?”

“I don’t need one. Brute strength is not how the city will be taken. It requires... patience. Some tact. A plan.”

“Uh huh.”

“You have doubts.”

“Several.”

“What if I told you that taking this bar is just the beginning?”

“This shithole bar was part of your plan?”

“Yes, you see—”

The front door opened, drawing everyone’s attention and their guns.

It was Duncan, eyes wide, letting out a small squeal.

Great.

“Oh, Christ,” Duncan whispered as he shrunk back in horror from the carnage. “Mickey... no... what have you done?”

Mickey held up his hand, shaking his head at Cold and Jules. “Don’t shoot him. He’s with me.” He glared at Duncan. “I told you not to come back here.”

“I was gonna try to help! I was, I was gonna try and talk to them!” Duncan cringed miserably. “We’re so fucked.” He finally seemed to notice Cold and Jules. “Oh, fuck. Oh, *fuck!*”

“Hello, Duncan Gill,” Cold greeted. “I assume you know who I am?”

“You’re Cold. You’re one of the Luchesi captains.” Duncan paled. “I don’t understand... we... why aren’t we dead yet? Why are we alive, exactly?”

“As I was explaining to your partner here, I have some very special plans for the city,” Cold replied. “These plans do not involve the Luchesi family running things. I could use a man like Mr. Tamerlane here, and you as well, if you’re interested.”

“Can you protect us from the Luchesis?”

“I can do much more than that.” Cold smirked. “Join me, and you’ll be able to rule the city with me.”

“Still not sold on that,” Mickey warned.

“Don’t listen to him, Mr. Cold, sir,” Duncan begged. “We’ll do whatever you want. Just protect us, okay? The Luchesis can’t know we did this. We, we had nothing to do with this! Please!”

“On the contrary,” Cold drawled, “my new friend Mr. Tamerlane here is a hero.”

“I am?” Mickey blinked.

“Tony Luchesi was going to steal the money kept here for himself,” Cold explained. “Mr. Tamerlane heard about it and being the loyal man that he is, he called me to let me know so we could take care of it. Our confrontation got out of hand, and we were forced to kill everyone here.”

“That’s, that’s not what happened,” Duncan stammered. “You can’t tell that to the Don. He won’t believe you!”

“He will.”

“Okay, so, you set Tony up for being a thief,” Mickey mused. “He’s already on the family’s shit list for borrowing money ’cause he can’t stay away from the ponies at the track... which, I’m guessing, you already knew.”

“I did.”

“What happens to all the money then?” Mickey pressed.

“It’s the most awful thing,” Cold said with a sigh, glancing over to Jules with a knowing smile. “We were not able to recover all of it because of the fire.”

“Fire? What fuckin’ fire?”

“The one I’m gonna start,” Jules said gleefully.

“We take the money, divide some of it amongst ourselves, and burn the building to the ground,” Cold said. “The Don will be grateful we took care of a thief and appreciate the cash we were able to spare.”

“That’s it? It’s that easy?” Mickey frowned.

“Oh, Mr. Tamerlane, have faith.” Cold chuckled. “The truth is whatever I say it is.” He took another sip from his glass. “I want you to come work for me. I’m sure I will have many uses for your unique talents. In exchange, I will protect you and Mr. Gill, provide you with a handsome salary, and when I take the city from the Luchesis, you will rule alongside me and the others.”

“The others?” Mickey hesitated.

“You know, the rest of us fine gentlemen who don’t like the fuckin’ Luchesis,” Jules said, belching loudly as he set the emptied bottle down on the counter. “It’s a real good deal, kid.”

“Mickey,” Duncan hissed. “Come on. We should take it.” He smiled eagerly at Cold. “We accept, sir. You can totally trust us. We’re so very trustworthy. Thank you.”

“Allow me to raise you up, Mr. Tamerlane,” Cold urged. “You’re worth much more than taking shots at disgruntled union leaders and heckling with human trash over deposits. Pledge yourself to me, and

Strassen Springs will be ours.”

“You sound pretty fuckin’ sure,” Mickey said, searching Cold’s face.

“Because I have a plan,” Cold said, his icy eyes meeting Mickey’s, “and I already know what to do.”

“Yeah, and how long is that gonna take, exactly?”

“Have patience,” Cold purred, a small smile playing over his lips. “I promise the spoils will be worth the wait.”

Duncan gave Mickey a pleading look.

Mickey didn’t know if Cold could deliver on what he was selling, but he didn’t have anything to lose. He had already been prepared to burn his ties with the Luchesi family, and here was a man offering him the matches.

Fuck it.

Mickey knelt down, taking Cold’s hand and kissing it chastely. “I’m yours to command, Boss Cold.”

Cold flinched and quickly gestured for him to stand. “I’m not a boss, not yet. Just ‘Cold’ will do for now.”

“What happens now?”

“Now, my dear *Gentlemen*, we wait. We watch. We bide our time. And when the moment is right?” Cold flashed a chilling smile. “We take Strassen Springs.”



## CHAPTER 2

Working for Cold brought money, power, and most importantly, respect.

Rafaello Luchesi, the Don of the Luchesi family, believed Cold's story and was very grateful to Mickey for his part in revealing Tony's alleged treachery. Mickey was even allowed a private audience with him, got to kiss his big ruby ring and everything.

It was surreal.

Mickey still didn't understand how toasting one shitty bar was going to help Cold take over the city, but he soon learned not to question Cold's plans.

Because damn if they didn't work out every time.

All of his plots, each and every one of his schemes, were successful. Between running numbers, baiting other crooks, and manipulating the police, Cold was making an absolute fortune for the Luchesi family.

As promised, Mickey was rewarded well, and Cold moved him and his grandfather into a modest apartment in the city. For the first time in years, Mickey had his own bedroom, a fridge full of food, and plenty of cash on hand to take care of his grandfather.

Pops assumed Mickey had gotten a promotion at work, and Mickey didn't bother correcting him.

After all, it was pretty close to the truth.

Instead of waiting for Duncan to hunt down a new client, Mickey's days started and ended with Cold. He busted heads, collected money, and did whatever else was asked of him. He went everywhere Cold did, and Mickey learned a lot about the mysterious mobster.

The first was that Cold didn't like to be touched. Anyone who tried was met with intense violence, a rare glimpse of the nasty temper hiding behind his icy facade. Jules seemed to be able to get away with bumping or nudging him, but even he kept his physical contact to a minimum.

He was never not in a suit. There was something important to Cold about looking nice, but Mickey didn't think it was vanity. Cold was very handsome and confident, but the meticulous way he fussed over his suits reminded Mickey of wearing a uniform. It always had to be perfect.

Cold also seemed to know a lot of people in the city. They couldn't go anywhere without running into someone he knew. Despite his fancy suits and brisk attitude, he never hesitated to stop so he could chat with the valets out front of the fanciest hotels or the cooks having a smoke break outside an alley.

Even the garbagemen greeted him by name, and there was one old man who sold fruit who would never let him pass without giving him an apple.

These people were the backbone of the city, and as Mickey discovered, they were key to Cold's massive web of information.

The Don wasn't supposed to be eating red meat, bad heart, but the cook at his favorite restaurant was still serving him steaks. The old man who sold fruit happened to frequent the same cathouses as the Don's eldest son and regularly had some juicy gossip. The mother of a valet at the Wynne Hotel was a maid at the mayor's office who heard everything that happened during private meetings, and the cousin of one of the garbagemen was a secretary at the Strassen Springs First Bank who oversaw countless money transfers.

All over the city, high and low, Cold had an entire network of informants. Though he was still a captain to the Luchesi family, he had his own loyal followers, and he was also slowly building his own crew.

The Gentlemen.

Mickey wasn't too crazy about the nickname, but it had sort of stuck, the irony being not a single one of them were the slightest bit gentlemanly.

The group included Jules, of course. He was more clever than he let on, and he was a monstrous physical force. He and Cold had been friends since they were children, and his devotion was without question. His reasons for hating the Luchesi family were unknown, but he made no secret of wanting to take them out.

Not long after Mickey and Duncan were brought into the fold, Cold recruited a man known only as Jermaine. Mickey wasn't sure how they'd met, but it was right around the same time two cops were gunned down outside a bank in broad daylight. Jermaine, or Jerry as he later preferred to be called, was French, sneaky, and quiet.

Mickey had heard he was a nasty criminal on the run from Interpol, but he was never sure.

There was a young man named Theodore Pym who claimed to be eighteen but didn't look a day over twelve. His parents had kicked him out after they found him kissing a boy, and he returned the favor by hacking their credit cards and forcing them into bankruptcy. Cold was quite fond of him and claimed he was instrumental for his future takeover.

The next Gentleman wasn't a man at all, but a fierce lady named Stephanie "Crybaby" Cox. She was a pit bull of a woman with a strong jaw and a nasty right hook. Cold had taken her under his wing after the Luchesis took her bakery out from under her when she and her girlfriend got behind on protection payments. Like Pym, Cold said she was vital for the demise of the Luchesi clan.

Whatever Cold had planned, it was going to be incredible. Mickey couldn't wait to be a part of it and watch those smug pricks go down.

But when?

It had been six months since Cold had offered him and Duncan protection, and Mickey was definitely better off than he'd ever been. A nice apartment and steady paycheck, however, wasn't the epic piece of the city Cold had promised him.

He reminded himself to be patient.

After all, Cold hadn't let him down yet.

"Thanks for the contribution, Officer Carville," Mickey said coyly, tucking an envelope full of cash in his jacket. "Cold appreciates your punctuality."

"It's true," Duncan piped up. "He does love when people are punctual. It might be his favorite thing."

"Yeah, whatever," Carville snapped. "You just make sure he knows it's all there."

Cold usually handled police collections personally, but he'd said he had something urgent come up that needed his attention and sent Mickey and Duncan to pick it up instead. The police paid Cold to keep all of their nasty business private, and there were at least ten crooked cops who paid hefty dues in exchange for his silence.

This money didn't touch any Luchesi hands. The money, and the power that came with it, was all Cold's.

"Will do," Mickey promised, giving a mocking salute as he headed back to his car with Duncan in tow. They got in the car, and he passed the money to Duncan. "Count it."

"Don't trust him?" Duncan put on his seatbelt before accepting the envelope.

"Not as far as I can throw him," Mickey replied, eyeing Carville all the way back to his police cruiser. They'd met in the parking lot of an old factory not far from where Mickey used to live with his grandfather.

As soon as Carville was gone, Mickey cranked the car and started driving back into the city.

"We're good," Duncan confirmed, handing the envelope back to Mickey. "It's all there."

"Good. Cold said to come right back to the club."

"Any idea what that urgent business was all about?"

"No."

"Huh." Duncan frowned. "Just figured you'd know."

"What's that supposed to mean?" Mickey quirked his brows.

"Just, you know, you guys talk more than me and him do." Duncan shrugged. "You're always hanging out."

"It's called working."

“Right, right.”

Mickey didn't know what Duncan was trying to insinuate, and he didn't feel like pushing. He wanted to get back to Cold and deliver the cash. If he needed to know what was so urgent, Cold would tell him.

Feeling his phone vibrate, he pulled it out of his pocket and flipped it open when he saw it was Jules. “Hey. Just finished up.”

“Good,” Jules rumbled. “Cold would appreciate it if you made one more stop.”

“Sure. Where?”

“Quickie Fuel on Fifth.”

“Got it.” Mickey knew the place, and the owner was one of Cold's informants who also paid for protection.

“He's probably gonna be short,” Jules warned.

“Does he need some encouragement?”

“Nah, nothin' like that. He's a friend. Be nice.”

“You got it.”

“I'm just saying,” Duncan suddenly piped up when Mickey hung up the phone. “I don't get to go to all the same meetings you do. You and Cold and Jules and Crybaby. And ugh, Jerry. I mean, come on. Even that kid Pym gets to meet with him!”

“When Cold needs you, he'll let you know,” Mickey said firmly.

“Look, it makes sense Cold would protect you,” Duncan went on, his voice getting shrill. “You're a fuckin' awesome assassin. What about me? I'm just a bum. I'm a nothing.”

“You know people. You know stuff.”

“Not enough. Not enough. Not enough to keep Cold from trading me in to the Luchesis the first chance he fuckin' gets—”

“Duncan,” Mickey snapped. “We made a deal. We work for Cold, he protects us. Both of us. He would have just as much as us to lose if he tried to turn us in to the Don.”

“Yeah, but who would they believe? Us or—”

They were about to turn into the gas station, and Mickey hit the brakes harder than he needed to. He rather enjoyed watching Duncan get caught by the seat belt and sighed. He leaned in close, saying firmly, “Duncan. You're with me. You're safe. Just...” He floundered for the right words, something meaningful, and he settled on, “Shut up.”

Duncan pouted, but he didn't say anything else.

Mickey parked at one of the pumps, getting out in a huff.

The last few weeks had made Duncan edgy, more than usual, and it was driving Mickey insane. He didn't have the patience for this.

As Mickey walked over to the door of the gas station, he saw an athletic young man a few steps ahead of him.

The man was fit, tan, and his painted-on jeans showcased a very attractive backside. He glanced back at Mickey, catching his eye for a moment.

He was handsome—good chin, full lips, blue eyes.

Mickey would have been interested, but he was here on business. He didn't have time to play. He hadn't had time to play in a very long time, an annoying little voice in the back of his head was quick to remind him.

He looked back down at the man's ass.

Damn, he really did need to get laid.

The man in front of him pushed the door open, but he didn't hold it. He let the door fall back, nearly smacking Mickey in the face with it.

"Hey!" Baring his teeth, Mickey slammed the door back open and glared at the man. "Watch it," he snarled low. "The fuck is your problem?"

The man turned around, glancing over him with an unimpressed snort. "Pfft. What's yours? Cancer?"

"Fuckin' rude ass."

"Bitch," the man shot back without hesitation. He didn't even look back at Mickey and headed over to a rack of chips and snacks.

Mickey followed him and angrily shoved him up against a display of donuts. "You're fuckin' lucky I've got—"

"What? A hair appointment?" the man snarked, grinning up at Mickey's bald head.

Oh, Mickey wanted to punch him. Or kiss him. Maybe both. Maybe fuck him. Clearly, this wise ass had no idea who he was dealing with.

"Listen, sweetness," Mickey hissed. "You need to learn some manners or someone is gonna have to teach you."

"Like you?" the man asked coyly. He boldly slid his hand down Mickey's stomach and batted his eyes. "Oh, *please*, teach me."

"What the fuck is wrong with you?" Mickey jerked away as the man's hand reached his crotch.

He definitely did not have time for this.

"Just being friendly," the man replied. He smiled, and of course it was perfect.

Mickey scowled. He had work to do. "Piss off, fuckin' freak." He turned to head to the counter.

The man whistled sharply. “Hey, fuck face. Think you might want this?”

Mickey looked back, and he gritted his teeth when he saw the envelope of money in the man’s hand. The bastard had robbed him, and he hadn’t felt a thing.

*That’s because you were too busy gettin’ fuckin’ felt up.*

Mickey’s patience had run out. He snatched the money back and grabbed the man’s arm, twisting it behind him at an unnatural angle. He pushed him face first up against the rack, ignoring how very nicely his hips were now lined up with that very shapely ass.

“Now, you fuckin’ listen up—” Mickey raged.

“Oooh, you like to play rough?” The man grinned. “What a coincidence! Me too! My safe word is ‘werewolf.’”

Mickey was stunned. He was supposed to be shaking this asshole down, showing him what was what. Instead, it felt like they were flirting.

“What the *fuck* is a werewolf?”

“Like a werewolf. But a fish. You know, full moon, glub glub all blowin’ bubbles then rawrrrr.” The man made a clawing motion with his free hand. “Rawr?”

“Piss off, you fuckin’ nutcase,” Mickey snarled angrily. He gave the man’s arm one final twist and shoved him away.

The man laughed, stumbling into some donuts and knocking several packages to the ground. He held up his hands and backed a few feet away, safely out of Mickey’s swinging range, before he made a kissy face at him.

Mickey couldn’t believe how fast his heart was pounding. He was furious, insulted, and he wanted to wipe that smug smile right off this man’s face.

Later.

“If I see you again, your fuckin’ ass is mine,” Mickey warned.

“Promises, promises.” The man winked.

All Mickey could do was stare. He was so mad he almost forgot what he was doing there. He quickly got back on track, squaring his business away with the owner, an elderly man named Mr. Leon. He nodded along with Mr. Leon’s promises and pleas that he would catch up next month, took the payment, and left as fast as he could.

He didn’t see the man again, but he couldn’t help but remember what it was like to shove him up against the rack, how his firm body had felt against his... shit.

Who the fuck was that guy?

He jumped back in the car, passing the money over for Duncan to count. It was quite short as expected, and Mickey didn’t say anything about what had happened with the crazy guy. He tried to

shake off the strange encounter and head over to Slick Rick's.

It was a gay bar, once exclusively leather but now open to all. Rainbow flags were hung outside, a disco ball was put up, and Cher got added to the musical lineup. Large steel cages had also been mounted in the center of the dance floor and more along the mirrored walls. At night, the cages would be occupied by young male dancers, exotic nymphs covered in body glitter who wore next to nothing.

Mickey found it all a bit tacky, but it was safe here.

It was one of the first gay clubs he'd ever set foot in, and it also happened to be the heart of Cold's territory. The Luchesis were only too happy to give it away, and Mickey was sure those pricks thought they were so clever.

The original owner, a sharply dressed man named Alistair Star, was still around. Cold kept him on even after he took over, and he was privy to their meetings.

Alistair was at least twenty years Cold's senior, and as best as Mickey could figure had served as a mentor or advisor of sorts. Alistair claimed to be a simple businessman who enjoyed collecting real estate, but Mickey imagined it was the same simple way that the Luchesi family claimed to be businessmen.

No way that man's hands didn't have blood on them, not in this city.

Not that Mickey cared. He was hardly innocent, and as long as Alistair did right by Cold, Mickey didn't give a fuck how Alistair made his money.

Mickey parked and walked into Slick Rick's with Duncan in tow, leading the way to the office behind the bar. The club only had a few patrons this time of day, old regulars, and they kept their eyes on their drinks as Mickey swept by them.

The office was clean, well lit, and the furnishings modest. There was a desk and a large table with enough chairs for seven people, three on either side and one at the end. It was quite the contrast from the colorful club outside, nearly sterile save for the fresh calla lilies ever present on the corner of the desk.

Cold liked them.

Crybaby and Jules were seated across from each other at the table, heatedly discussing some sports team fiasco. Pym was over at the desk, typing away on the computer. Jerry was leaning against the wall, looking bored and smoking a cigarette.

Cold was standing behind Pym, reading whatever it was he had pulled up on the monitor. Alistair was beside him, and they looked like brothers in their well-tailored suits.

Father and son may have been more apt, given the difference in their ages.

Cold looked up when Mickey and Duncan came in, and he gestured for them to sit down at the table.

Mickey sat beside Jules, and Duncan sat next to him.

"Everything go okay?" Jules asked gruffly.

“Fine.” Mickey put the money on the table.

Jerry put out his cigarette and came over to sit next to Crybaby. He eyed Mickey, noting, “You look a bit flushed, *monsieur*.”

“I’m fine,” Mickey grunted. It had absolutely nothing to do with the weird encounter with the nut job at the gas station he couldn’t stop thinking about.

Cold and Alistair exchanged a few whispers, and then Cold smiled. He leisurely strolled over to the head of the table to sit down, waving for Pym to join them.

Pym took the last open seat, sinking down in his chair. He seemed lost without the computer.

Alistair leaned against the side of the desk and crossed his arms.

There was definitely something big going on. The air was electric, nasty, and Mickey could feel it in his bones.

“Thank you all for coming,” Cold began, his voice as ever a lucid purr. “I have some exceptional news. I didn’t want to make the announcement until I was absolutely sure, but the moment we’ve been waiting for is finally here.” He smiled again. “Don Luchesi is dead.”

“How?” Mickey blurted out.

“Murdered in his very own home,” Cold replied. “I have been waiting years for the old man to kill himself with a heart attack, but someone else decided to speed his demise along. Though I am grateful, this means that certain plans are going to be put into action much sooner than I expected.”

“The city,” Crybaby said, her eyes wide. “We’re takin’ it. We’re gonna do it.”

“Yes,” Cold confirmed. “With your help, my dear Gentlemen, the city is finally going to be ours.”

“Fuck yeah,” Jules cheered.

“Who killed the Don?” Duncan asked quietly.

“I do not know.” Cold seemed a little annoyed at that fact. “But that will actually end up working to our advantage.”

“How?”

“Because if I don’t know, it means the Luchesis don’t know.” Cold leaned forward, his usually calm face lit up with excitement. “The most likely suspects are his three sons, Cristian, Luigi, and Matteo. The Don had yet to name an heir, and there will most certainly be a struggle for power.”

“The ring,” Mickey recalled. “He didn’t pass on that stupid ring.”

“Precisely,” Cold said. “Matteo was favored to take his father’s place, but his brothers are hungry for it too. This also works to our advantage.”

“What do we do?” Crybaby asked eagerly. “Kill ‘em?”



“I appreciate the enthusiasm, but no,” Cold drawled. “They’re about to do their own killing, and we’re going to help them right along.” He looked to Mickey. “Do you remember when you were so kind as to discover Tony Luchesi’s nasty theft?”

“Yeah,” Mickey replied. “What about it?”

“Well, it turns out he was stealing that money to help fund Cristian’s future claim to the throne.” Cold pursed his lips. “Such a shame.”

“The bar... it was Luigi’s, wasn’t it?”

“Yes,” Cold confirmed. “Piece by piece, we’re going to turn the three brothers against one another. The family will split apart. Everyone will try to pick a side, and the three darling siblings will each be attempting to make the best case for themselves while valiantly trying to murder the others.”

“Chaos,” Alistair said with a knowing nod. “It’s going to be total and complete chaos.”

“You knew this was going to happen,” Mickey accused. “You knew the Don hadn’t picked an heir and was going to die without one.”

“I knew he was arrogant enough to think he wasn’t going to die anytime soon and foolish enough not to listen to his doctors,” Cold said. “The chances of him dying prematurely without settling his affairs was very likely. I had planned to use his death to propel our takeover of the city. I did not expect, however, for him to be murdered.”

“I call that a fuckin’ bonus.” Jules laughed. “Them stupid ass brothers are gonna be at each other’s fuckin’ throats thinkin’ one of them killed Daddy.”

“So.” Jerry perked up. “What is our first move, *Monsieur* Cold? What would you have us do?”

“Everything we need is right here under this roof,” Cold replied, offering a coy smile.

“You know we’re in a gay bar, right?” Duncan asked in a loud whisper.

“Yes.” Cold looked irritated. “There is a young man who works here at night as a dancer. He goes by the name ‘Galavant.’ He also washes dishes over at Ragazzi’s.”

“How is a dishwasher gonna help?”

“That restaurant is the Luchesi’s big honey pot,” Jules replied, eyeing Duncan until he cowered. “Galavant is our fuckin’ way in. Payroll for all the drugs, brothels, and illegal type businesses gets banked there.”

“How much?” Mickey asked.

“Millions,” Cold replied, looking very pleased with himself. “The Luchesis are arrogant enough to believe no one would dare steal from them. That arrogance is going to be their undoing. First, we take their money. Next, we’re going to take their drugs. The bouncer here, Reggie? His mother is a maid at one of the hotels the Luchesis run as a brothel. They use the basement there to prepare their product before distribution.”

“So, we’re gonna take their drugs?” Pym perked up.

“No.”

Pym pouted and sank back down in his chair.

“We’re going to tip off the police to the location and allow them to have the glory of the biggest drug bust this city has ever seen. It’s a little gift to our friend Officer Carville for his very timely payments. He’ll look so fetching on the front page. Might even be chief one day. We’re also going to make sure the police’s anonymous source is identified as a member of the Luchesi family.”

“We take out the money, the drugs, okay, but what about the judges? All the politicians?” Crybaby frowned. “We don’t own any of them. We barely own any cops.”

“Never fear,” Cold soothed. “Once the blood starts filling the streets, they’ll come to us. They won’t have a choice. We’re going to be their safe harbor from the storm, you see. They won’t care who’s in charge as long as peace is established. And if not... well.” He smirked slyly. “I have other ways.”

“Okay.” Mickey grinned. “So, when do we start?”

“Soon. You, Jules, and our newest member will be going.” Cold waved to Alistair.

Alistair left his perch on the desk to open the door, gesturing for someone to come in.

Mickey turned to see who it was, and he couldn’t hide his shock.

*That son of a bitch...*

It was the crazy guy from the gas station.

“This is Roger Lorre,” Cold said. “He is a talented little thief and an expert safecracker. He will be accompanying you to Ragazzi’s. Say hello, Mr. Lorre.”

“Hello, boys,” Roger said, his eyes immediately focusing on Mickey. “Well, hi there. Long time, no see.”

Mickey gritted his teeth.

Cold glanced between them. “Am I to assume you’ve already met Mickey Tamerlane then?”

“Mickey, huh?” Roger grinned crookedly at him, whistling low. “Mm, and aren’t you just so *fine*.”

## CHAPTER 3

“No fuckin’ way.” Mickey stood up from the table. “I ran into this fuckin’ psycho at the damn gas station when I was collecting payment. He is fuckin’ unstable.”

“God, I love it when you talk dirty.” Roger laughed.

Mickey pointed at him. “See what I mean?”

“Roger has been paying off some gambling debts to a Luchesi lieutenant through some very unpleasant means,” Cold said firmly. “I brought the arrangement to an end, and he is extremely motivated to help us. He is a Gentleman now, and I’m sure he will behave as one.” His eyes narrowed at Roger. “Won’t you?”

“Yes, sir,” Roger promised. “Absolutely.”

Mickey bit the inside of his mouth.

“You three will get ready to hit the restaurant,” Cold went on with a flick of his hand. “Jules has the particulars for the plan, Mr. Lorre will handle the safe, and Mr. Tamerlane, well...” He smiled. “You just need to do what you do best.”

“What about the rest of us?” Crybaby asked. “Why aren’t we all going?”

“This is not the time to show our cards. On the rare chance that there might be unwanted survivors, I don’t want anyone being able to name our entire gang to the Luchesis. Small team, only those three, in and out.”

“And the money?”

“Don’t worry,” Cold said mysteriously. “It’s going to go to a very good cause.”

“Where exactly?” Duncan pressed. “This is literally millions upon millions of dollars.”

“It’s on a need-to-know basis. And right now, none of you need to know.”

Mickey frowned. Cold was usually very honest about his plans, and the secrecy struck him as a little strange.

“Whatever you say, Boss,” Jules was quick to affirm. He glanced over everyone at the table as if daring them to argue.

No one said a word.

This was it.

Cold was now *Boss* Cold.

“When we need to know, we’ll know,” Mickey said, glancing at Duncan and giving him a silent warning to keep his teeth together. “What the Boss says goes.”

“Any other questions?” Cold asked as he leaned back in his chair. It didn’t sound like he wanted to answer any.

The room was silent.

“Jules, if you’d be kind enough to get our dear Mr. Tamerlane and Mr. Lorre up to speed, it would be most appreciated,” Cold said. “The rest of you, stay close. Even without our influence, the city will be quite dangerous. Be careful. Check in often.”

There were several affirmative murmurs, and Pym got up first and headed right back to the desk to get back on the computer.

The others began to file out into the bar but Cold called out, “Jules, stay for a moment.” He looked to Roger and Mickey. “You two, wait for him outside.”

“You got it,” Roger said with a little salute.

Mickey nodded, and he handed his car keys over to Duncan. “Go pick up your wheels, leave my keys inside. Do not lock it. I’ll have Jules give me a ride over to get it later.”

“Okay,” Duncan said, walking alongside Mickey over to the bar. He waved farewell to Jerry and Crybaby as they left, watching as Alistair closed the office door again. “This is so fucked up.”

“What?”

“Cold won’t tell us what he’s doing with the money,” Duncan hissed, dropping his voice down. “And now him, Alistair, and Jules are all having a private meeting while the kid is in there?”

“Who cares?” Mickey glanced over his shoulder, and he noted Roger was lingering not too far away. He whispered urgently to Duncan, “Just don’t fuckin’ worry about it.”

“You don’t think it’s fucked up?”

“I think I trust our boss, and he’s always done right by us.” Mickey shook his head. “Chill the fuck out.” He clapped a hand on Duncan’s back. “Go get your car and go home.”

“Are you guys hitting the restaurant tonight?”

“Cold said ‘soon.’ You know as much as I do right now.”

“Yeah, okay. Whatever.” Duncan still seemed upset, but he managed a weak smile. “You watch your ass if you do, okay?”

“Don’t worry,” Roger teased as he suddenly popped up beside Mickey. “I’ll be watching it very closely.”

Mickey scowled.

“And how do you two know each other?” Duncan demanded. “You met at the gas station?”

“Mickey made a really big impression on me,” Roger teased. “Had no idea we’d be working together. Isn’t this great?”

“He’s nuts,” Mickey said flatly.

Duncan glanced between the two of them, and he smiled wide. “Yeah, I can see that. Well, you have fun. Try not to get into too much trouble.”

Mickey scoffed as Duncan abruptly left, and he glared daggers at his back. He didn’t understand why Duncan had smiled like that. “The fuck?”

“So, Mickey.” Roger wagged his eyebrows, sashaying uncomfortably close. “Wanna blow my mind while we wait?”

Roger’s gaze was so intense that Mickey had to take a step back. He wasn’t sure if Roger wanted to fuck him or fight him, maybe both. No one had ever looked at him like that, and a surge of heat was twisting up inside of him.

Mickey wanted to punch Roger right in his pretty face, shove him up against the bar, and get another taste of that delicious thrill again. He’d liked overpowering Roger, and he’d liked being in control.

Roger seemed to have enjoyed it too.

Mickey had never been daring in the bedroom, his partners few and their time together brief. He’d certainly never had the urge to push one of their faces down into a bar and fuck them raw just to shut them up for five seconds.

Shit, where did all of *that* come from?

“Go play in fuckin’ traffic.” Mickey scoffed in disgust and stomped toward the bathroom, trying to squash his lustful desires. He needed to get some space before he did something stupid.

Slamming the bathroom door behind him, he went to the sink to splash some cold water on his face.

He needed to get a grip.

No one ever got him this riled up. He was a professional. He was working. He didn’t need some punk pushing his buttons like this.

When the bathroom door opened and he saw Roger in the reflection of the mirror, he wanted to scream.

“Maybe we got off on the wrong foot,” Roger said as he strolled toward him. “Hi, I’m Roger. I’m an Aries, and I like candlelit dinners and big dicks. You?”

Mickey’s face got hot, and he warned, “If you jeopardize this job, I will end you myself. I am not gonna put up with your weird bullshit while we’re working. Been waiting far too long for this.”

“Mmm, you’re so tense.” Roger was only a few inches away now. He smiled at Mickey, and he reached up to adjust his collar. “You really need to—”

“Don’t fuckin’ touch me,” Mickey barked, smacking Roger’s hand away. He could smell his cologne, and his thoughts were swarmed with the memory of what it had felt like to be pressed up against him.

“Sheesh, just trying to be friendly!” Roger laughed, and he pushed Mickey.

It was hard enough to send Mickey off balance, and he had to catch himself on the sink. He couldn’t stop his temper from flaring, and he shoved Roger back. “You fucker!”

Roger stumbled, but he bounced up and pushed Mickey again with a loud laugh.

The energy between them was charged, hot, and Mickey wanted to hit him. No, he wanted to *spank* him, treat him like the petulant little child he was acting like. He couldn’t believe how reckless Roger was being. Mickey tried to knock him back again, but now Roger had a hold of his shirt.

Mickey grabbed Roger’s arm and soon they were struggling to break free of each other, their heads nearly knocking together. Their scuffle forced Mickey’s back against the wall, and he growled furiously.

Roger was grinning from ear to ear, and he lunged forward and bit Mickey’s shoulder.

That pissed Mickey off even more, and he heaved Roger off of him and slammed him into the adjacent wall. He quickly pinned him there by his shoulders, roaring, “You stupid son of a bitch! You just don’t know when to fucking quit, do you?”

“Nope,” Roger panted as he grabbed the sides of Mickey’s head. “Not when I fuckin’ want somethin’.”

Mickey twisted away, expecting Roger was going to head butt him.

Instead, Roger pulled him in for a fierce kiss and didn’t let go.

Well, huh.

Mickey gasped, his heart pounding up in his ears from the passionate kiss. He was already so on edge from their fight, and wow, Roger was a fantastic kisser. He let him lead while his brain tried to catch up with what was happening.

They’d been fighting mere moments ago, and Mickey was ready to clobber him, and now they were kissing.

Today was shaping up to be a hell of a weird day.

Roger suddenly bit Mickey’s lip, huffing, “Come on. What are you doing?”

Mickey narrowed his eyes, giving Roger another mean shove. He saw the way his eyes lit up, and it all clicked. That's exactly what Roger wanted.

Well, now that was something.

He kept Roger pressed up against the wall and hissed in his ear, "This what you want? To get roughed up?"

"Top of the class." Roger licked his lips excitedly. "Now come on... what you got for me?" He reached down and grabbed Mickey's crotch, finding him already half-hard. "Ohhh, you do know what I like."

Mickey grunted, his cock soon at full attention beneath Roger's eager touch. There was a crazy part of him that couldn't believe this was happening. He should stop right now before things got any more carried away, but he couldn't refuse the warm hand on his cock.

"Mickey, Mickey, so very fine," Roger teased in a little singsong voice. "I think—"

"Go. Stall on the end," Mickey ordered.

"Really?" Roger gasped. "And what are we ever going to do there, hmm?"

"Whatever the fuck I want."

"Oh, yes, sir," Roger said, obediently slinking over to the last stall. "This is exactly what I wanted you to do at the gas station. Just drag me into the bathroom and mess me up."

Mickey latched the door behind them, and his cock was absolutely throbbing. He pushed Roger away when he tried to kiss him again. "On your fuckin' knees."

Roger went down with a smug little smirk and quickly unbuttoned Mickey's pants. "Just can't wait to try me out, huh?"

"This is the only fuckin' thing I can think of that will shut you up," Mickey retorted. His skin was already buzzing, and he couldn't quite define the excitement stemming from Roger's obedience.

He felt... *powerful*.

More than that, it was how clearly into it Roger was. He was practically drooling when he pulled out Mickey's cock, and Mickey couldn't recall anyone being so hungry for him. It was doing awesome things for his ego, and he wanted more.

"Well, didn't see that coming," Roger said with a laugh, playfully thumping the silver bar he found in Mickey's cock.

Mickey had been twenty-one when he got the piercing, fresh from his military discharge and feeling pretty defiant. Having someone stab a piece of metal through his frenum seemed like a good idea at the time. Partners weren't as leery of it as they may have been about a big Prince Albert, and Mickey had never progressed to bigger or thicker jewelry.

It was a simple barbell, curved and small, that ran through the piece of skin that connected the head of Mickey's cock to his shaft. When he wasn't hard, his foreskin usually hid it and sometimes he forgot

about it.

The jewelry had his full attention right now though, and he watched Roger's tongue lapping over it greedily. The skin there was especially sensitive, and Roger's ministrations sent little electric bolts of pleasure up Mickey's spine.

Damn, it felt good.

Roger pulled back, looking over the wetness his tongue had left behind with a smug smile.

Mickey slipped his hands down into Roger's hair and pulled, demanding, "You gonna suck it or just stare at it?"

"Haven't decided yet," Roger challenged.

Grabbing his cock, Mickey directed it to Roger's lips and pushed forward. "Shut the fuck up already."

Roger only grinned and opened his mouth, finally sucking Mickey's cock inside.

Mickey tightened his grip on Roger's hair, groaning low at the wet heat now surrounding him. It was tight and hot, and the suction was fantastic. He wanted to feel more, thrusting until the head of his dick hit the back of Roger's throat.

He held him there, staring down into those bright blue eyes, waiting to hear him sputter or choke. He was angry this man had somehow managed to topple his defenses and sneak beneath his skin, and he wanted to punish him.

Roger squirmed, grabbing Mickey's hips and trying to pull away.

Mickey didn't let go, not yet, not until he felt Roger's throat squeezing around him and heard a desperate whimper. He could see tears in Roger's eyes and when he was finally satisfied, Mickey thrust.

"Go on," Mickey urged. "Suck my cock. Come on... you look so damn pretty like this, with your mouth full of cock."

Roger started sucking in earnest, using his tongue to rub up and down Mickey's shaft. He focused in on the little piece of jewelry, his gaze lucid as he looked up at Mickey. He seemed so content, even when Mickey thrust harder.

"You like this, huh?" Mickey sneered, fucking Roger's throat savagely. "You like gettin' used? I bet you're hard as fuck, aren't you?"

Roger whined.

Mickey's heart pounded in reply, his eyes focused in on how desperately Roger was taking his cock and sucking every inch down. He could see some spit pooling around Roger's lips, and he knew he wouldn't last much longer.

Roger was good, so good, and the way his tongue kept coming back to rub over his piercing made him ache. It was so sensitive there, and Roger seemed to know exactly what to do to drive Mickey crazy.



When Mickey pulled Roger's hair again, the way he moaned sent shivers up Mickey's spine. He could be as rough as he wanted to, and Roger *liked* it. It made him want to test his limits, to see how far he could push him, but that would have to come later.

If there was a later.

Mickey pushed his cock in deep, holding there again just to feel the delicious heat and tightness fully enveloping his cock. He had never known how much he would enjoy being in charge like this, and how easily Roger was willing to give him control was a huge turn on.

Roger whimpered, obviously fighting the urge to gag again, and he was reaching down to pull out his cock and jerk off. He was as hard as Mickey thought he would be, and Mickey thrust again, hard and fast, to match Roger's strokes.

"You love this, don't you?" Mickey growled. "You little cock slut. Fuck. This is what you need, hmm? To get all used up?"

Roger seemed to go limp, his damp eyes glazed over when he looked back at Mickey.

Yes.

That's exactly what he wanted.

Mickey tugged at his hair, fucking his mouth harder, and the wet sounds of his cock diving in and out were loud and echoey in the small stall. He was getting close now, and the way Roger was taking all of this so willingly, how he *wanted* to take it, was accelerating the inevitable.

"Mmmm." Roger whimpered, his hand practically a blur down between his legs. He was getting close too.

"Not yet," Mickey hissed. "You don't get to come until I do, not until you swallow me down."

"Mmm!"

There, it was happening. All of Mickey's muscles had wound up tight, aching for release, and one last flick of Roger's talented tongue made them snap, turning heavy and soft as he came down his throat.

Mickey continued to thrust with every pulse, and his cock felt even more sensitive as Roger got going with a fresh round of suction. It was almost unbearable, but Mickey kept going. He was tingling and sweaty from the exertion, and he looked down at Roger's cock pumping into his own fist.

"Go on," Mickey urged. "Come with my cock in your throat. Right now."

Moaning helplessly around Mickey's cock, Roger came hard. He pulled off with a stunted gasp, bowing his head against the tiled wall as he worked himself through it.

Mickey hadn't realized how out of breath he was until then, and his entire body felt like it was glowing. He hadn't come like that before, so intense and fast, and he knew it was because of Roger.

As he began to tuck himself back into his pants, he had no idea what to do with that. He and Roger had only known each for a few hours, and yet Mickey already wanted more.

The thrill of public sex combined with the rush of ordering Roger around was new and exciting. It was also dangerously addictive, and Mickey told himself it couldn't happen again. Lust could not cloud his judgment like this, not when there was so much at stake.

They had to take the city from the Luchesi family.

That was too important to risk getting his rocks off, no matter how good it was.

Roger stood up with a groan, grabbing some toilet paper to wipe himself up with as he said, "Damn, Mickey. Consider my mind blown."

Mickey scoffed.

"Well." Roger licked his lips proudly. "Now you're all nice and relaxed."

That was true enough, but Mickey didn't want to give Roger any more satisfaction. He couldn't tell him that was the best blowjob he'd ever had. He let himself out of the stall, glancing in the mirror. He looked flushed but presentable.

Roger was right behind him, his hand coming down to smack Mickey's ass. "Hey, hey! Leaving me so soon?"

Mickey jerked from the slap, and he turned to glare at Roger. "You're a fucking menace, do you know that?"

"Yup." Roger kissed him.

Mickey allowed it to linger, his fingers sliding back through Roger's hair. No matter how hard he tried to resist, he was getting sucked right back into Roger's twisted orbit.

Damn him.

He pulled Roger's hair.

"Ow!" Roger grinned slyly. "Do it again?"

"Behave," Mickey warned. "We got work to do."

"And after that?"

"Maybe if you're lucky." Mickey's face was getting hot. "Big maybe."

"I think this is the start of something beautiful," Roger gushed.

"I think you need medication."

"Awww, come on. Don't you wanna say good night and take me home?"

Mickey scowled. "I *hate* that fuckin' song."

"Oh, hush. It's a classic."

"I fucking swear, I'm going to—"

“After the job,” Roger went on, pressing himself into Mickey’s arms without missing a beat. “We could celebrate.”

Mickey grabbed Roger’s shoulders. “Oh, yeah?”

“Uh huh.” Roger nipped at Mickey’s lower lip. “Maybe some dinner, me and you, a bottle of lube...”

“Sounds an awful lot like a date.” Mickey pushed Roger back. He couldn’t think clearly when he was that close.

“So?”

“I don’t date.”

“I bet you don’t usually let guys go down on you in dirty bathrooms either,” Roger pointed out, his hands on his hips. “But you just did. And I want some more of that sweet dick, and you definitely want some more of me.”

Mickey made a face. He hated that Roger was right. He also hated how beautiful he was, apparently as insatiable as he was annoying.

This was such a terrible idea.

But Cold trusted Roger; didn’t that mean Mickey could too? He still had his reservations about mixing business and pleasure, but Roger was special. No one had ever made Mickey feel so powerful or turned on before, and he knew he wanted to taste that intoxicating rush again.

“If the job goes well—” he began.

“It will,” Roger swore.

“And if you don’t fuck anything else up, I’ll get us a room and I’ll fuck you until you can’t walk straight. How’s that for a date?”

“Why, Mickey,” Roger drawled. “That’s the most romantic thing I’ve ever heard.”

## C H A P T E R   4

When they came out of the bathroom, Jules was waiting immediately outside. He gave them both a suspicious glare, but he said nothing except, “Come on.”

Mickey and Roger followed him back into the office. Pym and Cold were gone, and Alistair now sat behind the desk.

“We’re gonna hit the restaurant tonight right before closing,” Jules rumbled, waving for them to sit down.

“Tonight?” Mickey was surprised. “Damn, that’s fast.”

“Oh, very fast,” Roger agreed. He looked positively gleeful, no doubt thinking about the date Mickey had promised him.

“Shouldn’t be no customers,” Jules continued. “Just some Luchesi men and kitchen staff, including our boy Galavant. He’s gonna leave the backdoor open for us to sneak right on in.”

“How many men?” Roger asked, pretty serious for someone who’d taken a mouthful a few minutes ago.

“At least six. Maybe more if they’re movin’ that money.”

“Which they might be,” Alistair chimed in. “If the brothers are trying to close ranks, it makes sense they’d start collecting all their coin. Ragazzi’s is the bulk of their undeclared wealth.”

“So, they’re gonna try to move the big cash in house somewhere safe before somebody else hits them?” Mickey mused.

It was all he could do not to stare at Roger’s lips and remember what they felt like wrapped around his cock.

Damn him.

“Precisely,” Alistair confirmed.

“Too bad for them,” Roger said. “We’re gonna hit them before they have a chance to move a cent.”

“So we hope.” Alistair looked up from the computer. “The brothers are certainly paranoid of each other now, but I doubt they’d risk moving so much cash during regular business hours.”

“They’d probably do it tonight, right when we wanna hit ‘em.” Mickey snorted. “We should be expecting a nice crowd.”

“Why don’t we just go when the restaurant is open?” Roger asked. “I mean, there might be a little bit of panic, maybe a few unexpected casualties...”

“No,” Jules said firmly. “Boss said at closing.”

“Fine.”

“Minimal civilian harm,” Alistair reminded with an equally stern tone, raising up a pointed finger. “Remember, Cold is going to rule this city when the dust settles. The only blood he wants spilled is the Luchesi family’s.”

“No problem,” Mickey said. “Boss gets what he wants. We’ll be in and out, no problem.”

“Galavant lets us in, me and Mickey clear the way, Roger opens up that pretty little safe for us, and then we snatch the cash,” Jules went on. “We leave a bag with Galavant. We gotta rough him up a bit and leave him with a message.”

“And what message is that?”

“That this money grab was for Luigi. He’s got the weakest claim to the throne, so he’d have to do something pretty fuckin’ big to stand a chance against his big brothers.”

“Like stealing millions of dollars to fund his claim?”

“Yup.” Jules smirked. “Cristian and Matteo will be more than fuckin’ willin’ to believe their little brother is tryin’ to be a big man. We’re just like ol’ Hansel and what’s her fuckin’ face, leavin’ a trail of breadcrumbs behind.”

“Got it.”

“After we’re done, I’ll drop you by your car,” Jules went on. “And Roger, I’ll bring you—”

“You can drop me off with Mickey,” Roger cut in.

Jules only appeared vaguely surprised, and he glanced over to Mickey. “Yeah?”

“Sure thing.” Mickey cringed as heat crept up his neck. Both Alistair and Jules were staring at him now. Great.

“Right.” Jules cleared his throat. “So, I’ll drop you two lovebirds off, and then I’m taking the cash to Cold.”

“Okay.” Mickey leaned across the table. “And now?”

“Now we wait.”

“Whatever will we do to pass the time?” Roger wagged his eyebrows over at Mickey.

“I’m going for a walk,” Mickey grunted.

“Don’t go too far,” Jules warned. “Stay ready.”

“Always.”

Mickey left the club to take a stroll around the block to clear his head. He began to run the many possible scenarios of assaulting the restaurant through his head, all the various ways they could attack, but his thoughts were muddled by a certain blue-eyed devil.

The fierce way he kissed, the sting of his teeth, his hot mouth...

Damn him!

Huffing sharply, Mickey tried again to get his thoughts together. This job was vital. They had to take the Luchesi family’s cash out from under them as soon as possible. It was essential to weakening them. Without money, they couldn’t pay their men or the cops and politicians they owned, and the chaos within the city would only spread.

Mickey still didn’t know what Cold’s intentions for the money might be, but he was confident it would only be to help them.

He trusted Cold.

Even if he’d brought that idiot Roger into the fold...

Beautiful, sexy, absolutely enraging Roger.

Mickey stayed gone long enough to cool off and get the echoes of their bathroom tryst out of his brain, returning finally with his head right and trigger finger itching.

He was ready to work.

Roger stayed in the office with Jules and Alistair, and that was fine by Mickey. He wanted to keep some distance between them and maintain his focus on the job tonight.

He thought over his promise to take Roger to a hotel room afterward, and a rush of heat flooded his chest. Shit. He was getting distracted again. Even without Roger being right in his face, he couldn’t stop thinking about him.

Mickey needed to scratch this itch and rid himself of this temptation. He was a one and done sort of guy, and that’s all this was. Once he’d had Roger in bed, he wouldn’t have to worry about wanting him again.

This strange attraction, whatever it was, would be over.

Right?

Jules came to find him when it was getting close to time, inviting him back to the office to stock up on ammunition. Roger didn’t appear to take any, and Mickey was silently thankful.

The last thing that lunatic needed was a gun.

Mickey tucked the extra magazines into his jacket and checked his guns one final time before sliding them into his shoulder holsters. He nodded at Jules. "Ready."

"Let's go." Jules rose up to his feet, looking to Roger. "You good?"

"I'm good," Roger replied curtly. Whatever earlier madness had possessed him seemed to have ebbed, and he appeared calm.

"Good luck, Gentlemen," Alistair said solemnly.

They piled into Jules' El Camino, driving a short distance to an abandoned shoe store. It was one of their safe houses, and they switched over to the unmarked van parked in the back.

The giant flames on the El Camino were not exactly discreet.

They donned black masks and gloves, grabbed silencers and checked their weapons once more, and then they all piled into the van. Jules got behind the wheel, Mickey took the front seat, and Roger hunkered down in the back.

Mickey could feel the faint prickles of adrenaline beginning to stir beneath his skin knowing what was to come. It was the same sweet anticipation as waiting for Christmas morning to arrive but already knowing there would only be coal. He wondered if Roger felt it too.

The fire he'd seen in Roger's eyes before, that intense passion...

Maybe they were more alike than Mickey thought.

Roger was oddly quiet again, and Mickey looked back to see what he was doing.

Roger winked at him and pulled his mask down to blow him a kiss.

Maybe they weren't that alike after all.

Rolling his eyes, Mickey faced forward again.

They were almost at the restaurant.

Ragazzi's was one of the city's oldest restaurants, plain and unassuming except for the hand painted name scrawled across the front glass in glittering gold and green. The lights inside were dim, and Mickey saw the 'open' neon sign flick off as they drove around.

Right on time.

Jules parked a block away, and they exited the van in silence and walked through the alley toward the back door. There weren't many people on the sidewalk, and no one seemed to notice them slipping off into the darkness.

Mickey took the lead and when the door was in his sights, he pulled his guns from their holsters. The silencers would help muffle the sound, but it wouldn't be long after the first shot was fired that everyone inside would know what was happening.

Jules flanked him and reached for the door.

As Galavant had promised, it was unlocked.

Mickey took a deep breath and surged forward.

The door led into a storage area packed with crates of food and overflowing trash cans. There were two men inside the doorway and three more standing by the entryway that led into the kitchen.

It was noisy, loud, and the kitchen was still bustling despite the front of the restaurant being closed. Everyone was probably trying to clean up and shut down for the night, and these men had definitely not been expecting company.

Mickey could see the surprise in their faces as he shot them, firing off a single shot for each of them before anyone could draw their weapons.

He continued into the kitchen, his eyes scanning the startled staff and watching them as they fled. He heard another door open off to his left, and he turned in time to see a large man pointing a gun at him.

Before he could fire to defend himself, Jules was there to intercept.

Jules grabbed the man's arm and twisted it back with a loud crack, sending him howling and stumbling into a rack of dishes.

The man had come out of a small office, and two additional armed men now emerged. They rushed at Mickey with their guns blazing.

Mickey grabbed the man whose arm Jules had broken, pulling him into the line of fire to use as a human shield.

Jules ducked back into the storage room to escape the hail of bullets, shouting angrily, "Assholes!"

It sounded like he was hurt, but Mickey couldn't be sure. He stuck out his arm from around the man's body, glancing out quickly to aim. He only had a split second to look, bullets flying all around him, and he fired twice.

Both men fell dead.

Mickey dropped his shield, and he scanned the kitchen interior for any more enemies.

It was empty and silent except for the faint clanging of pots that had been disrupted during the exchange of bullets.

Jules came back through the door with a scowl. There was blood dripping down his arm.

"You're hit," Mickey said.

"I'm fine. Come on." Jules jerked his head to the office, calling over his shoulder. "You're up, Lorre."

Roger came slinking out from where he'd been taking cover in the storage area and hurried into the office. Jules and Mickey followed him and kept their weapons at the ready.



The office was small and cramped, dominated by a safe nearly as tall and wide as Mickey. There was a desk covered in cash, all neatly arranged in little stacks, and more in bags down on the floor.

“Cold was right,” Mickey said, looking over a large number of bags that had yet to be filled. “They were getting ready to move it.”

“Let’s help ‘em out, huh?” Jules grinned and shoved the money on the table into a bag.

Roger was kneeling in front of the safe, and he had popped off the casing around the locking mechanism.

“How long is that gonna take?” Mickey asked, eyeing Roger’s quick fingers.

“Don’t worry, Mickey,” Roger replied. “I’ll be done in plenty of time for our date.”

Mickey wished he hadn’t asked.

“Date?” Jules scoffed.

Mickey made a face.

There was movement in the kitchen, immediately drawing Jules’ and Mickey’s attention and their guns.

“Shit!” It was Galavant, the young dancer from the club. “Hey!”

Mickey almost didn’t recognize him with all his clothes on.

“Come on!” Galavant cowered back a few steps with his hands up. “Hey! It’s me!”

Jules dropped his gun, grabbing ones of the bags of money and shoving it at Galavant. “Here. You know what to do.”

“Yeah, yeah. I know.” Galavant scrunched up his nose. “Just not the face, okay? I have to work at the club tomorrow night—”

Mickey pounced, slamming the butt of his gun into the side of Galavant’s head.

Galavant crumbled to the floor with a groan and didn’t move.

“What did you do that for?” Jules griped. “We still gotta hide him somewhere!”

“Too much?” Mickey frowned.

“Jackass.” Jules sighed and kneeled down, scooping Galavant into his arms. “I’ll find a place to stash him and this bag of cash. Hopefully, he’ll remember what the fuck he’s supposed to say when he wakes up. You get ready to load up the second Lorre’s opened the safe.”

“Got it.” Mickey watched Jules lumber off into the kitchen, and he turned back just in time to see the safe door clink.

Roger stood up, waving to the open safe with a flourish. “Ta-dah!”

Mickey had never seen so much money before in his life. It almost didn’t look real, and he couldn’t

resist the greedy smile curling his lips. He holstered his guns and picked up some of the empty duffel bags, shoving one at Roger.

Roger took it and immediately packed in handfuls of cash. Even with both of them working, it was going to take several minutes to clear the safe. Mickey set down an empty bag and dragged the wads of cash in like he was clearing dust off a shelf, watching it tumble down like a green waterfall.

“You know,” Roger said casually, “you looked really hot doin’ your thing.”

“Not now,” Mickey warned, reaching for another bag.

“You know everybody calls you the ‘Shadow’? Why is that?” Roger went on, undeterred. “Is it because you’re so fast?”

Mickey said nothing and snatched more cash.

“And quiet?” Roger taunted. “Mmm, I bet I could make you get loud. When your dick was in my mouth before, I bet—”

“Shut up,” Mickey snarled, slamming his hand around Roger’s throat.

Roger moaned.

The air had suddenly become hot, sweltering, and Mickey wanted to keep squeezing. He wanted to hear Roger moan again, just like that, just for him.

“Don’t stop,” Roger pleaded, his eyes wide as he leaned into Mickey’s hand.

“Business first.” Mickey used his grip to shove Roger back. “Fuckin’ weirdo.”

“Then pleasure?” Although Roger’s face was mostly hidden behind the mask, it was obvious he was smiling.

“If you’re lucky,” Mickey snarled, not believing what was coming out of his mouth.

He was flirting.

Now.

Mickey’s rage was rising, and the urge to punish Roger was overwhelming. He wanted to put him in his place, down on his knees... oh, this was more than anger.

Mickey wanted to own Roger, totally and completely, and he hated how weak his desire was rendering him. Those bright blue eyes were stripping him of all his defenses.

It also created another irritation, another primal urge that needed urgent attention.

He took a deep breath, steadying his hands. He honestly didn’t trust what they might do, but he had work to do.

“We’re literally playing with millions in cash,” Roger said as he continued to stuff bags with cash, clearly oblivious to Mickey’s inner struggle.

Or maybe he did know, Mickey mused, and that was why he looked so damn snug.

“I’m feeling very lucky,” Roger went on to taunt, almost as if he could hear Mickey’s thoughts.

“Feel fuckin’ lucky later,” Jules grunted as he came back in. He grabbed the full duffel bags and handed over new ones. “We still gotta load this shit up.”

“Where’s Galavant?” Mickey asked.

“Taking a little nap under a table up front,” Jules replied curtly. “He’ll wake up with the cash and sell our Luigi story to whoever finds him.”

“Good.”

“Why are we leaving him with a giant bag of cash exactly?” Roger asked.

“To make sure he gets a pat on the head from the Luchesi family instead of ‘em breakin’ his neck,” Jules explained. “He’s gonna tell ‘em he got all fucked up fightin’ off Luigi’s guys, but he managed to keep that one bag safe for ‘em on account o’ him bein’ so loyal.”

“Ah.”

The rest of the work went quickly. They cleared the safe and dragged the duffel bags out to the van. There was no sign of the police, not yet, and they had every intention of being out of there long before any official presence arrived.

Roger let out a triumphant cheer as the van doors slammed shut upon their departure. He was lying on all the duffel bags of cash, and he pulled his mask off to shout, “Fuck! We did it! We really fuckin’ did it!”

“Shut up,” Mickey growled, his attention snapping to Jules. “Are we good?”

Jules hit the gas, tires squealing as he pulled out onto the road. He didn’t say anything for several tense moments, and his eyes remained glued to the mirrors before he finally said, “So far.”

Mickey accepted that, and he sank down into his seat. He eyed the blood still running down Jules’ arm. “You sure you’re okay?”

“I’ll get somebody to stitch me up,” Jules replied. “Don’t worry about it.”

Mickey didn’t push, instead asking, “Now what? Back to the safe house?”

“No,” Jules said. “I’m dropping you off to get your car and meeting Cold to unload the cash.”

“Okay. It’s over at the park.”

“Why is it there?” Roger asked.

“The fuck do you care?” Mickey snapped.

“It seems a little strange, that’s all,” Roger replied innocently. “I mean, why meet up at the city park? Do you like the slide? Why go there?”

“Because that’s just where me and Duncan meet for work. He leaves his car there, he gets in mine, we go work. Happy?”

“Not yet.” Roger batted his eyes.

Mickey glared out the windshield and refused to say another word. He reconsidered his promise to take Roger to a hotel tonight, but the mere memory of that mouth on his dick confirmed that was exactly what he was going to do.

It was gonna be fine, he told himself. He’d fuck Roger, get all of this tension out of his system, and then he could stay focused on the work ahead of them.

They did have a city to take over, after all.

The rest of the ride was silent until they arrived at the park, and Jules said a quick farewell before driving off. Mickey watched him leave, now alone with Roger standing beside his car.

“Your ride is a piece of shit,” Roger said bluntly, poking one of the rust spots in the sedan’s door.

“Shut up and get in.” Mickey rolled his eyes and walked around to the driver’s side door.

“I can’t.”

“Why the fuck not?”

“It’s locked.”

Mickey pulled at the handle and found his door was locked too. He could see the car keys peeking out from the center console. “Oh, that fucking moron.”

“Who?”

“Duncan! He locked the fuckin’ keys inside!” Mickey raged, kicking the tire in his frustration. He couldn’t believe Duncan had done this. “That fuckin’ idiot! I gave him one fucking simple task, one fuckin’ thing to do—”

The smashing of glass grabbed Mickey’s attention, and he snapped his head over to see Roger reaching in through the newly broken passenger side window to retrieve the keys.

“What the fuck?” Mickey stared.

Roger calmly unlocked his door, brushed the glass off the seat, and sat down. He reached over to open Mickey’s door and offer the keys. “What? Come on.”

“Did you... you just...?” Mickey still couldn’t quite believe what Roger had done. “You just broke my fucking window?”

“Technically, the rock I found over there broke the window. Now, let’s go.” Roger huffed impatiently, jingling the keys at him. “Me, you, getting fucked until I can’t walk straight.”

“Holy shit. You’re fuckin’ insane.” Mickey scoffed. “You’re really fucking crazy, aren’t you?”

“Probably. And horny. Definitely fuckin’ horny.”

Mickey snatched the keys and got behind the wheel, slamming his door shut. His shock gave way to rage, and he growled, “I should beat your fuckin’ ass for this.”

“Please do,” Roger gushed, reaching over to squeeze Mickey’s thigh.

“You just fuckin’ wait until we get in that damn room,” Mickey warned. “I’m gonna fuck your little world right up.”

“Remember, my safe word is ‘werefish.’”

## CHAPTER 5

Mickey didn't need a hotel.  
He needed an insane asylum.

First, he would commit Roger, and then he would commit himself because here he was still driving over to the Master Inn Economy Motel.

He wasn't entirely sure if his head was screwed on right when he locked the door of their room for the night, finally alone with Roger.

The ride over here had been tense, and the air inside the small room was absolutely electric. He questioned his sanity for going through with this, but his growing desire trumped any hesitations.

Roger immediately made himself comfortable by stretching out on the bed, and he grinned. "Now, get naked. I wanna see you."

"Bossy, aren't you?" Mickey remained standing by the door and kept his clothes on for now.

"Oh, very."

"I'm going to need for you to simmer down for a second."

"Why?"

"Because this is a very bad idea."

Roger frowned. "What are you talking about?" He narrowed his eyes. "We're still fucking, right?"

"Yes, but—"

"Then who cares!" Roger pulled off his shirt. "I'm still hot as fuck after watching you clean out that restaurant. Also, silencers, not quite as silent as I thought they would be."

"After tonight, we're done," Mickey said firmly, trying not to stare as Roger continued to strip. "I need you to understand that this is a one time thing."

Roger had the most delicious looking tan line around his hips and thighs from sunning in what looked to be a very small pair of shorts. The lines framed his cock perfectly, and Mickey's mouth was filling with spit.

“What are you so afraid of?” Roger challenged, rising up to his knees on the bed. “Getting a taste and wanting more, huh?”

“I’m not afraid of shit!” Mickey snapped. He took off his jacket, laying it over the top of the television. He removed his shoulder holster as he continued to argue, “You’re fucking crazy, and I don’t like getting mixed up in crazy.”

“Yeah, but you’re about to put your dick all up in some. Come on. Why are you hiding all that beautiful fire?”

“You don’t know what the fuck you’re talking about.” Mickey stepped toward the bed, watching Roger’s quick fingers unbutton his shirt. He was honestly surprised he didn’t rip it off. “There is no ‘fire.’ You’re just insane.”

“No? Then why are we here, eh?” Roger smirked. He pushed Mickey’s shirt down and off his shoulders, greedily sliding his hands down his bare chest. “You like me. You like what I bring out in you.”

Mickey’s pulse began to steadily climb, and he refused to acknowledge Roger’s accusations.

He did like it... perhaps too much.

Grabbing Roger’s wrist, he shoved him back on the bed. “Fuck you.”

“I mean, that’s the plan, isn’t it?”

“Why do you have to be such a fuckin’ pain in the ass?” Mickey jumped on top of him, grunting as Roger dragged him into a harsh kiss. Their teeth clicked, and he found himself getting sucked right back in.

The crazy must have been contagious.

Roger kissed him fiercely, and he raked his nails down Mickey’s back hard enough to make him hiss.

It hurt, but it was exciting, and a fresh surge of adrenaline made him lightheaded. His cock was hard, throbbingly so, and he rolled his hips down to pin Roger against the bed.

Something about being held down made Roger moan, and he went limp, sagging into the mattress. “Fuck, mmm, that’s good.”

Mickey recalled how much Roger had liked being shoved around before, and he had more than a few reasons to still be angry with him. He grabbed Roger’s wrists, pushing them up over his head. “I shouldn’t even fuck you, you know. You don’t deserve my cock.”

“What?” Roger’s eyes widened, and he pulled against Mickey’s tight grip. “No, come on. I’ll be good, I swear. I can be so fucking good for you.”

Those words made Mickey shudder, and he was once again flooded by the unique thrill of power. Roger would do anything for him, he realized. In these heated moments, Mickey had total control over him, and fuck...

That was hot.

“Please,” Roger continued to beg, rubbing his body enticingly against Mickey’s. “Fuck me, Mickey. I’m so good. I’m so fuckin’ good. I’m the fuckin’ best there is. Everyone fuckin’ says so. My ass, my hands, my mouth...”

“Oh, yeah?” Mickey smirked. “You trying to fuck everything that moves? Try to give your ass out to everyone, you fuckin’ slut?”

The dirty talk came easily, and the fog it put in Roger’s already lusty gaze told Mickey all he needed to know; he needed to keep going.

“I bet you love it,” Mickey taunted. “Whoring yourself out, getting your hot little body all used up. Don’t you?”

“I have to...” Roger bit his lip and whined.

“Oh? Why is that? Just can’t help yourself?”

“Because I’m looking for the right one. I need a man.” Roger let his head drop back against the bed. “No, not a man. I need a monster.” He grinned suddenly. “And I think I finally found one.”

*Monster.*

“Yeah,” Mickey breathed, a new wave of lust surging down his spine to power the grind of his hips. “I’m a monster.”

He killed people for money and had never experienced the slightest hint of remorse or regret. He was good at it, even liked it at times, and he knew he would probably never stop.

“Mine.” Roger groaned, lifting his head and chomping down on Mickey’s neck.

Okay, that fucking *hurt*. Mickey didn’t mind some occasional love nibbles, but he swore Roger was trying to take flesh.

“You bitch!” Mickey grabbed Roger’s hair and pulled him off, turning his face to shove him down into the bed. He checked his neck to see if he was bleeding.

Roger laughed, letting out another delicious groan as Mickey rolled him over to pin him down face first. “Oh, there we go. There he is... my little monster.”

Mickey twisted Roger’s arm behind his back to keep him there, and the urge to punish him was becoming irresistible. He had to show Roger that kinda bullshit wasn’t acceptable, and he wasn’t going to tolerate it.

Roger was practically writhing beneath him, and his perfect ass was right there, pale and round and so very vulnerable.

“Now, you listen to me. I’m not going to put up with your shit, do you understand?” Mickey pushed Roger’s wrist up into the crook of his shoulder and reared back with his other hand. “I might be your monster, but this monster expects you to fuckin’ behave. Like right fuckin’ now, you’re gonna take your punishment like a good little boy or you’re gonna get nothin’.”

Yes. This was it. This was exactly what Roger needed.



To be spanked, *punished*, to be put into his place.

Mickey's palm came down on Roger's ass, but the angle was all wrong. He didn't get the singular smacking sound he was hoping for, and Roger only mildly jerked in response.

"Really?" Huffing in what must have been disappointment, Roger drawled, "I canceled getting my nails done for this?"

That smart-ass little remark made Mickey even more furious, and something inside of him snapped. It reminded him of the rush he got right before a job, and he had no idea why. From the moment he'd met Roger, all he'd done was piss Mickey off.

He was tired of him acting like all of this was a joke or some sort of game, and he was determined to make him answer for every offense.

Mickey brought his hand back again and spanked Roger's round ass so hard his palm stung. The sound of colliding skin was like a firecracker popping, and Roger's ensuing moan was absolutely erotic.

"Oh, fuck!" Roger whimpered, his swagger reduced once more to soft pleading. "Ow, okay, okay. Mmmph, message received. I need to be good for you. I can be so good. No more bullshit, I'll be so damn good for you."

"Can you, though? Really?" Mickey brought his hand down again with another wicked smack. He could feel Roger's entire body stiffen and buck up against him, and the resulting thrill was incredible. Mickey was powerful, in absolute control, and Roger was totally at his mercy.

"Yes! Fuck!" Roger cried out, his hips shaking as he squirmed against Mickey's grip. "I'm sorry! Mmm, I'm so sorry. I can't help it. I know I was bad. I was so fuckin' bad."

"You've been a fuckin' brat from the second I met you," Mickey went on, spanking Roger again. "But it's okay. You're gonna learn, aren't you?"

"Yes!" Roger's cheek was turning a beautiful shade of pink, he smothered a small sob into the mattress. "I can learn. Please, Mickey."

Mickey stroked Roger's ass, amazed at how quickly his own handprint was appearing there. He could see each individual finger and the heat, wow, was surprising. He could only imagine what it was like for Roger, and he reached between his legs to grope his cock.

"No... don't. Don't do that." Roger tried to wiggle away, but Mickey held him firmly.

"You're so hard," Mickey taunted, giving Roger's dick a rough squeeze. "You like this, don't you? Getting your sweet little ass spanked? Hmm?"

"Fuck off!" Roger panted. "I don't! But I wanna be good! Just, just let me be good for you!"

"Not until you take your punishment, slut." Mickey grabbed Roger's balls and tugged, enjoying another sultry moan before raising his hand to spank him again. He loved the sound of his hand smacking against Roger's ass, and the immediate response was addictive. He could bend Roger to his will, make him do whatever he wanted, and punish him thoroughly for being such a brat.

After another sound spank, Mickey reached down to squeeze Roger's cock. The heat of it was comparable to the reddening handprints he was leaving all over Roger's ass, and he slipped his thumb over the head. "You're so fuckin' wet. Mmm, just a little bit more, and maybe you've learned your lesson, huh?"

"Fuck... yes." Roger sounded weak, broken, and he cried when Mickey stroked his dick. "I'm so very sorry. I fucked up. I fucked up so much. I'll be good, okay? I swear."

"I don't know." Mickey grabbed Roger's blushing cheek, enjoying the scorching heat he'd left behind in the wake of the spanking. Having power over someone else like this was incredible. "You're a fuckin' disrespectful little slut."

"But I can be good!" Roger pleaded. "Please, please! Mickey, I'll be so good!"

"Then be good... and take your punishment."

Every sob and moan Roger uttered only spurred Mickey on, swinging with all his strength. He smacked Roger's ass so hard that his hand was tingling, and he shivered at how Roger moaned in reply.

"Fuck, yes!" Roger gasped, rocking his body down into the bed as if trying to give himself relief. "Oh, God... oh, Mickey... See? I can take it. I can take it all so fuckin' good."

Mickey's hand was getting sore, and he decided to give Roger a break. He marveled at how quickly so many red handprints had popped up all across his abused cheeks, and he paused to trace one almost reverently.

An alien sense of pride fluttered in his chest at how well Roger had taken his punishment. He hadn't asked Mickey to stop once. He wasn't exactly sure what to do with it, but it made him smile.

"Good slut." Mickey petted Roger's red cheeks, giving him one last little pop. "You did so fuckin' good for me. Now I'm gonna fuck you."

"Mmm, yes. Thank you. Lube is in my wallet." Roger was out of breath, his face flushed nearly as red as his ass when he looked back at Mickey. "Condoms too."

"I got some," Mickey said defensively.

He was an assassin, not some irresponsible dickhead.

By the time Mickey had pulled out a condom from his wallet, Roger had already fished out two small packets of lube from his pants on the floor and ripped one open with his teeth.

Roger squirted the lube all over his hand as he rolled over onto his back, thrusting two fingers right into his asshole with a deep groan. There was no buildup. There was no gentle opening. Roger was fucking himself hard and fast, and he demanded, "Come on! Put it in me, Mickey! Please, I was so good for you!"

"Christ, hang on!" Mickey slapped the side of Roger's thigh, scrambling to open the condom. He was careful not to catch his piercing as he rolled it on. His pulse was thundering in his ears, and he was panting as he struggled to get into position.

He was totally consumed with the need to be inside Roger, to fuck him, to own him completely. He had to have a taste of that sweet hole, and he didn't waste a second pushing inside of him. He groaned at the first taste of tight heat, gritting his teeth as he thrust in balls deep.

Oh, *fuck*, that was good.

Roger was already clenching around him, as if trying to pull him in even farther, and he'd melted down into the mattress with a loud moan. "Ah, fuck, yes. Yes, Mickey. Give it to me!"

Grunting, Mickey rocked his hips and began a brutal rhythm. Roger was so damn tight, and Mickey loved how his legs fell apart as he took every inch of his cock. "Such a good fuckin' boy," he hissed. "Mmm, you like that dick?"

"Yes!" Roger grabbed his knees and pulled them up to his chest, begging, "Fuck, you feel so good! Come on, fuck me harder!"

"Fuck me harder what?" Mickey stilled and smirked down at him. "Gonna have to teach you some manners, huh?"

"For fuck's sake!" Roger whimpered, staring up at Mickey with a pout. "Are you serious right now?"

"Uh huh." Mickey pulled out leisurely, sliding back in about halfway and refusing to give him any more. He grabbed Roger's hip to stop him from trying to push down on his cock and quickly spanked the underside of his thigh.

"Ow! Fuck!" Roger cried sharply, going still now. "Mickey! Please!"

"Tell me what I fuckin' want to hear." Mickey slapped his thigh again. "Now."

Roger let out another delicious moan, and Mickey was struck by a new surge of lust from how responsive he was. That flare of defiance was lost in beautiful submission and watching it go out was like a drug. Roger was trembling, desperate, and Mickey could see his eyes getting glassy.

"Fuck me harder," Roger said between gritted teeth, "please."

"Please what?"

"Please, sir? Master? Your highness?" Roger whined. "I'll call you whatever you fuckin' want, just please fuck me!"

"Oh, master sounds real good," Mickey declared wickedly. "Call me master."

It was ridiculous and completely over the top, but it felt so right in that moment. He wanted to have full command of Roger's body, and he wasn't going to give him what he wanted until he heard those precious words.

"Please!" Roger begged, writhing beneath him. "Master, please fuck me!"

Mickey's response was instant, and he slammed his cock back inside with a low grunt. He pushed Roger's legs back up, and he fucked him as hard as he could. He could let go completely, focus on his own pleasure, and bask in Roger's passionate moans.

He didn't have to worry about hurting him or being too rough because this was exactly what Roger wanted.

Roger was taking his cock like he was made for it, giving it up beautifully with a litany of excited cries. He kept his legs arched up, and his toes were curling. He loved this, Mickey could tell, and they were just getting started.

Mickey drilled him so fast and fierce that their bodies were slapping together, and the noise echoed throughout the room. He didn't know what was coming over him, but he suddenly swept his hand down and smacked Roger's ass to add to the symphony of sinful sounds.

"Oh, God! Master!" Roger's body tightened down around Mickey's cock, and he pulled his legs up to bite down on his knee as he whimpered. "Fuck, fuck, fuck! God, yeah! Fuck me up!"

"Yeah, you fuckin' slut," Mickey grunted as his thighs burned. "Take that fuckin' dick! Mmm, yeah! Just like that!"

"Thank you, master!" Roger's jaw was hanging open, and he cried out shamelessly with each slam. "Thank you, fuck! Yes!"

Heat was already coiling up inside of Mickey's loins, and his balls were pounding with the need for release. He was getting close, and he was overwhelmed with sensation. Roger felt so damn good, and the thrill of dominating him was so much that it was making Mickey's lips tingle.

He knew then he was totally fucked because he already wanted to do this again. He didn't want to give this up. He wanted to punish Roger, to spank him, to make him his over and over—

"Fuck!" Mickey groaned as he suddenly came, his hips stuttering as he worked himself through his orgasm. The head of his cock throbbed as it was surrounded in the wet heat of his load, and the piercing there was aching sweetly. It was wave after wave of intense feeling, a pleasure that made every muscle in his body ache and sizzle as his dick pulsed.

"Yeah, get that fuckin' nut, master. Yeah, come on." Roger reached down to grab his cock and jerk himself off. "Mmm, fuck yes!"

Mickey watched him in a daze, still coming down from his climax, but he snapped out of it when he realized what Roger was doing. He curled his hand over Roger's, halting him. "Ah ah, did I tell you that you could fuckin' come?"

"No, master." Roger licked his lips. "No, you didn't. But... but I was good for you. Can I please come now?"

"Not yet." Mickey felt a twinge of excitement from how obediently Roger moved his hand away, clearly waiting for permission. He pulled out with a satisfied groan, sliding off the bed and heading into the bathroom to dispose of the condom.

He got a glimpse of himself in the dingy mirror, and he was struck by how he was smiling.

He looked... happy.

He also had a giant bite mark on the side of his neck.

That son of a bitch!

Mickey was tempted not to let Roger come and make him wait until next time, but he immediately squashed the idea. This was supposed to be a one and done deal. That was it.

No matter how much fun it was to boss Roger around and spank him, he didn't have time to get involved.

He did, however, have time to make Roger wait a little longer. He lingered inside the bathroom for a few more minutes, used the toilet, washed up, and finally came out to find Roger face down, humping the bed impatiently.

"Please, master," Roger groaned, gazing up at Mickey. "Can I come now? I was so good. I was so damn good. I fuckin' waited like you told me to."

Mickey debated dragging this out more, but he was starting to feel the itch to leave. There wasn't any reason for him to stay now that he'd gotten off. He wasn't exactly the cuddling type.

He gathered his things and said, "Go on. You've been very good for me. You get to come now."

"Thank fuck!" Roger flopped onto his back, grabbing his cock and stroking fast. He bit his bottom lip, and he panted, "Yeah, fuck... thank you, master."

Hovering by the door, Mickey decided to at least wait until Roger finished. He liked watching him, seeing the way his stomach and thighs flexed as he drove himself over the edge with a loud gasp. A residual twinge of lust made Mickey's spent cock twitch as Roger's cock shot all over his abs, and he was half-tempted to go over and get a taste.

Instead, he asked, "You good?"

Roger stretched across the bed with a happy sound, and he turned his head to smirk at Mickey. "Oh, I'm awesome. Obviously. I haven't had a fuck like that since my last Bible study group."

Mickey snorted, refusing to laugh but unable to resist cracking a smile. "Fuck, you really are crazy."

"Yeah." Roger beamed.

"You need a ride somewhere?"

"And waste this fancy hotel room?" Roger laughed. "In your dreams." He batted his eyes. "Don't worry about little ol' me. I'll catch a cab in the morning."

"You still owe me a new window," Mickey said pointedly.

"I'll get right on that."

Mickey didn't know what else to say, and the ensuing silence was surprisingly awkward. This was supposed to be the easy part, but Roger was looking at him so damn expectantly, and Mickey had no idea what to think.

Maybe he should stay, he thought. Being rough like that probably needed a special kind of attention, but he couldn't bring himself to offer any.

As if reading his thoughts, Roger said dryly, “If you’re worried about me because you smacked my ass around and rode it like a stolen tricycle, don’t. I’m fine.”

“I’m not. Just trying to figure out the safest way to leave you so you don’t try to pick another fuckin’ fight.”

“There will be no fighting. I don’t have pants on.”

“Right.” Mickey cleared his throat. “See ya’ around, Roger.”

“Good night, Mickey.” Roger grinned. “Thanks for givin’ me the chills.”

Yeah, definitely not fuckin’ staying.

Not that Mickey was going to anyway, but the reference to that damn song immediately eliminated any chance in hell that he would have.

Without another word, he left the motel. He leaned back in his seat, taking his time and enjoying the drive. It wasn’t often he let himself relax, but he had earned it after today. They’d dealt a major blow against the Luchesis, and hell, he’d even gotten laid.

He smiled when he thought of how Roger had begged for his cock, and the rush of power he’d experienced had been incredible. He’d had some good sex before, but apparently he’d been missing out.

All sorts of fantasies sprung to mind, everything from spanking Roger over his knee to making him crawl on the floor. He could probably make him do just about anything, and his face was starting to get hot thinking of ways to punish him.

Shit.

He turned on the radio to distract himself, and he redirected his thoughts to the takeover ahead. He didn’t know what Cold had planned for them next, but he was determined to be ready for anything.

He also made a mental note to call Duncan tomorrow and give him a good piece of his mind for locking the keys in his car.

Mickey felt different when he got home. His body was heavy, a familiar sensation from having such an intense fuck, but there was something else. It was a vivid satisfaction, a creeping hum beneath his skin he’d only ever experienced after a hit.

Weird he was having it now.

He checked on his grandfather, found him sleeping, and got ready for bed. He cleaned his guns, made a sandwich, and then took a quick shower.

After putting on some shorts, he got into bed. He couldn’t drift off right away, looking up at the ceiling as his thoughts continued to wander. The vision of a smooth ceiling above his head was much better than the popcorn one he used to stare at from his ratty couch.

He trusted Cold and respected him for doing right by him all these months, and he couldn’t wait for the rest of his plan to come together. They were going to have power and wealth, and he wouldn’t

have to worry about how he was going to take care of his grandfather ever again.

It wasn't going to be easy, but nothing in Mickey's life ever had been.

Well, except for sleeping with Roger, he mused.

That would be even easier to do again.

Mickey allowed himself to fantasize, and he was just closing his eyes when he heard his phone ring. It was Cold, and he picked up right away.

"Hey, Boss."

"Hello. Thank you for your extraordinary work today. I appreciate it very much."

"Always."

"Jules made the delivery successfully and is being taken care of. Thought you'd like to know."

"Good. Thank you."

"I have a new job for you," Cold went on. "A hit."

"Of course. I'll hit whatever you aim me at."

"Ah, that's just it, Mr. Tamerlane," Cold purred. "This time, I need you to *miss*."

## CHAPTER 6

Cold had asked Mickey to do a lot of things, but this was a first.  
He wanted him to miss a target.

But who?

That's what he was waiting to find out, sitting in the office at Slick Rick's with Jules and Alistair the next morning. The rest of the Gentlemen were not going to be present for this meeting, and he was grateful that Roger wouldn't be here.

He didn't want to see him.

The bite mark wasn't the only thing Roger had left behind, and Mickey was having more trouble than he'd like to admit squashing the memories of their hookup. He could still recall the wicked sting in his hand when he spanked Roger's ass and the way he moaned his name and called him 'master.'

Shit.

The erotic thrill he'd felt when they were together was hanging over him like a delicious cologne, strong and alluring, and he couldn't shake it.

He forced himself to ignore it for now and tried to stay focused on the work ahead of him.

Cold was running late, but Alistair said he would be there soon. Considering Boss Cold's near microsecond accuracy with time, it was unsettling for him not to be here already.

Something must have happened.

Alistair was sitting at the desk, in his usual spot, dressed in a slick navy blue suit but no tie. His shirt wasn't buttoned up either, and his jacket was rumpled as if he'd slept in it.

Mickey sincerely doubted this was an intentional fashion choice. Whatever had gone down with Cold, Alistair knew.

"Everything cool?" he dared to ask, eyeing Alistair.

"Fine."

Jules didn't say anything but had suddenly found the ceiling interesting.



That giant bastard probably knew too.

“How’s the arm?” Mickey nodded at the bandage peeking out from Jules’ t-shirt sleeve.

Today’s shirt said ‘I Kicked The Kookamonga Challenge,’ whatever the hell that was.

“Good,” Jules grunted. “Doc fixed me right up.”

“Doc Brown, right?”

“Yeah, that’s him. Said he might be retiring this year though. Gonna give us some kinda referral for somebody before he goes.”

The office door opened, and Duncan scurried in. He looked around in surprise. “Where’s the boss?”

“He’s on his way,” Alistair replied shortly.

“You!” Mickey pointed at Duncan with a scowl. “You locked my goddamn keys in my car!”

“What? No!” Duncan protested. He came to the table and sat down next to Mickey. “I made sure it was unlocked before I left, I swear!”

“Bullshit.”

“How’d you get home then?” Jules asked. “Did you jimmy open the door?”

“Roger broke the window,” Mickey said sourly.

Jules barked out a laugh.

Duncan started laughing too.

“What’s so fuckin’ funny?” Mickey demanded.

“Well, you got into the car.” Jules grinned. “Right?”

“I bet that’s not all he got into,” Duncan teased.

“Well, duh.”

“Fuck both of you,” Mickey growled. He refused to say anything else about it, and he looked to Alistair. He was hoping for a return to some semblance of professionalism.

“Well.” Alistair cracked a smile. “It’s nice to know you and Mr. Lorre are getting along so well.”

Mickey made a face.

Cold came in then, thankfully saving Mickey from dealing with any further nonsense. He was wearing an immaculate gray pinstripe three-piece suit, and there was a small bruise blooming beneath his left eye.

Mickey was concerned. “You okay, Boss?”

“Never better,” Cold replied briskly. “I apologize for my tardiness. A prior appointment ran longer than I expected.”

“You good?” Jules asked, his brows arched. Even if he knew what had happened, he seemed concerned.

Punctuality was one of Cold’s most famous virtues, and it was highly unusual for him to be late. The shiner he was sporting was also very concerning.

“Fine.” Cold took his seat at the head of the table.

“I don’t see Mr. Corman with you,” Alistair noted. “Am I to assume—”

“Assume nothing,” Cold snapped. He didn’t even turn his head to look at Alistair. “You may leave now.”

Alistair was visibly stung, but he said nothing. He got up as commanded, pausing only briefly to rest his hand on Cold’s shoulder as he passed by.

Cold didn’t flinch, but he still refused to acknowledge him.

Maybe it was Mickey’s imagination, but it sure did look like Alistair’s knuckles were swollen up like they would be after socking someone in the face.

He really didn’t understand what was up with those two.

Their relationship, whatever it was, was very private. Mickey had thought of Alistair as Cold’s mentor, guiding him through a life of crime and villainy and wearing expensive suits.

Anything more than that, Mickey had no idea. Duncan swore they were lovers, claiming he’d seen the two of them kiss once when they didn’t think anyone was around. Mickey didn’t care if they were fucking or not, but any sign of conflict made him uneasy.

Cold waited until Alistair left before he began, “The target is Delgado Ricci. He’s been the Luchesi family’s personal accountant for years, and he is an outspoken supporter of Matteo’s. Ricci was close to the Don and claims his choice to lead would have been Matteo, not Cristian.”

“So, naturally, Cristian wants him dead,” Duncan said.

“Yes.”

“We’ll need to track him for a few days. Figure out the best time to hit.” Duncan looked pleased to finally be included in the planning. “I can follow him around, see where he goes, and then—”

“I already have the time and place,” Cold cut in. “Cristian has been kind enough to give us a detailed look into Ricci’s schedule, and he also suggested an opportunity I believe is perfect.”

Duncan pouted.

“What is it?” Mickey asked.

“Friday afternoon at precisely four o’clock. Ricci has a massage scheduled at Lovely Lou’s Massage every weekend, and he never misses it.”

“The happy ending kind?” Jules leered. “Or the regular kind?”

“Regular. The place is clean.”

“Oh.”

“We’ll check it out.” Mickey nudged Duncan. “Find a nice quiet spot to hunker down. Lot of foot traffic over there.”

“Retail, some cafes,” Duncan added. “I think there’s an office building that faces Lovely Lou’s. We could use that.”

“Do what you must, but this is the most critical aspect of the mission,” Cold warned. “You’re not actually going to kill Mr. Ricci.”

“Why?” Mickey pressed.

“Cristian wants him dead, but I want him alive,” Cold replied. “You’re going to miss, Mickey. Make it look good, but under absolutely no circumstances are you to kill Mr. Ricci.”

“And he’s gonna what? Just play dead?”

“Yes.”

“He knows Cristian is trying to kill him,” Duncan realized out loud. “He wants to leave the family.”

“More importantly, he wants to survive it, and he’s willing to cooperate with us. He’s going to drop once he hears the shot, and the paramedics who respond are going to bring him over to our safe house.”

“And we get ourselves a snitch who knows all about the Luchesi coin.” Jules grinned. “I like it.”

“Yes. Ricci will have a set of ledgers with him. These contain the bank accounts and routing numbers for all of the family’s holdings, including their personal accounts. He’s also been kind enough to offer to include some other very vital information, such as delivery schedules and addresses.”

“Sweet.”

“Delivery schedules for what?” Duncan asked. “Drugs? Guns?”

“All of the above,” Cold replied. “Now, as I’ve said, Mr. Ricci will be taken to our safe house after he drops. The paramedics are on my payroll. They’re loyal, but not even they know who they’re going to be transporting.

“Duncan, I want you to get the house ready. Make sure it’s comfortable. Mr. Ricci will be staying with us for some time. No one will know we’re letting him live. That does not leave this room. Not even to the other Gentlemen.”

“Of course, Boss,” Mickey said without hesitation. It wasn’t his place to question orders.

“You got it, Boss,” Jules grunted. “Not a peep.”

“Yeah, no problem.” Duncan nodded, but he did glance worriedly at Mickey.

Mickey ignored him.

“You have two days to plan the hit,” Cold drawled. “Any questions?”

“What about the others?” Duncan asked. “Jerry’s a good spotter—”

“They’re engaged.”

Jules frowned.

“That is to say they’re busy,” Cold amended.

Jules nodded in understanding.

“That’s it?” Duncan shifted in his chair. “We got a new hit Mickey isn’t even gonna take at a time and place you already picked out? Maybe a text would have been easier? I mean, what exactly are we supposed to do now? Shop for curtains for the safe house?”

Cold leaned forward, and his eyes grew icy. “My apologies, Mr. Gill. Do you feel that I’ve wasted your precious time?”

Duncan shrank back. “No, Boss. Not at all. I’m just, you know, confused.”

“What is it about this very simple plan that is mystifying you, Mr. Gill?”

“Nothing.” Duncan tried to make himself smaller. “I’m good, Boss. Really.”

Mickey stared at Duncan as if he’d lost his mind. He must have to openly question Cold like that. He looked back to Cold, trying to gauge his expression.

At the moment, Cold seemed mildly annoyed and not murderous, so that was good at least.

“Shut your mouth hole,” Jules advised Duncan with an all too friendly smile. He turned his head. “Mickey, you good?”

“Golden,” Mickey replied.

“That’s all, Gentlemen,” Cold declared. “Please. Hurry along before I take up another second of your valuable time.”

Duncan grimaced, but he didn’t dare say anything. He scrambled out of the office with Jules hot on his heels, doubtlessly about to give him a stern lecture about the virtues of silence.

Knowing Jules, not many of the words would have more than two syllables and most of them would start with ‘fuck.’

Mickey stood to go after them, but he noticed Cold wasn’t moving.

He was still seated and was reaching up to gingerly touch his bruised cheek. He looked tired, suddenly decades older in an instant. His icy armor had melted for a moment, and he seemed lost.

“You and Alistair okay, Boss?” Mickey hesitated to ask, but he’d never seen Cold like this before.

“Me and Alistair?” Cold echoed flatly, and he snorted in amusement.

“Yeah, you and him.”

“Are we an item now?” Cold’s tone was sarcastic, and his armor was strapped right back into place.

“I don’t know what you guys are,” Mickey said honestly, “but I wanna make sure you’re okay.” He straightened himself up. “If he’s a problem, I need to know, Boss.”

“You’re a loyal man, Mr. Tamerlane,” Cold said after a moment. “I value that above all else. Thank you for your concern.”

“So, I don’t need to kill him?”

“Alistair does not agree with some of my plans and made his opposition known. That’s all.” Cold waved his hand. “He is outspoken, but he is loyal, like you. There is no problem, but if one should arise... you’ll be the first to know.”

“Sounds good, Boss.” Mickey turned to leave, but there was still a question nagging at him. He’d probably never have another chance to ask, and as much as he told himself he didn’t care, he was curious.

“So... are you two...?”

Cold smiled. Not a chilling smirk or a sly grin, but a smile that lit up his whole face. Damn, he was such a beautiful bastard.

“Well?”

“Mmm, careful,” Cold cautioned. “You’re going to make Roger jealous if he finds out you’ve been asking about my personal life.”

Wait, how the fuck did *he* know?

Mickey’s shock must have been written all over his face because Cold laughed.

“I don’t belong to anyone except myself, Mr. Tamerlane. And that includes Alistair Star.” Cold tilted his head. “Is that a satisfactory response?”

“Good, Boss.” Mickey paused. “And you’re sure you don’t want me to kill him?”

“Focus on the job. I promise you’ll actually be able to kill someone soon enough.”

Mickey was happy with that and left the office. He shut the door behind him, scanning the bar for Jules and Duncan. As expected, Duncan was trying to disappear into a corner while Jules towered over him.

“You fuckin’ hear me?” Jules was snarling.

“Heard. Totally heard.” Duncan grinned nervously. “I also can’t help but notice, seeing as how you’re right in my face, but uh, did you start using a new mouthwash? ’Cause your breath is amazing right now. Very minty. Little orangey.”

“Yeah, it’s new.” Jules smiled. “Natural Citrus.”

“Good, good. I like it.”

“Now, we got an understandin’?”

“Absolutely.” Duncan slipped out from the corner and dashed over to Mickey’s side.

Jules looked to Mickey. “Muzzle him. You hear me?”

“Got it,” Mickey said. He watched Jules go back to the office and grabbed Duncan’s arm. “Outside. Now.”

“Oh, come on!” Duncan protested as Mickey dragged him out into the parking lot. “I was just asking a few fuckin’ questions!”

“You’ve gotta chill the fuck out.” Mickey didn’t stop until they were on the other side of the building, where he let go of Duncan with a shove. “You keep running your damn mouth like that—”

“None of this bothers you?” Duncan demanded. “He doesn’t even want us to tell the others? My gut is telling me there’s something up! Keeping all these secrets?”

“It’s the job. We’re not fucking Boy Scouts.”

“Whatever.” Duncan hung his head miserably. “You really trust him more than you trust me, don’t you?”

“Jesus Christ.” Mickey wasn’t going to justify that with a response. He hated to see his friend so upset, so he tried. “You’re not smarter than Cold.”

Duncan’s grimace deepened.

Shit.

“Let it go, okay? It’s gonna be fine. I trust you to set me up right for a job, and I trust Cold to make a plan that’s gonna work.”

Duncan frowned.

“Come on,” Mickey said gently. “Let’s go.”

“Where?”

“To check out that office building you were talking about before.” Mickey smiled. “We’re still partners, right?”

Duncan hesitated.

“What’s wrong?”

“How about we go tomorrow? I got some shit to go do.”

Mickey scoffed. “What shit could you possibly have to do?”

“Stuff, okay?” Duncan made a face. “Maybe I don’t wanna be around you right now. You ever think of that? Hard to think when I’m fuckin’ pissed off at you.”

“Me? What the hell did I do?”

“You fuckin’ stood there and didn’t say a fuckin’ word! You just smiled and nodded like a *bitch*! What happened to the Mickey I knew who didn’t take any shit and just wanted to get paid, huh?”

“Technically, I was sitting.”

“I’m going home,” Duncan grumbled.

“Well, let me drive you.”

“I’ll catch a cab.” Duncan walked away. “I’ll see you tomorrow.”

Mickey was left alone once Duncan turned the corner. He huffed under his breath, “Squirrely little fuck.”

Whatever had crawled up Duncan’s ass was getting worse. Mickey didn’t understand what Duncan was so upset about, but he didn’t like the dreadful knot that was beginning to form in his belly.

Tomorrow, he decided. He would get Duncan to talk and figure out what his damn problem was.

With his afternoon now cleared of plans, Mickey debated on what to do.

*Huh, I wonder what Roger is doing...*

He immediately brought that train wreck of a thought to a screeching halt and opted to go home instead. There had to be laundry or dishes that needed attention, and he could check on Pops.

Mickey tried everything not to think about Roger, but his brain jumped right back on the tracks and flooded his mind with all the sinful memories of their evening together.

Now all he could think about was the way Roger had begged for him, the hot grip of his body around his cock, and God, that one moment when Roger was so caught up that he’d bitten down on his own knee in the heat of the moment.

Great.

Mickey was hard.

He was going to grab a shower as soon as he got home, but he heard his grandfather calling for him the second he stepped through the door.

“Hey, Michael! You’re home early.”

“Half day.” Mickey stripped off his jacket, heading into his bedroom to finish getting undressed.

“You gotta go back?”

“Not today.”

“Come here! I’m tired of yellin!”

Mickey scowled, but he left his bedroom to go see him. “You need somethin’, Pops? I’m gonna grab a shower real quick.”

“Let’s go.” Pops pushed the pillows out of his way.

“Hey, hey! What are you doing?” Mickey rushed over to his side, trying to stop him from getting out of bed.

“I’m fine! Let’s go. I wanna go see my girl.”

Mickey had been looking forward to a hot shower and a very hateful jerkoff session, but that didn’t seem to be in his future. “Right now?”

“Yes, right now.” Pops stubbornly sat up on the edge of the bed. “Get me some pants, and let’s go.”

“You know the very nice doctor I pay a lot of money to take care of you says you need to rest.”

“He can blow me.” Pops held his head high, refusing to back down. “I wanna go see my girl.”

“All right, all right. We’ll go.”

Pops’ girl was a slick black 1972 Nova SS. It was a two door hardtop coupe with a four speed manual transmission and a Turbo Fire 350 engine. He said it was the last real muscle car ever made, and he had bought it new before Mickey was even born.

When Pops had gotten ill and lost the farm, he had to sell the car too. It had taken some time and some heavy-handed persuasion, but Mickey finally found it and bought it back for him.

They kept it at a storage facility a few miles outside of the city, and Mickey took Pops out there a few times every month to visit. The condo Cold had set Mickey up in was very nice, but there wasn’t a garage, and Pops didn’t want his girl out on the street.

Strassen Springs Store-URself offered large bays for rent, and so that’s where Pops’ girl stayed. They’d open the garage door, crank the old girl up, and go for a leisurely spin at an electrifying twenty-five miles per hour around the parking lot.

Mickey was not allowed to drive, only his grandfather.

“You can have these keys when you pry them from my cold dead fingers,” Pops would say.

“You got it, Pops,” would be Mickey’s dutiful reply.

Mickey had to help him get in and out of the car because he couldn’t walk on his own. Sometimes he had to reach over and change gears for him because his hands were too weak to pull the knob. But never once did Mickey’s hands touch that steering wheel.

He did, however, occasionally punch the radio. No matter what they did, it would come on at ear blasting levels whenever the car cranked. The only thing that seemed to work was a few well-placed



taps.

After a few laps around the parking lot, Pops drove back to the storage unit. Mickey pulled the knob into reverse so he could back in.

“Work going okay, Michael?” Pops asked once they’d parked.

“Real good, Pops. You need something? Want a bigger TV?”

“No, no, I’m fine. I was actually about to ask you the same thing.”

“Me?” Mickey blinked. “You think I need a bigger TV?”

“Do you need something, is what I mean. You know, like...” Pops gestured helplessly. “Like a friend.”

“A friend?” Mickey didn’t understand where this was going.

“I worry about you, Michael. You work all the time, you keep crazy hours... I just...” Pops frowned, clearly struggling to articulate his thoughts.

Mickey leaned back in the seat, and he quirked his brows at his grandfather. “What is it?”

“I want you to meet somebody, okay?” Pops huffed. “Somebody special.”

“Oh, God.”

“I wouldn’t care if you wanted to bring a guy home. I want you to date, kiddo.”

“Oh, *God*.” Mickey held his face in his hands. “Pops, I’m not dating anyone. I’m too busy working.”

“Well, your neck looks like a vampire got a hold of you.”

“It’s *nothing*.” Mickey would much rather be shooting someone than having this conversation.

“You know I want you to be happy,” Pops soothed. “There’s more to life than working all the time and carting my old ass around.”

“I’m fine, Pops.”

“This vampire of yours got a name?”

“It doesn’t matter.”

“Michael Tamerlane, you’re blushing.”

Goddammit.

“His name is Roger, but it’s nothing, okay?” He massaged his temples.

“Roger. Huh.” Pops sounded surprised. “Blond, tall, in real good shape?”

“Yes?” Mickey frowned.

Pops pointed out the windshield.

Mickey heard a low whistle and looked up to see *Roger* standing there in front of the open garage.

“What the fuck?” Mickey growled.

“Damn, now *this* is a car,” Roger declared. “Much better than that piece of shit with the broken window.”

“A window you broke, asshole!” Mickey snapped as he stepped out of the car.

“Let’s be honest.” Roger grinned. “It was a piece of shit before I broke it.”

Mickey stalked toward Roger. “What the fuck are you doing here?”

“Oh, I was just in the neighborhood.”

“Bullshit,” Mickey snarled.

Pops poked his head out the window. “Is that your vampire, Michael?”

“I’ll be right back, Pops! Work stuff!” Mickey pushed Roger backwards, forcing him up against the door of the adjacent unit and out of sight.

Roger went willingly, smiling all the while. “Vampire, huh? I can dig it.”

“How the fuck did you know I was here?” Mickey demanded.

“I smelled your manly aroma, and it drew me over.”

Mickey was going to kill him. He grabbed Roger’s jacket lapels and slammed him against the door. His blood was pumping furiously, and being so close to Roger was waking up all kinds of feelings.

It didn’t help he hadn’t been able to handle his earlier frustration. It was even worse that the source of that frustration was right here in front of him, writhing against him with a soft moan.

The exquisite spark he’d felt before was right there where they’d left it, and Mickey’s skin was burning to be near him again. The scent of his cologne was so familiar now, and Mickey breathed it in with an annoyed hiss.

Damn him.

“Stop making those fuckin’ noises! You’re so fucking weird!” Mickey barked. “The fuck do you want? Huh?”

“Oh, Mickey.” Roger grinned, rolling his hips forward with a longing sigh. He pretended to look shocked as he reached down and found Mickey’s straining dick. “You missed me.”

Mickey suddenly couldn’t think of anything else except getting his hands on Roger. He wanted to wipe that dazzling, infuriatingly *smug* smile right off his face. He was gonna find the nearest horizontal surface and bend him over it.

One last time.

“I’ll be right back, Pops!” Mickey suddenly shouted. “Gotta go talk some business.”

“As long as that business is your dick going in my mouth,” Roger said gleefully, “I’m totally in.”

## CHAPTER 7

The storage facility office was closed, but it didn't take Roger any time to pick the lock. Mickey was surprised he didn't break the window.

Their lips collided in another passionate kiss as soon as they were inside, and Mickey slid his hands down his hips, going straight for his ass and squeezing. "You are such a fuckin' bastard!"

"Uh huh." Roger panted as he pulled at Mickey's zipper. "Fuck, come on. I love when you call me names!"

"Shut the fuck up, you fuckin' nutbag!" Mickey pushed Roger back, knocking over a small trash can as they crashed against the service desk. He gasped when Roger bit his lip, and he pushed him. "Bitch!"

"Mmm, just like that." Roger dropped to his knees, groaning when Mickey snatched up a tight handful of his hair.

"God, is that the only way to make you shut up?" Mickey grumbled as he pulled his cock out. "Huh? Gotta stuff your pretty little mouth?"

"You can certainly try," Roger taunted. He parted his lips, sinking down on every thick inch with a growl. He closed his eyes and groaned, already bobbing his head and sucking hard.

Mickey sighed, savoring the wet heat and the way Roger's tongue worked so expertly around his piercing. He pulled Roger's hair just to hear him moan, and he thrust forward, sinking deeper into his mouth.

They had to be quick. Pops was waiting for him, and he shouldn't even be doing this. This was stupid. It was so fucking *stupid*, but seeing those big blue eyes staring up at him while Mickey's cock was hitting the back of his throat was doing things to him.

He knew Roger liked it rough, so he could slam as hard as he wanted to. He loved how Roger's eyes fluttered and he let his jaw hang open to take every brutal thrust.

It was beautiful.

But it wasn't enough. Mickey wanted more. He pulled out, smacking his cock against Roger's cheek as he commanded, "Get up on the desk. Ass up."

“What?” Roger laughed. “Right here?”

“Did I fuckin’ stutter?” Mickey said sternly.

“You’re serious?” Roger’s eyes widened. “Look, I was thinking some quick head and—”

“And your fuckin’ master says to get up on the desk, ass up.” Mickey made sure that his tone left no room for argument, and he glared down at Roger, daring him to refuse.

The air was tense, but he wasn’t going to back down. He wanted to fuck Roger raw for dragging him away from Pops, and he wasn’t leaving until he got exactly that. He could see Roger’s expression scrunching up, as if he was fighting with the decision of whether or not to get fucked right there on that desk.

“Okay, master.” Roger’s eyes fluttered, and he wiped the drool from his lips as he stood. He hopped up on the desk, slipping out of his pants and spreading his legs wide. He hadn’t been wearing any underwear. “Fine. Come on. I’ll do it.”

“Good boy.” The sight of Roger’s exposed thighs and hole made Mickey’s cock twitch, and he tried to stay calm. “I thought I told you ass up.”

“I already said I’d let you fuck me!” Roger groaned loudly. “Why does it fuckin’ matter how?”

Mickey surged forward, grabbing Roger’s arm and effortlessly twisting him around to face the desk. He kept his wrist pinned, holding him there as he snapped, “Because that’s not what I fuckin’ told you to do, now is it?”

“F-fuck.” Roger moaned. “Okay, okay... mmm, I’ll be good. Like this. This is fine, master. This is great, actually.”

“You crazy ass son of a bitch. I can’t even go one fuckin’ day without running into you.”

“Ah, maybe we’re soulmates.” Roger laughed under his breath. “You ever consider that, master?”

Mickey spanked Roger. “New rule. Pretend there’s a dick in your mouth at all times.”

“Mmm? Mm, mmph.” Roger continued to make a series of dramatic muffled noises. “Mmm, mph!”

“Christ!” Mickey smacked him again, viciously hard, watching his hips jerk forward against the edge of the desk. He used his grip on Roger’s arm to force him over, spanking the other cheek just as savagely. There, yes, there was that rush of power he’d missed.

He could actually see Roger’s entire body melting against the desk, and the way his head dropped down in submission made Mickey’s dick throb. He watched Roger’s shoulders tremble, heard his breathing hitch, and he knew Roger was going to be his again, exactly the way he wanted him to be, right here on this damn desk.

“Oh, fuck!” Roger moaned, a long and breathless cry of pleasure that nearly rattled the windows. “I’m sorry, I’m sorry! It was just a fuckin’ joke! Ah, fuck! Mmm, master!”

“Thought I told you to shut up.” Mickey brought his hand down again. He rubbed the bright splotch he’d left behind, tracing over the outline of his own fingers.

“F-fuck... oh, I’m a very, very slow learner,” Roger said, his voice shaking. “So very slow. I really wanna be good, I swear. Please.”

“You need some more, don’t you?” Mickey watched him writhe, a deep ache in his loins from knowing he could do almost anything right now, and Roger would take it and beg for another helping. “You’ve been such a naughty little slut, and you need to be punished again, don’t you?”

“Yes, master. Please!”

Mickey spanked him, a flurry of fierce smacks in rapid succession, each tearing a loud moan from Roger’s lips. Mickey couldn’t believe how easy it was to get caught up in this, and he wanted to make Roger pay for all of his offenses. He had to punish him for that foul mouth, his rampant disobedience, and only then would Roger be good enough to have Mickey’s cock.

Roger was limp, totally pliant, and he mewled softly. He was so quiet now, lured into some distant fog by Mickey’s strong hand, and Mickey thought he looked especially beautiful like this. From his naked ass covered in bright handprints to his half-lidded gaze, he was an absolute vision.

Mickey rubbed the welts he’d left on Roger’s ass, his fingers soon sliding between his cheeks and teasing over his hole. He was surprised to find him wet and dared to slip a finger in. “You fuckin’ prepped?”

“I was very optimistic when I realized it was you here, master.” Roger dropped his head and stretched his legs with a deep sigh. “You know. Be prepared. Boy Scout stuff.”

“You stupid slut.”

“You gonna fuck me now, master?” Roger arched his hips up. “I was good, wasn’t I?”

“Mmm, I suppose.”

“Remember, your Pop-pops is out there waiting. Better hurry before someone sees us.”

“God, I hate you.”

“Oh, yeah? Show me how much, master.”

Mickey fumbled for the last condom in his wallet, telling himself this was a sign that this was definitely going to be the last time. He was gonna stay away from Roger, and he could resist whatever this bizarre attraction was burning like a raging gasoline fire between them.

He let go of Roger’s arm so he could spread his reddened cheeks, lining himself up and pushing right in. He watched Roger’s hole stretch and swallow him up smoothly, closing his eyes to savor the snug heat wrapping around him.

Last fuckin’ time.

He immediately fucked Roger fast and rough, pounding through any resistance. He pushed in deep, circling his hips wide to make Roger squirm before starting right up again.

“Fuck, yes! Come on, master! Fuckin’ get it! Fuck! Fuck me!” Roger braced himself against the desk, grunting from the force of Mickey’s slams.

Mickey smacked Roger's ass, chuckling breathlessly when he clenched down on him impossibly tighter. "Oh, yeah. Fuck, just like that." He spanked him again, savoring the squeeze. "Yeah, just like that."

Roger was slowly being pushed up onto the desk, and he scrambled to keep his feet on the floor. "Ah, shit! Mmm, come on! Come the fuck—"

Slapping his hand over Roger's mouth, Mickey pulled Roger back on his dick and fucked him harder. He forced his spine to arch, his other hand grabbing Roger's hip and holding him right where he wanted him. Roger felt even fucking tighter, and his muffled cries sparked a new flurry of shivers down Mickey's spine.

Though there wasn't as much of a chance getting caught here like at the club, Mickey was still on edge knowing someone could walk in at any moment. Hell, all they would have to do is walk by the window, and they would see Mickey fucking Roger within an inch of his life.

That thought fueled every merciless thrust, and Mickey was getting close. His stomach muscles were tight, his thighs and back flexing hard as he moved. The pleasure was soon coming over him in waves, faster and faster, and his heart was pounding in his ears until it became a fantastic roar.

He gasped when Roger clenched around his dick, rhythmic and strong, and he knew he was coming. He grabbed Roger's hair and pulled, snarling, "Did I tell you that you could come? Did I? Huh?"

"No, master," Roger moaned, grinding back on Mickey's cock. "Felt too good... fuck, it was just too fuckin' good! Mmmm, I couldn't stop!"

Mickey pulled out, ripping off the condom and jerking his dick fast. "Dumb slut. You can't even follow simple fucking directions. Mm, fuck!" He growled as he came, pulsing his load all over Roger's ass. He teased his bare cock between his cheeks, groaning low as he watched his cum dribble over Roger's hole.

"Mmm... fuck... I'm sorry, master." Roger did not sound sorry at all. He was definitely smiling.

"Yeah, I bet." Mickey took a deep breath, tucking himself away and enjoying the warm buzz of his afterglow. Quickie or not, Roger was still an incredible lay, and bossing him around was as amazing as it had been before. He certainly owed Roger a punishment for coming without permission, but they didn't have time for that.

And there wasn't going to be a next time.

"God, I love your dick." Roger grinned happily, flopping against the desk with one last moan. "Fuck."

Mickey spread Roger's cheeks, feeling the scorching heat of his skin where he'd spanked him so many times as he admired how his asshole looked dripping with cum. He gave Roger a departing slap, hating how quickly reality was settling back in.

Roger had some serious explaining to do.

"Why did you come over here?" Mickey asked shortly. "Really? How did you know I was here?"

"What? I can't just miss you?"

Mickey glared.

“Whatever.” Roger rolled his eyes. He slinked off the desk and put his pants back on, not bothering to do anything about the mess between his legs. He walked to the door, but Mickey caught his arm.

“If you’re gonna be following me around, that’s gonna be a serious fucking problem,” Mickey warned. “Yeah, we had some fun, but I don’t have time for your stalker shit.”

“I live here, you dumb fuck!” Roger sighed, jerking away from him. “Okay?”

“Bullshit.”

“Don’t believe me? I’ll prove it.” Roger marched outside to the storage units with his nose in the air.

Mickey knew that couldn’t be true, but he still followed after him anyway. If nothing else, the view was nice.

Roger went back to the section where Mickey kept his grandpa’s car, but he walked around to the other side. He took a key from his pocket, opening up one of the other garage units.

Inside was a mess of boxes and dusty furniture, but a small space had been cleared for a bed and a television. There was also a mini-fridge, a lamp, and a microwave.

“Shit.” Mickey was honestly shocked Roger had been telling him the truth.

Roger flopped on the bed, tucking his arms up behind his head. “Been staying here for a little while. Heard the car crank, came out to look, saw you and the old man.”

“Why the fuck are you living in a storage unit?”

“Why not? It’s climate controlled, and the neighbors are quiet.”

“If you need a place to live, Cold would take care of you. You know he will.”

“I got a place,” Roger protested. “Right here, between my left cheek and my right cheek. Feel free to kiss it.”

“Fuck you.”

“Again? Okay, well, give me a minute.”

Mickey silently commanded his cock to stand down. “We’re done with that. We gotta work together, and I’m not doing this again.”

“Ouch.” Roger clutched his chest. “You wound me, sir. And here I was thinking about picking out wallpapers and china patterns with you.”

“Have a nice day. Bye bye now.” Mickey turned to leave.

“Hey, Mickey!”

Mickey stopped and turned back around. “What?”

“Oh, I just wanted to make sure your hearing was okay.” Roger grinned. “Seems to be working fine.”



Mickey gritted his teeth, and he stomped away with a scowl. Roger didn't try to call him back, and he returned to where Pops was still patiently waiting for him in the car.

"Hey, Michael," Pops said. "Everything go okay with your little business meeting?"

"Fine, Pops." Mickey opened the driver's side door. "You ready to go home?"

"Yeah, I'm ready. You gonna tell me if that was your vampire or not?"

"No."

"No, he's not, or no, you're not gonna tell me?"

"Both."

"You're sweaty."

"Let's go home."

Mickey helped Pops into the busted sedan and locked up the garage. The drive home was thankfully devoid of any further vampire talk, and it was easy to get Pops back into bed for a nap. Mickey finally took the shower he'd been longing for, but the itch he'd needed scratching was already sated.

Goddamn Roger.

He wondered why Roger was living in a storage unit. He recalled Cold had said something about Roger having some gambling debts he was paying off through unpleasant means. Mickey had a nasty imagination, and he suspected Roger might have been selling himself to pay the debt.

Knowing it was a Luchesi lieutenant only made him more sure. In Mickey's experience, those holier than thou big macho bigots were usually giant hypocrites. They did a good job of hiding it, was all.

So, he mused, what happened?

Roger was giving it up on the sly to some Luchesi fuckwad and Cold decided to pay off the debt? Cold had a weird knack for helping people out in a bind, but it still didn't explain where Roger was living. Cold had more than enough resources to put Roger up somewhere.

Mickey didn't get it.

He spent the rest of the day cleaning, working out, and making sure Pops took his medicine. He had to meet with Duncan tomorrow to prepare for the job, and that was another situation he didn't understand.

Something was up with Duncan. He'd been a little anxious for as long as Mickey had known him, but this was getting silly. Mickey suspected it could be nerves about the big takeover, and he needed to make sure Duncan was fully on board.

It didn't look good for him to be questioning Cold and acting like a little jackass. It was suspicious, for one, and decreased Cold's probably already dwindling confidence in him. Mickey resolved to have a long talk with Duncan tomorrow and went to bed certain everything was going to be fine.

He wasn't going to bother with Roger again, and he was gonna set Duncan straight.

Everything was going to be peachy.

When he lay down to sleep that night, his thoughts drifted toward a certain blond, and he ran his tongue over his lip.

He swore he could still feel Roger's teeth as he fell asleep.

Morning came, and he got ready for work. He fixed breakfast for Pops, sneaking in his bedroom to leave it on the bedside table without waking him. He wasn't in the mood to chat.

His mind was already starting to play the many possible scenarios ahead of him for the hit. He had to make it look good, but he couldn't actually kill Mr. Ricci.

Maybe he could nick an ear?

Quick spray of blood, non-lethal, and very convincing.

Eh, Cold probably wouldn't like that. Hitting an ear didn't qualify as missing since he'd still technically be hitting the guy, lethal or not. He continued to ponder it over on his way to the park to pick up Duncan.

Duncan hopped in the passenger seat as soon as Mickey pulled up, and he seemed to be in a better mood. He was smiling, less twitchy.

"Hey."

"Hey, Mickey. How's it going?"

"Fine. You ready?"

"Hell yeah. Let's go get ourselves ready to not kill someone!"

Mickey snorted. "Glad to see your head is back in the game."

"Yeah, I'm good." Duncan smiled weakly. "I just get a little in my head, you know? It's hard to keep my mouth shut when all these thoughts come tumbling out. I'm nervous, you know? Cold makes me nervous. All of this does. I get all worked up, and then I can't shut up—"

"Duncan. I got it."

"Right."

The office building sat directly across from the massage parlor, and the rear emergency door was broken. It would not lock nor would the alarm actually go off when it opened. The third floor was empty, and they didn't see anyone in the stairwell on the way up.

Most of the furniture was covered in plastic, and it didn't look like anyone had been here in several days.

Mickey found an office with a window facing the street. He could see the massage parlor from here, and he looked over the city skyline.

Strassen Springs.

Soon enough, it was going to be theirs.

This hit was going to bring them one step closer to driving out the Luchesi family, and Mickey couldn't wait. He could move Pops into a bigger place, one that had a garage for his girl, and maybe even a suite for a home nurse that could be there around the clock.

*I want you to meet somebody, okay? Somebody special.*

Someone to fall asleep next to, to hand him gun oil while he was cleaning his rifle, to hold his hand during a scary movie...

Roger was special, Mickey's brain unhelpfully supplied.

Yeah, the kind of special that needed a padded room and a little jacket. Fuck. He couldn't get Roger out of his damn brain, like some sort of monstrous deep-throating masochist tumor.

"Here is good," Duncan said, interrupting Mickey's thoughts. "Good, clear view of the massage parlor. Nice and quiet."

"How long is this part of the building closed?"

"At least another two weeks. We're solid. The door down there. It's what? Thirty yards?"

Mickey appraised the distance thoughtfully. "Thirty-five, I believe."

"You could almost spit on him from here."

"It's very nice. What's upstairs?"

"More offices, but they're occupied. Only this floor is empty."

"Why?"

"They're painting." Duncan gestured to the plastic everywhere. "But the contract got bought out by another company, and they don't start until Monday."

"Hmm."

"So, right here, this office, boom." Duncan shrugged. "That's pretty much it, right?"

"Yeah." Mickey glanced out the window again.

"What's wrong? You got that damn look on your face."

"What?"

"Something's bothering you. Is it the job?"

"No."

Duncan's eyes widened. "It's Roger, isn't it?"

Mickey scowled. "I will throw you right out this fuckin' window."

"It is!" Duncan cheered. "You guys hooked up again, didn't you? Ahhh, I knew it. The way you looked at him before. Yup. Called it."

"What way? There is no 'way.'"

"Mickey." Duncan was smug. "The only other thing I've seen put that look on your face is your grandpa's Nova."

"You. Window. Very soon."

"Deny it all you want," Duncan declared. "But I know you, Mickey Tamerlane. You finally got bit."

Yeah, he'd gotten bit, all right. A few times now.

"Ten seconds," Mickey sighed.

"Ten seconds?"

"Until you go out the window."

"You're so mature." Duncan grinned. "I'm just saying, I'm happy for you. It could be really good for you."

Mickey gritted his teeth. "Okay, are we done here?"

"Hot date with Roger to get to?"

Mickey narrowed his eyes, and he lunged forward as if he was going to grab Duncan.

Duncan immediately bolted.

Mickey didn't bother giving chase, instead leisurely strolling downstairs and back outside to the alley where he'd parked the car. He had no intention to run after Duncan, but he knew he could have easily caught up to him if he'd wanted to.

Breathless but triumphant, Duncan slapped the hood of the car when he saw Mickey walk out. "Ha! I win! I beat you! I survived!"

"Ah, Duncan." Mickey grinned. "If I really wanted to kill you, I would have shot you."

Duncan's smile dropped. "Fuck, why do you have to say shit like that? It's creepy."

"Let's go," Mickey scolded.

"Okay. Just don't think about shooting me again."

"Don't give me a reason." Mickey shrugged, getting back behind the wheel. "So, tomorrow, we come back, and you'll be waiting for me down here. I make the shot, close up shop, and we ride away."

"Yup." Duncan nodded. "That's it."

"Tacos?"

“Tacos.”

They got their food to go, and Mickey ordered extra for Pops. He took Duncan back to the park, reminding him, “We meet back here at three o’clock. I wanna be set up by three thirty. You hear me?”

“Heard.”

“Keep your head right. We’re almost there.”

“Get some sleep tonight, lover boy,” Duncan teased. “Big day tomorrow!”

“I should have thrown you out the window.”

\* \* \*

The Barrett M82A1 was Mickey’s rifle of choice for long distance shots. He’d tried the M107, but found he missed the weight and went back to the M82. He kept it in a discreet case, and it made his fingers itch to pack it away.

Knowing he was going to use it in a short while brought on a flood of adrenaline that made every nerve in his body sizzle.

He barely ate breakfast, and he skipped lunch. Today was the big day, and he was excited. With the job so close, he hadn’t thought much about Roger. He was too busy thinking up contingency plans in case anyone happened to walk into the office while he was there or ran into him on the stairwell.

No matter what happened, he had to make the shot.

Even if he was supposed to miss.

He checked on Pops one more time before he left, made him soup just the way he liked it, and then drove over to the park to pick up Duncan. He was right on time, and they headed over to the office building downtown. They didn’t talk much. Mickey was too focused on the mission, and Duncan knew to keep quiet.

They’d done this many times before. Duncan helped set everything up, and Mickey made the kill. It worked well for them, and today was no exception in spite of the non-lethal objective. It still had to look good, after all.

Cristian would certainly not be very happy if he found out Cold was plotting to snatch up the man he wanted dead.

Mickey parked back behind the office building as before and handed Duncan the keys. “Ready?”

“Ready,” Duncan confirmed.

“See you on the other side.” Mickey moved to get out, but Duncan caught his arm. “What?”

“You’ve always been a real good friend to me, Mickey.” Duncan smiled. “Thank you for that.”

“Uh... sure.” Mickey frowned, gently pulling his arm away. “How about we have this heart to heart after I pretend to kill someone?”

“Right, yeah. Got it.” Duncan fidgeted, quickly sliding over to take the driver’s seat. “I’ll be here.”

Mickey took the case from the trunk and headed inside through the broken emergency door. He didn’t see anyone on his way up and made it to the office they’d picked out yesterday without incident.

His phone buzzed, and he found a text message from one of Cold’s phone numbers.

*Good?*

*Good*, he texted back.

*Go.*

Mickey opened the case and reverently assembled the rifle. He took his time, making sure every piece was perfectly joined. He checked it twice before loading, and he got settled on the floor in front of the window on his stomach.

The windowsill was low enough that he could rest the barrel there, just peeking through the curtains as he peered through the scope to the streets below.

Ah, there was that sweet rush again.

It was fluttering down in Mickey’s belly and tingling over his cheeks and lips. Fake or not, the thrill of the hunt was real enough to excite him. He kept his breathing steady, his finger resting on the trigger guard as he got comfortable.

All he had to do now was wait for Mr. Ricci to make his appearance.

He was able to rest in this position for hours if he had to. Thirty minutes wasn’t going to be a problem at all. He counted them off in his head, mumbling the passing digits under his breath.

When it was three fifty-eight, he saw Mr. Ricci coming down the sidewalk toward the parlor.

A fresh surge of adrenaline made Mickey’s heart pound, and he could feel his pulse in his finger as he moved it over the trigger.

Mr. Ricci appeared nervous. He was sweating and looking around frantically. It was obvious he was expecting this. He hovered near the door, and Mickey saw his chance.

There was a lantern hanging from the front of the parlor, and it was right next to Mr. Ricci’s head. The bullet would break it, maybe hit him with some shards, and definitely scare him into dropping down right away.

Perfect.

Mickey fired.

The lantern shattered, and Mr. Ricci’s head jerked away. There was a noise, some sort of pop, and Mr. Ricci convulsed again. Blood poured down the side of his face.

The glass from the lantern must have...

Wait, no, that was too much blood.

Mickey watched in horror as Mr. Ricci collapsed dead on the sidewalk. It wasn't possible. He'd only fired one shot, and that had hit the lantern.

That popping sound...

Another sniper!

Mickey heard the first bullet hit the brick by his head, and he tried to roll out of the way. The next one struck his forearm, and he cursed loudly as he ducked beneath the window to take cover.

More bullets flew overhead, pinning him down, and he scowled angrily.

Well, this job had officially gone to shit.

## CHAPTER 8

On his back, Mickey scrambled to disassemble his rifle and put it back in the case. His position had been compromised, and the target he was supposed to not kill was now very dead.

Fantastic.

A mix of anger and panic made his muscles springy and wild, and he ran out of the office building as fast as he could.

Duncan was waiting for him in his car, engine running.

Mickey jumped in. “Drive.”

“What the fuck is wrong with you?”

“I’m fine.” Grunting with effort, he threw the gun case into the back seat. “Drive.”

“You’re bleeding, Mickey!”

“Drive!” Mickey roared.

“Okay, okay! Jesus fuck!” Duncan nearly spun tires from hitting the gas so fast, but he slowed down as he pulled out onto the street.

Mickey fumbled around in the glovebox to find some drive-thru napkins, trying to staunch the bleeding. He didn’t know how bad it was, and the blood wasn’t stopping.

“What the fuck happened?” Duncan demanded frantically. “How the fuck did you get shot? Christ, that’s a lot of blood! Mickey!”

“I took the shot. Missed like I was supposed to. Someone else shot Ricci and then shot at me.”

“What the fuck!”

“Keep driving!”

“Fucking where?”



“I don’t know! Just hang on!” Mickey tried to think through the pain. “The safe house! You got it all set up, right?”

Duncan cringed. “Okay, only kind of? I thought we’d have some time after not killing that guy, and I could do it then—”

“But there’s still medical supplies there, right? Let’s go. We gotta call Cold. This is all fucked up.”

“Here, I’ve got you.” Duncan waited until they were at a stoplight to fish his phone out of his pocket, punching buttons quickly. “I’ll put it on speaker.”

Each tinny ring made Mickey’s stomach turn. He’d never failed before, and a lick of shame compounded the physical pain he was already in.

“What?” Cold’s voice snapped.

“We got a problem,” Mickey said hurriedly.

“What’s wrong?” Cold demanded, his tone changing at once.

“We gotta meet. Now.”

“Was it done?”

“No. But also yes.”

“Explain, please.”

“I didn’t do it, like I was supposed to. Someone else did.”

“Fuck.” Cold’s voice was a snarling whisper. There was a loud crunch, and the line suddenly went dead.

“What the fuck?” Mickey stared at the phone. “Did he hang up?”

“I don’t know!” Duncan cried. “Maybe the call dropped?”

“Call him the fuck back!”

The phone rang.

“Weird,” Duncan said. “That’s Alistair’s number.”

“Pick it up!”

“Uh, hello?”

“It’s me,” Cold’s grumpy voice said. “Where are you now?”

“Driving to the safe house,” Mickey replied quickly. “Took one, okay?”

“Are you all right?” Cold sounded concerned now.

“I’m good. I can make it to the house.”

“Go. I’ll meet you there.”

Duncan hung up and put both hands back on the steering wheel. “Okay, okay, okay. I’m sure this is fine. You’re bleeding, but it’s fine. Everything is fine. Cold sounds mad as hell, but it’s okay! Everything is totally okay.”

“Duncan. Please. Shut up.”

“Shutting up.”

Duncan drove them to the safe house and helped Mickey inside. He sat him down in the living room, promising to return with the first aid kit. Mickey flopped back on the couch with a grunt, trying to keep his arm up and maintain pressure.

This was just great.

“Okay, here, I got it!” Duncan came running back in with a small white box and frantically dumped the contents out on the coffee table. There were a few alcohol wipes, a roll of gauze, and some Band-Aids.

“That’s it?”

“I’m sorry! Okay? I fuckin’ suck! I thought there was more!”

“I’m gonna die.” Mickey stared mournfully up at the ceiling. “This is how I go. Bleeding to death because all you brought me was fucking *Band-Aids*.”

“No, you’re not!” Duncan tugged at Mickey’s jacket. “Come on, let’s get this shit off, and I can totally fix it!”

Mickey was a little dizzy, and it was hard to help Duncan get his clothes out of the way. He had no idea how much blood he’d lost. They managed to get his jacket off, but when Mickey suddenly tipped forward, Duncan had to rip the sleeve of his shirt to get to the wound.

“Fuck. I’m sorry.” Mickey grunted, trying to hold himself up. He was weak, and his skin felt clammy.

“It’s okay, I got you!” Duncan swore. He pressed his hand on the wound to stop the bleeding, and he scrambled for the gauze. “Shit, shit. Okay, almost got this. Hang on, Mickey!”

The front door opened, and Cold and Alistair were there with Crybaby right behind them.

“Holy shit,” Crybaby gasped as she rushed over to Mickey’s side. “How much blood has he lost?”

“I don’t know!” Duncan snapped anxiously. “Lots?”

“Shit.”

“Hey, Boss.” Mickey was surprised his voice sounded slurred. “How’s it going?”

“Just fine, Mr. Tamerlane,” Cold said calmly. “Now, I need you to tell me what happened.”

Crybaby pushed Duncan out of her way, grabbing the gauze from his trembling hands and wrapping up Mickey’s forearm tightly.

“Took the shot. Made it look good.” Mickey made a face. He was starting to feel sick. “Someone else shot him. There was another shooter. Then they tried to take me out... had to have known... they had to have known I was there...”

“Mr. Ricci is definitely dead?”

“Very dead,” Mickey croaked.

Cold gritted his teeth and struggled to contain his fury.

“Boss, he’s bleeding bad,” Crybaby warned, her hand still clamped down on Mickey’s arm. She held it up high, and her grip never let up for a second.

“Did you see anyone?” Cold demanded, his angry gaze now zeroed in on Duncan.

“No! I was down in the car, waiting like I was supposed to!” Duncan cried. “I didn’t see shit! I heard a bunch of shots, but I didn’t know what had happened!”

“What about the ledgers? Where the fuck are they?”

“Roderick,” Alistair hissed, grabbing Cold’s shoulder. “We’ll deal with this later. Mickey is bleeding out.”

“I am?” Mickey mumbled. His lips were getting cold, and it was hard to keep his eyes open.

He wondered where Roger was, and he thought about his bright smile and his hot kisses.

Wow, he hated that guy so much.

Mickey couldn’t keep his eyes open another second. The moment he closed them, everything went black.

When he woke up, he was in bed, and there was a young woman with peroxide blonde hair in an EMT uniform checking the IV in his arm. There were two bags of fluids hanging from a coatrack next to the bedside.

“Who the fuck are you?” Mickey demanded weakly.

“I’m Madeline Queen, and I just saved your life,” she drawled. “Good thing Cold had us coming by to drop off a dead body he suddenly didn’t want anymore. You would have been corpse number two.”

That’s right, Mickey realized. The paramedics on Cold’s payroll were supposed to bring Mr. Ricci here. It was a solid plan, when the guy was still alive at least.

“The bullet nicked an artery, but it will heal,” she went on briskly. “If anyone had bothered trying to put a tourniquet on you, you wouldn’t have gone into shock.”

Mickey’s head still felt fuzzy, and he tried to focus on Queen. “You a doctor or somethin’?”

She smirked. “Not yet.”

Mickey sat up. “Okay, almost-doctor lady, I need to see Cold. Now.”

"I'm here," Cold said, standing up from where he'd been sitting in a chair by the foot of the bed.

"Boss!" Mickey grunted as Queen pushed him back down. "Hey! Watch it!"

"Don't move," Queen ordered fearlessly. "You need to rest." She turned to address Cold. "I've patched up his arm and given him some fluids to stabilize him, but he's going to be weak for a few days."

"I appreciate your help, Miss Queen," Cold said politely.

"Money is an excellent way to show appreciation."

"So it is." Cold smirked. "Mr. Star will take care of you."

"Thank you." Queen shook Cold's hand. "A pleasure, Mr. Legrand."

"Always, Miss Queen."

Queen shut the bedroom door behind her, leaving Cold and Mickey alone.

"I don't care what she says, Boss," Mickey said. "I'm fine. I'll be up in no time."

"Take Miss Queen's orders as if they were mine," Cold said firmly. "You're no good to me dead."

"Understood, Boss."

"I'm glad you're all right." Cold approached the side of the bed. He hesitated before adding, "I was worried."

"I'm good." Mickey appreciated the concern, but he knew they had much bigger problems to worry about. "What's going on? Anything on the second shooter?"

"No. Cristian is pleased Mr. Ricci is dead, and I was able to recover the ledgers, thanks to Miss Queen and her fellow paramedics. It will take some time to decipher them."

"Written in some kinda secret code?"

"Something like that. It's a cypher that Pym is writing a program to break as we speak. May take some time, but we'll get what we need."

"Good." Mickey closed his eyes. "How long have I been out?"

"Only a few hours. It's ten minutes after eight o'clock."

"Fuck. Do we know what the hell happened? Who was the other shooter?"

"Cristian may have been testing us. You're being credited for the kill, so it's difficult to say if he had a hand in it or not."

"What about his other brother? Luigi? Think he would have sent another shooter?"

"He would have just as much reason to kill Mr. Ricci as Cristian, although you're well known for your success rate. It seems redundant to have sent someone else if he already knew what Cristian was doing."

“If he knew.”

“True. But to attack at the same time and then take a shot at you?” Cold shook his head. “Luigi may have been trying to send a message. I’m sure he’s not pleased we’re working with his brother.”

“Or Cristian is fucking with us.”

“Both scenarios are possible, but that means there’s a rat.”

The word made Mickey shiver. “A snitch?”

“Either someone in Cristian’s camp leaked it to Luigi’s, or someone in ours told Cristian I wasn’t going to kill Mr. Ricci. Or, again, this was a test independently created by Cristian we’ve just failed.”

“So, what the fuck do we do?”

“Nothing. We wait, we watch, and we keep moving forward.” Cold’s lips twitched up in a smile. “Meanwhile, Cristian has rewarded me with a new piece of property for a job well done. The Gentlemen now own La Belle et la Bête.”

“What’s that?”

“It used to be a theater. I’m going to turn it into something a bit more profitable.” Cold tilted his head. “In time, that is. We still have a city to take.”

Mickey tried to sit up again. “Okay, what can I do, Boss?”

“You will rest,” he commanded. “Everything else is going according to plan. Officer Carville is going to discover an unprecedented amount of cocaine later this evening, and he will be on the front page by tomorrow morning.”

“Money is out, drugs are done. What’s next then, Boss?”

Cold smiled. It was not a nice smile. “Get some rest, Mickey. I’ll send Duncan over to check on your grandfather, all right?”

“Thanks, Boss.” Mickey wanted to argue, but he was honestly too damn tired. “Everybody else okay?”

“Yes.” Cold stepped to the door. “Crybaby is going to stay here with you tonight. You can go home tomorrow and get cleaned up. Then I want both of you to meet me back at the club so we can discuss the next move with the others. Twelve o’clock sharp.”

“You got it, Boss.”

Cold watched Mickey thoughtfully for a few moments before finally taking his leave.

“Fuck,” Mickey cursed out loud to a now empty room.

This was a disaster.

Cold was as calm as ever, but Mickey's guts were churning. If any of the Luchesi family knew what Cold and the Gentlemen were up to, all of this could come crashing down.

Everything they were working for would be over.

Cold's suggestion that there might be a rat was also troubling. He couldn't imagine any of the Gentlemen betraying Cold, and he immediately decided it had to be someone working for one of the Luchesi brothers.

Now that he was awake, he couldn't get back to sleep, and he was restless. He managed to sit up and disconnect the IV, stumbling weakly toward the bathroom. He had no idea where his shirt was but at least he had pants on.

No sooner had he unzipped, there was a knock at the bathroom door.

"Hey! Mickey! You're supposed to be in bed!" Crybaby bellowed.

"I'm takin' a piss! Christ!"

"Hurry up and get your ass back in bed. Cold told me to keep an eye on you!"

"Yeah, yeah." Mickey finished using the bathroom and washed up, being mindful of the new bandages on his left arm. It throbbed distantly, and he suspected Queen had given him something to dull the pain.

His reflection was gaunt and tired, and he scowled.

He looked like shit.

Emerging from the bathroom, he protested, "I'm fine. I don't need to be babysat, okay?"

Crybaby crossed her thick arms and did not look convinced. "Yeah, sure. Now, how about you get your ass back under the covers?"

"Or, option B, I go downstairs and make a damn drink."

"No fuckin' way."

"I got shot. I deserve alcohol."

"You almost bled to death. Alcohol is the last fuckin' thing you need. Now, get back in bed before I make you."

Mickey sized up Crybaby's broad build and knew he couldn't fight back in his weakened state. He trudged back to bed, grumbling, "This is bullshit."

"Yeah, yeah. Go on, princess. Want me to fluff your pillows for you?"

"Get fucked, Crybaby." Mickey groaned as he collapsed back on the mattress. "And thank you."

"What for?"

"I remember you trying to help me. Before I passed out."

“Yeah. No problem.” Crybaby shrugged. “We’re family. It’s what we do.”

Mickey sighed. “And everybody else is okay?”

“Yeah, me and Jules got the drug sting set up nice and pretty. Guess there’s no harm tellin’ ya now that it’s done.”

“Ah, so that was you guys?”

“Yeah. We’d just finished up and was talkin’ with Cold and Alistair when you and Duncan called. Came here as fast as we could.”

“Where’s Jules?”

“Doin’ Jules stuff. Cold sent him on a special errand as soon as we heard the hit that wasn’t a hit went bad.”

“Cold told you, I guess.”

“Yeah, he did. Cold left to go see Pym, see if he’s makin’ any progress with those ledgers. Jerry and Alistair are with them.”

Mickey nodded.

That accounted for all the Gentlemen.

There was absolutely no one else to ask about.

No one at all.

Before he’d passed out, Mickey knew his last conscious thoughts had been about Roger. He could see his smile in his mind’s eye. He tried to resist asking about him, but the compulsion to know was overwhelming his judgment.

“Is Roger all right?”

“Yeah, he’s okay.” Crybaby looked unusually smug. “He’s asked about you. Wanted to make sure you weren’t dead.”

“How thoughtful of him.”

“He’s asked about you a few times, actually.”

“Huh.” Mickey fidgeted.

“Roger’s a good friend of mine, you know.”

“That fuckin’ nut bag has friends?”

“Yeah. He used to come by my lady’s bakery like clockwork.” Crybaby smirked. “Broke in once when we were closed for Christmas.”

“The fuck?”

“He really likes tiramisu. Took it personally when he couldn’t have any. Helped himself to a slice, left money on the counter with a fuckin’ Christmas card.”

Mickey actually laughed. “He really is fuckin’ nuts.”

“He’s, mm, unique.”

“Huh. I’m guessing you’re the one who told Cold about his little Luchesi situation then? Since you’re such good friends and all.”

“I maybe knew we all had some common interests and made some introductions, yeah.”

“Did you know he’s living in a fuckin’ storage unit?”

“Yeah, I know.”

“Why?”

“Salvatore Luchesi.”

Mickey knew the name, but he was drawing a blank.

“The fucker Alistair banned from Slick Rick’s for getting too rough with the dancers.”

“I thought that asshole’s name was Marco.”

“Wrong asshole. Salvatore is Cristian’s guy. He’s the lieutenant Roger was fuckin’ to pay off his debts.”

Mickey’s chest tightened, and he felt a strange flash of anger. He couldn’t pinpoint the cause, and he blamed his recent blood loss for the odd feeling.

“Salvatore actually came by Slick Rick’s lookin’ for Roger yesterday,” Crybaby went on. “Which tells me Roger ain’t been anywhere near home for him to find.”

*Yeah, because he’s been hiding out at the damn storage unit,* Mickey thought to himself. He figured Crybaby already knew that, but he didn’t want to explain how he’d found out. “Cold know?”

Crybaby rolled her eyes.

“Of course he knows,” Mickey said, realizing what a dumb question it was to ask.

“Who the fuck do you think told Salvatore to ever so politely fuck off?”

“Got it.”

“Cold paid Salvatore off, but that bastard still wants him some Roger.”

“Well, fuck that. He can’t have him.” Mickey’s sudden anger caught him off guard. “Roger doesn’t belong to him. He’s a Gentleman now.”

“Oh, sure.” Crybaby smiled smugly. “That’s totally it.”

Mickey glared.



“You want me to tell Roger to come by?”

“No,” Mickey said immediately. “I’m fine.”

“Right.” Crybaby was still grinning when she left, and she called back over her shoulder, “You holler if you change your mind!”

Mickey would absolutely not change his mind, and he fought to get comfortable. There wasn’t anything else he could do except rest now and think about what Cold had said.

They might have a rat in the house.

That wasn’t a good feeling, but he was sure none of the Gentlemen would betray Cold. Then again, he mused, Cold and Alistair had been fighting because Alistair didn’t like what Cold was doing. Maybe it was him.

Roger was their newest member, but he’d just gotten away from the Luchesi family. While it could be part of an elaborate ruse, Roger came off as way too spontaneous to be part of any complicated plan.

Jules had grown up with Cold, and he didn’t seem like the type to turn heel. Pym was only a kid, Jerry was fiercely devoted to Cold, and Crybaby didn’t seem like the turning type either.

Duncan...?

No. No way. Duncan was a nervous wreck lately, but he wouldn’t do something like that. It wouldn’t only be Cold he’d be betraying; it would be Mickey too.

He couldn’t fathom his friend doing that to him.

Still, he was left with a dreadful lump in his gut, and it was there the next morning when he woke up. He was weak, but he was able to get out of bed and walk downstairs to find Crybaby.

She was passed out on the couch with a box of pizza in her lap and a gun in her hand.

Cautiously, he whispered, “Hey, Crybaby.”

She jerked awake, her gun pointed at Mickey. “Huh?”

“Hey.” Mickey held his hands up. “Just me.”

“Right.” She lowered her gun and rubbed her eyes. “Hey. You ready to go?”

Mickey gestured to his shirtless torso. “We got any clothes here?”

“No. I’ll drive you over to your place so you can get cleaned up.”

“What time is it?”

“Hungry?” Crybaby offered the pizza box.

“I’m good.”

“It’s like ten. You slept for a while.”

“I’ll eat later. We’re supposed to meet Cold at Slick Rick’s by noon. Let’s get going.”

Crybaby shrugged and stuffed a slice of cold pizza in her mouth. “All right, let’s hit it.”

They took Crybaby’s truck, a 1950’s Ford that had seen better days, over to Mickey’s place. Mickey got a shower, a change of clothes, and checked in with Pops.

Pops was drowsy but made sure to scold Mickey for worrying him and tell him to thank Duncan for bringing him dinner.

“He’s a good boy,” Pops said with a yawn. “Why don’t you date him, huh?”

“I’m going to blame your pain killers for asking me that,” Mickey drawled, leaning down to kiss Pop’s forehead. “Get some rest, old man.”

“Is he not your type? Do you like bears?”

“How do you even know what that is?”

“We got cable now.”

“Later, Pops.”

Mickey felt better now he was clean and wearing fresh clothes, having settled on a black suit with a mandarin style jacket. It was a gift from Cold, not something he normally would have chosen for himself, but he wanted to look good.

It had absolutely nothing to do with seeing Roger.

His arm was still throbbing beneath the bandages and trying to keep it dry while he showered had been a pain in the ass. He didn’t like feeling weak, and he wanted to look as strong as possible when meeting up with the rest of the crew.

Nothing to do with Roger.

When he and Crybaby pulled up to Slick Rick’s, there were a surprising number of cars in the parking lot. Mickey recognized his beat up car, Jules’ El Camino, and the rest of the Gentlemen’s rides, but there were also a handful of shiny black sedans.

The Luchesi family was here.

“Fuckin’ great,” Crybaby mumbled. “What the fuck are they doing here?”

“I dunno.” Mickey’s trigger finger twitched. “You said Salvatore came by asking about Roger, right?”

“Yeah. Maybe he went crying to his mommy after Cold made him look like a bitch.”

“Let’s go see.”

Side by side, they marched through the front doors of Slick Rick’s. There were unfamiliar men in suits crowded around the bar, and Jules and Jerry were standing guard by the office door. Pym was making a drink behind the bar, and Duncan was biting his nails in the corner.

Mickey didn't see the other Gentlemen, including Roger.

"Hey," Jules grunted. "Welcome to the party, guys."

Mickey tilted his head in greeting, but his eyes moved to the Luchesi men. There were six of them, two shots each, twelve bullets. He could probably take out three, maybe four, before needing to take cover if he had to. He stared each one down until they couldn't meet his hateful sneer before taking his place next to Duncan.

"Cold is in there with Alistair, Cristian, and Cristian's captain, Stefano," Duncan mumbled. "They just showed up out of fuckin' nowhere."

"It's fine," Mickey said firmly. "We got this."

"But why are they here?" Duncan whispered. He was twitching. "Do you think it's because of—"

"Shut up," Mickey snapped. "Calm down. Okay?"

"Okay." Duncan kept chewing on his nails.

Mickey was content to wait here and continue to stare down the Luchesi goons, but then he heard something coming from the dance floor. He turned his head to glance over there, and he was instantly frozen in place.

It was Roger.

Roger was up in one of the cages, lazily spinning around the pole inside even though there was no music playing. He was fully dressed, and yet that didn't detract from the sensuality of his performance.

He dropped down on his heels and rose back up, his spine curling gracefully as he took another spin. He clung to the pole, twirling around before seeming to realize he had an audience. He grinned right at Mickey and waved.

Mickey made a face, but he didn't look away.

His heart was beating faster, and he loved how Roger was looking at him, those bright blue eyes tracking him from head to toe. Mickey was definitely pleased with the outfit he had chosen because he could not get enough of Roger's hungry gaze.

Even with the ache in his arm, he felt good. He couldn't explain the sense of peace coming over him, but it felt like everything was going to work out. They'd find the rat, get through whatever shit this was with Cristian, take over the damn city, and Mickey would fuck Roger, and...

Wait, what?

Mickey suddenly felt a hand on his shoulder, and he reached for his guns.

"Oh, look! It's the little Shadow," a man's voice mocked right in his ear. "Aren't you just fuckin' cute?"

Mickey drew, whirling around to point his weapons right in the man's sneering face.

It was Salvatore Luchesi, in all his hulking glory. He was almost as big as Jules but twice as ugly. His breath was also atrocious.

“So, tell me, Mickey,” Salvatore spat, fearlessly staring down Mickey’s guns, “why’d you fuck up that hit on Ricci yesterday, huh?”

## CHAPTER 9

“The only thing that got fucked yesterday was probably your mother,” Mickey drawled, unflinching. “I did my job.”

The office door had opened, and Cold and Alistair were closing in on them. Salvatore must have been in with them and Cristian and Stefano.

“Did you?” Salvatore snorted. “I heard witnesses down on the ground say there were actually two shooters.”

“I heard your mother was real busy that day. Does that mean it’s true?”

The air was becoming tense, and Mickey saw a few of the Luchesi men reaching for their weapons. The Gentlemen responded in kind, and the energy was quickly turning foul.

“You got some fuckin’ nerve, freak. The fuck exactly are you trying to say, huh?”

“Mr. Tamerlane,” Cold warned.

“I’m trying to tell you that your mother is a whore,” Mickey quipped.

“You fuckin’ piece of—!” Salvatore raged.

“Salvatore!” Cristian bellowed. “Enough!”

Salvatore glared, but he finally backed off.

Mickey didn’t move, keeping his guns up until he saw Cold nod. Only then did he return them to their holsters, and he smiled sweetly at Salvatore.

“I said that I expected everyone to be on their best behavior while we were here,” Cristian chastised. “You were not exempt from my orders. Now that you’ve made an ass out of yourself, let’s go.”

“It’s no trouble,” Cold said smoothly. “We’re friends, after all. Thank you for coming by.”

“Sorry again for not telling you,” Cristian said. “I didn’t mean to catch you off guard.”

“You didn’t.” Cold’s pleasant expression didn’t falter. “That’s part of my job. To expect the unexpected.”

“Well, you take care now. I appreciate all of your support.”

“Of course.”

Cristian waved his hand, and his men began to depart. The atmosphere relaxed as they left, but Salvatore lingered.

Roger had stepped out of the cage, scowling as Salvatore stared him down.

“I’m just gonna go talk to my buddy Roger real fast,” Salvatore said with a nasty smile. “We go way back, you know. I’ve missed him a lot.”

“We’re all friends here, right?” Cristian shrugged. “Go ahead. But make it quick.”

Salvatore tried to push by Mickey, but Mickey didn’t move.

“No,” Mickey said firmly.

“Excuse me?” Salvatore bowed up.

Fuck.

Well, too late to back down now.

“Do we need to go back to how your mother’s a sloppy whore again?” Mickey grinned. He felt a familiar tingle of adrenaline, and no matter how much his arm throbbed, he wanted to punch Salvatore right in his nasty face.

No, that would hurt his arm more.

He should shoot him.

There, now that was a good idea.

“Fuck you, you little fuckin’ snake,” Salvatore growled. “I got some unfinished business with him. Now fuck off.”

Mickey turned his head to call back to Roger. “You wanna talk to this fuck?”

“I’d rather stick rusty pins under my toenails,” Roger said cheerfully. “How’s that?”

“I think you need to go,” Mickey taunted.

“Fuckin’ move.” Salvatore grabbed Mickey’s arm right *there* where he’d been shot.

It took every ounce of Mickey’s willpower not to show any sign of pain, and he had a gun pointed back at Salvatore’s head in a blink. “Let go before I drop you.”

“Cold?” Cristian snapped, gesturing toward the unfolding scene.

“Control your man.” Cold sounded bored.

“Or what?” Cristian countered.

“Or he’s going to get himself killed.” Cold’s expression hardened. “Maybe I’ll shoot him myself. Good friends don’t behave like this. I’ve already relieved Mr. Lorre of his financial obligations, and it doesn’t sound like he wants to chat. I would hate to ruin what we’ve worked so hard for because you can’t keep one disruptive man on his leash.”

“Salvatore,” Cristian snarled suddenly. “Back off. Now.”

Salvatore did not look pleased, but he let go of Mickey’s arm and stepped away. He threw a nasty glare toward Roger, warning, “I’m not done with you.”

“Well, he’s done with you,” Mickey challenged. “Go say hi to your mom for me.”

“Mr. Tamerlane,” Cold cautioned.

“Take care, Cold,” Cristian said shortly. “We’ll be in touch.” He and Stefano ushered Salvatore out, and the bar finally felt safe again.

“Fuckers,” Mickey spat under his breath.

“Can’t wait for them all to leave for fuckin’ good,” Jules agreed.

“Soon,” Cold soothed.

Roger slinked up to Mickey’s side and kissed his cheek. “My hero!”

“Get the fuck off me,” Mickey grumbled, instantly aghast and hating how his face got hot.

The bartender finally poked his head out from where he’d been hiding behind the counter. “Uh, am I good to open, Mr. Star?”

“Go ahead,” Alistair replied. “Everything is fine now.”

“Come along, Gentlemen.” Cold waved for them to gather back in the office. “We have much to discuss.”

As they filed inside, Mickey made a point not to sit next to Roger.

Cold took his place at the head of the table, and Alistair and Jules sat to his left and his right. Roger sat beside Alistair, and Mickey quickly took the chair next to Jules.

A nauseated looking Pym hunkered down at the desk behind Cold, and Jerry and Crybaby took the last two seats at the table. Duncan went to the couch since there was nowhere else to sit.

“The first order of business is the hit,” Cold said. “Per Cristian’s command, we were tasked with killing Delgado Ricci because of his support for Matteo. My intention was to spare Mr. Ricci to gain valuable access to the Luchesi family’s personal finances. Mickey was going to miss, we were going to fake Mr. Ricci’s death, and then keep him safely tucked away until this was all over. However, that did not happen. There was a second assassin, and he or she killed Mr. Ricci. They also tried to kill Mickey.”

Roger frowned over at Mickey in what may have been concern.

“How did this other killer know about the hit?” Jerry demanded. “You didn’t even tell all of us what was going on.”

“There’s a rat,” Jules grunted. “Gotta be.”

“Someone in Cristian’s camp may have told Luigi,” Cold said. “Matteo had no reason to kill Mr. Ricci, not when he was openly supporting his claim. Luigi may have wanted his man to get credit for the kill. More likely, Cristian was testing us. He knows what a valuable and dangerous asset Mr. Ricci would have been alive and in the wrong hands.”

“You mean in our hands, yeah?” Jules snorted.

“Precisely.”

“What do we do now?” Duncan asked nervously. “Cristian knows. He has to. He is gonna know we fucked up. He’s gonna know what we’re doing.”

“No, he’s not.” Cold shook his head. “We say nothing. Mr. Tamerlane will still take credit for the hit, and we move on.”

“That’s it?” Mickey frowned.

“Cristian wanted Mr. Ricci dead. Now he’s dead.”

“Is that what the surprise meeting was about? That fucker Salvatore seemed real eager to jump on my dick about not actually killing Ricci.”

“Cristian had some concerns regarding some rumors he’d heard. I did my best to put them at ease so we can continue working together.”

“He totally fuckin’ knows, doesn’t he?”

“Most likely.” Cold shrugged. “But right now he needs us. As long as Matteo and Luigi are both still fighting him for the city, he can’t afford to lose our support.”

“Even if he knows we’re trying to fuck him over?” Duncan asked miserably.

“A temporary problem that will soon have a permanent solution,” Cold replied. “Now, the drug sting. As planned, Strassen Springs’ finest recovered a very impressive amount of illegal drugs and made several arrests. Officer Carville is looking at a promotion and is very grateful for the little boost we gave him.”

“Carville ate it the fuck up.” Crybaby cackled. “He was happier than a pig in shit. Literally. ’Cause you know, he’s a pig. He’s already working on tracking down two more distribution hubs right here in the city limits.”

“Excellent.”

“He’s holding Marco Luchesi and a few others on charges,” Crybaby said. “They’re gonna have their arraignments tomorrow. Thought you might wanna know.”



“Well.” Cold’s upper lip twitched. “I will look into that. Can’t have a prize specimen like Marco locked up. Someone should make sure he makes bail.”

“I’ll call him,” Alistair said quietly.

“Him who?” Duncan asked.

“Later.” Cold held up his hand. “We’ve dealt a substantial blow to the Luchesi family’s operations, but there is still much to do. The ledgers have revealed a particularly lucrative opportunity I believe we are going to take advantage of.”

“What is it, Boss?” Jerry lit up a cigarette. “More drugs?”

“Even better. Guns.” Cold smiled wickedly. “Matteo is expecting a very large shipment of weapons. We’re going to relieve him of it.”

“Fuckin’ awesome,” Crybaby cheered. “Let’s do it.”

“Oh, we will,” Cold promised. “You, Mr. Tamerlane, Mr. Gill, and Mr. Lorre will be going.”

Mickey made a face hearing he was going to be working with Roger again.

“And why not me?” Jerry protested.

“Because you’re going to be quite busy with something else,” Cold replied. “You and Jules are going to create a murder weapon for us.”

“Eh?”

“They haven’t recovered the knife that killed Don Rafaello. I need you to make one that will pass as the weapon that killed him.”

Jerry seemed confused by the request, but he nodded. “As you wish, *Monsieur* Cold.”

“Officer Carville should be more than willing to get you the specifics you’ll need to make a fitting stand-in.”

“Of course.”

“What do we need a murder weapon for?” Duncan raised his brows.

“For a murder conviction, obviously,” Cold said with a strange smile.

“Mind your business,” Jules grunted at Duncan. “We got this.”

“Hurry along now. I’ll need it fairly soon, if you’d be so kind.” Cold glanced back to Pym. “Take a break. And stay away from the bar.”

“One beer!” Pym fussed.

“It was six beers,” Alistair corrected, “and you got sick.”

“I made it to the bathroom!” Pym grumbled sullenly.

“But you missed,” Cold pointed out. “Try again in a few years. In the meantime, go. Get something to eat.”

Pym scowled, but he obediently got up from the computer. “Yes, Boss.”

“Good luck, Gentlemen.” Jerry gave them a little salute, moving to the door and holding it open for Pym and Jules to leave first. He said something in French and winked at Cold.

Cold smirked, replying a few words back.

“You speak French now?” Alistair sounded surprised.

“I’m learning.”

“It needs some serious work.”

Cold rolled his eyes. He waited for the door to shut before beginning again, “The weapons are coming in tonight at the Strassen Springs Pork Plant. They will be arriving in a refrigerated truck disguised as a shipment of meat at precisely nine o’clock. According to the ledger, they are to be unloaded at dock number three.”

“Don’t suppose it happened to say how many men we should be expecting?” Mickey asked hopefully.

“In fact, it does. Mr. Ricci did not care for electronic communication and instead kept records of everything on paper. There should be four men with two vans waiting to accept the delivery. The plant workers and the truck driver are meant to take an extended break while the Luchesi men unload the guns.”

“Damn, that’s some really good ledger,” Roger remarked. “So, that’s it? Us against four Luchesi punks who don’t even know we’re gonna be comin’?”

“That’s right,” Cold replied, “but that’s no reason to be careless or arrogant. Matteo could have easily increased the number of men, and we would have no way of knowing.”

“So, we’re packing heavy then?” Mickey leaned forward.

“Yes.”

“Excellent.” Mickey was eager to get back to work. The pain in his arm disagreed, but he ignored it.

“Alistair has the map of the plant and the parking lot layout for everyone to review,” Cold went on. “I want everyone to memorize at least two different escape routes in case anything goes wrong.”

“You expectin’ it to get that rough?” Crybaby scowled. “Come on. We can handle this.”

“I want you all to be safe,” Cold said firmly. “Cristian is already suspicious, and I can certainly guarantee Matteo is on guard as well. The war we’ve started is about to get very messy, and I would prefer it not to be our blood being spilled.”

“Can do,” Roger chirped. “Spill the other guys’ blood. All over that.”

“Take some time and review the layout and the rest of the plan with Alistair.” Cold stood. “I’m going to meet with someone who’s going to help us.”

“Alone?” Alistair sounded annoyed.

“Yes. As per his request.” Cold eyed Alistair. “He has Judge Olden in his pocket. The same Judge Olden who will most likely be presiding over the arraignments tomorrow morning.”

That apparently meant something because Alistair backed off, but he still looked perturbed. “Fine.”

“I trust that Alistair can get you all up to speed before my return,” Cold said briskly. “I’ll be here to see you off and meet you all back at the safe house where you can drop off the guns once you have them. Any questions?”

Silence.

“Until then, Gentlemen.” Cold left without another word.

“Well, then.” Alistair shifted over to Cold’s chair, reaching back to pull some papers off the desk behind him to spread out on the table. “Let’s get to it, shall we?”

The layout of the plant was fairly simple. A chain link fence with barbed wire surrounded the entire property, and there were only two ways in.

One was at the front of the plant for visitors and administrative employees, a simple gate that was only big enough for small vehicles to pass through. The second entrance was down a wide road that led around to the back of the plant where the loading docks were. It was a much more sizable gate built to allow semi-trucks through, and there was a security station with guards posted at all times.

“Except at nine o’clock tonight,” Alistair said. “The guards will be taking a break along with the rest of the men who work the docks.”

“And that’s when the Luchesi guys will be sneaking in?” Crybaby asked. “What are we going to do? Follow them in?”

“No, you’ll already be there,” Alistair replied. “The plant often has an issue with coolant leaking from their refrigeration units. After generously donating to one of the plant’s night supervisors, we have gotten a work permit for a team to come check out the equipment.”

“But these guys get paid to look the other way for the Luchesis,” Roger pointed out with a frown. “How do we know this supervisor isn’t gonna snitch?”

“Because he’s loyal to Cold. His son is our boy, Galavant. And from what I understand, he’s now dating our bartender, Patrick.”

“Long live the gay fuckin’ mafia.” Roger cackled.

“So, we get in, we pretend to fix whatever the fuck is broken, and we wait for the very special truck?” Mickey interjected.

“Yes,” Alistair confirmed. “The dock workers and the truck driver will be gone as soon as he parks, leaving you with the four Luchesi men, two vans, and a lot of guns.”

“Four men that we know of.”

“Yes.”

“Fuck it.” Mickey snorted. “Can’t wait.”

“You’re more than welcome to take the day. Rest up. Get ready. But all of you need to be back here by eight o’clock sharp.”

“What time is Cold gonna be back?” Crybaby asked.

“I don’t know,” Alistair replied honestly. “But I do know he’ll be here by eight.”

“Got it.”

“If you’d be so kind, Crybaby, I need you to run a quick errand for us. I’ve got a local repair shop that’s willing to let us borrow a van and some uniforms for the night.”

“I love borrowing things.” Crybaby grinned. “Who’s the repair shop guy dating, huh? The bouncer? Our liquor distributor?”

“No.” Alistair frowned as he handed Crybaby a business card. “They’re a high quality HVAC repair company that enjoys bribes.”

“Right. Okay then, I’ll see you guys later.”

Mickey waved, and he stood to take his leave as well. “Be back soon.”

“Where are you going?” Duncan piped up.

“Home,” Mickey replied shortly. “Why? You wanna come over and fuckin’ cuddle?”

“I would love to if he’s not interested,” Roger teased.

“Fuck off.” Mickey walked out of the office, and he shouldn’t have been surprised Roger was following him.

The bar had some patrons now, a handful of regulars crowding along the counter. They all politely looked the other way when Mickey came out.

Roger was right behind him, and he reached for Mickey’s arm. “Hey, can we talk for a second?”

“Don’t fuckin’ touch me,” Mickey warned, smacking his hand away. “I told you we were done, remember? I don’t have anything else to say to you.”

Roger’s handsome face twisted up in anger, and he immediately shoved Mickey. “Well, fuck you too, asshole!”

Mickey had to get away from him as quickly as possible. Seeing Roger worked up was waking up all the wrong feelings, and he could sense a fight brewing—maybe something else.

“This is what I get for fuckin’ a goddamn bitch,” Roger raged on. “Fuck, you’re so pathetic. I can’t believe I actually thought... no, fuck you!”

“Fuck you!” Mickey bellowed back. He didn’t even fully understand what they were fighting about right now, but he was pissed.

“Fine! It’s totally fine! I don’t need you!” Roger looked over the men at the bar, picking the man closest to him and sliding right into his lap.

“Uh, hello?” the man said, his hands awkwardly latching onto Roger’s hips. “Can, can I help you?”

“Do you think I’m attractive?” Roger demanded. “Do you wanna fuck me?”

“Wah...? I... uh...” The man looked between Roger and Mickey, clearly flustered. “Yes, you’re very nice looking, but... uh...”

“What? You’re afraid of *him*?” Roger scoffed and stroked the man’s chest. “Don’t worry about him. He doesn’t give a shit. He’s a fuckin’ bitch.”

Mickey needed to walk away immediately. There was absolutely no reason for him to stay. They had an important and dangerous mission ahead of them tonight, and he had nothing to prove to Roger or anyone else here.

But he was pissed.

And seeing Roger all over that other man was making his eye twitch.

His thoughts were consumed with putting Roger in his place and teaching him a lesson.

No one called the Shadow a *bitch*.

He grabbed Roger up by the back of his neck, dragging him out of the man’s lap and pushing him face first up against the bar. The man and the other patrons scrambled out of his way, and the bartender backed away to the end of the counter.

Roger struggled, trying to whip his head back like a caged animal, but Mickey didn’t let go. Even when Roger kicked him, he didn’t budge for a moment. He twisted Roger’s arm up behind his back, forcing him to bend over the bar.

“Let go of me!” Roger barked. “You don’t give a shit, remember? No shits given?”

“You’re right. I absolutely don’t. But nobody fuckin’ talks to me that way and gets away with it. Nobody.”

“Ooo, tough guy!” Roger sneered, bucking up defiantly. “And what are you gonna do, huh? Talk some more?”

Mickey’s hand swung down and collided with Roger’s ass so hard that Roger’s knees smacked the underside of the bar.

“I’m gonna teach you a fuckin’ lesson in manners,” Mickey hissed, spanking Roger again. “You’re being really fuckin’ rude right now, and I ain’t havin’ it.”

Roger hissed out a sharp breath between his teeth, and he dropped his head down on the bartop. “Ah, fuck.”

Mickey's arm was throbbing where he'd been shot, and the rhythm grew as his excitement surged. He was consumed with the urgent need to punish Roger, and he didn't give a fuck who saw him.

He reached around Roger's side, deftly unbuttoning his jeans and yanking them down in the back to expose his naked ass. His skin was absolutely pristine, unmarked, and Mickey could not wait to spank him right here in front of everyone.

"Of course you're not wearing anything else." Mickey scoffed. "You little slut."

"Stop!" Roger was absolutely writhing, still trying to break away. "Mickey, don't do this! Not here! Please, not like this!"

"What's wrong, Roger?" Mickey taunted. "You don't want everybody to see what a slut you are?" He leaned in close. "Trust me, I think they already know."

"Fuck you, Mickey," Roger whined.

Mickey rubbed Roger's exposed ass, enjoying how cool and smooth his skin was. He was going to fix that soon enough, and he hoped Roger was totally humiliated. He wanted a lesson that was going to stick inside that beautiful thick skull, and he raised his hand up.

"God, you're such a—ah! Bastard!" He cried out when Mickey struck bare skin. "Fuck!"

"You owe me a fuckin' sincere apology," Mickey snapped, grabbing a handful of Roger's ass where he'd smacked him, heat blossoming beneath his fingers. "Right now."

The whole bar was watching them, and Mickey couldn't explain the new thrill coursing through him. Alistair was hovering by the door of the office and couldn't look away, and Mickey liked it. He liked knowing everyone was watching him put Roger in his place.

"I'm sorry..." Roger groaned, arching his hips up. "I'm so sorry... for never replacing the toilet paper when it's out. The empty roll on the holder? That's me. That's totally me."

Mickey spanked him again, switching to the other cheek and listening to him cry out with great satisfaction. Roger's perfect ass was now lit up with brilliant handprints, and Mickey much preferred it this way.

"Wanna try again, smartass?"

"I'm sorry for... mmm... I'm sorry for eating the last Twinkie... and not throwing away the box."

Mickey popped him.

"Fuck! Mmm. I'm sorry for parking and, and taking up two spaces!"

Mickey spanked him again, his pulse skyrocketing from how Roger moaned and bucked in reply. He had to be hard, Mickey knew it, and he dipped his hand down to grab at Roger's cock still trapped in his pants.

Oh, hard. Very hard.

Mickey leaned in close to whisper in Roger's ear, "I should pull your dick out right here, let them all see what a little whore you are for this shit."

"Mmm... no..." Roger shook his head. "You fuckin' wouldn't!"

"You don't ever get to tell me what I would or would not fuckin' do." Mickey palmed Roger's cock and smacked his hand across the shaft through his pants.

Roger moaned, his back arching instantly. "Oh, fuck! Mickey! No, no, don't do that! I'll be good, I promise!"

"The fuck you will." Mickey spanked Roger's cock again, daring to use more force.

"Ohhh, fuck! Mickey!" Roger slapped the top of the bar with his free hand, and his shoulders shook. "Mm, fuck!"

Mickey's cock was getting hard just from listening to how Roger moaned for him. He felt powerful, and he could hear their audience cheering him on now.

"Give it to him good!" one of the men shouted.

"Just like the old days," another said with a wistful sigh.

Mickey spared a moment to briefly ponder how wild Slick Rick's must have been in its heyday, but he quickly refocused his attention on Roger. "See? They all know you've been bad too. They know you have to be punished."

"I'm sorry!" Roger gasped. "Okay? I'm so very sorry—!"

"Sorry for what?" Mickey spanked his cock again, grinding his own dick into Roger's hip. "Tell me. Say it real good and loud so everybody can hear you."

"I'm sorry I called you a bitch, okay?" Roger whined. "I'm fuckin' sorry!"

"I'm sorry, what?"

"I'm sorry, master!" Roger pleaded, squirming desperately against Mickey's hold.

Mickey still refused to let go, his mind reeling with trying to figure out how far he was willing to take this. Especially with a captive audience, he didn't know. He wanted to humiliate Roger for insulting him and daring to make him jealous—!

As if Mickey would ever be jealous.

Roger was his, thoroughly and completely...

Shit.

Mickey slapped his hand on Roger's cock over and over, losing himself in his frantic cries and the trembling jerks of his hips.

"Mmmm, master! Fuck! Yes!" Roger howled, the sound nearly lost in the appreciative groans of the bar patrons.

Mickey clamped his hand down on Roger's cock, and he could feel the pulse of his orgasm through the denim.

Flushed and grinning, Roger sighed dreamily. "Fuck, I think I love you, Mickey."

Mickey could hardly believe it. He'd made Roger come in his pants right here in front of everyone. He leaned close and whispered in his ear, "Who's the bitch now?"

"Fuck," was all Roger could say in reply, breathless and groaning wantonly.

Head held high, Mickey left him there without another word.



## CHAPTER 10

Driving with a raging erection was not Mickey's idea of fun, but he was still very satisfied that he'd given Roger exactly what he deserved for running his mouth.

The tense energy rushing through him was familiar now, not only because it was so similar to the surge he got from a job, but because he'd felt it with Roger so many times now. As hard as he tried to stop himself, he kept getting drawn right back in.

He'd never met anyone like Roger—maddening, infuriating, and absolutely irresistible.

No one had given Mickey this sense of power before, and that thrill of total control made him shudder deep inside from the mere thought of it.

Fuck, what the hell was he supposed to do now?

Back at home, he snuck inside to grab a quick shower so he could handle his traitorous cock without waking up his grandfather. The hot water was soothing, and he kept his injured arm out of the spray so the bandages wouldn't get damp. He had bled through the gauze some, probably from when that bastard Salvatore grabbed him.

Mickey briefly fantasized about killing Salvatore, but with his hand wrapped around his dick, his mind turned to Roger for proper inspiration.

He'd never spanked someone like that, and he still couldn't believe Roger had literally gotten off on having his dick smacked. It was insanely hot, and he could have listened to him moan like a whore all day.

Roger couldn't resist him either apparently, and his submission was the sweetest treasure Mickey hadn't known he needed. He couldn't give it up now. When he bit down on his lip, he wished it was Roger's teeth on his skin.

When Mickey came, he was thinking about Roger's hot kisses and the sinful clench of his gorgeous body on his dick. The climax was quick, bland, and not nearly satisfying enough.

Now that he'd had Roger, jerking off was nothing but a tease.

He got dried off and changed into fresh clothes: a pair of cargo pants, a shirt, and work boots. As much as he had enjoyed Roger's ogling earlier, he wanted to be comfortable for later tonight.

“Hey, Michael! Is that you?”

“One sec!” Mickey called back. He left his bedroom to go to his grandfather’s room. “Hey. You need somethin’ to eat? You want some soup or something? Maybe a sandwich?”

“I’m okay,” Pops replied with a gracious smile. He was nestled in bed with his pillows and seemed to be comfortable. “Home from work early, aren’t you?”

“Just for a few hours. I gotta head back out. Gonna be working late, so don’t wait up.”

“Are you gonna be here for dinner?”

“If we eat around six or somethin’, yeah. I don’t have to leave until a little later.”

“Can we do Chinese?” Pops perked up. “I would kill for some fried rice.”

Mickey smiled. “Kill, huh? Must be serious.” He tilted his head. “You sure you can have that stuff? What did your nurse say?”

“Oh, screw her,” Pops fussed. “I can have some damn Chinese food. I’m a grown man, for cryin’ out loud!”

Mickey crossed his arms. “Fine. But then you’re eating a salad or some shit tomorrow. Deal?”

“Deal.” Pops relaxed, happy he was gonna feast on fried rice in a few hours. “You take real good care of me, Michael.”

“I try to.”

“It’s better than I deserve. You’re the best damn grandson a man could ever ask for.”

“Hmmp.” Mickey was suspicious. “Why does this feel like all of this praise is leading to something I don’t want to talk about?”

“You know, you could maybe use somebody to take care of you too.”

“Ah, there it is.” Mickey sighed. “I’m fine. Totally fine. I don’t need anyone to take care of me.”

“Michael,” Pops scolded, reaching out for Mickey’s hand. “I’m being serious now. We both know I’m not gonna be here forever. You’ve got docs and nurses on standby for me around the clock, but I’m already on borrowed time as it is.”

Mickey frowned.

“I wanna know you’re gonna be okay when I’m gone. More than okay, I wanna know that you’re happy.”

“I am happy, Pops.”

“See, last month I would have told you that you were full of shit.” Pops smirked. “But see now, I almost believe you. It’s that vampire guy, isn’t it?”

“If I say yes, will you drop this?”

“Bring him over,” Pops said stubbornly. “I wanna meet him.”

Mickey grimaced. “That’s not happening.”

“Michael,” Pops scolded. “Do you like this boy?”

“Against my better judgment.”

“Why don’t you go for it then, son? What’s holding you back? Are you scared of getting hurt?”

*Scared that he’s gonna get me killed*, Mickey thought to himself. He shook his head and said out loud, “We work together. It’s unwise.”

“Me and your Meemaw worked together, and we got along just fine. We left work stuff at work. That’s the secret.”

“I’m not really sure he and I are a good match.”

“Certainly seemed like you two were pretty good the other day when you was messin’ around at my girl’s place.”

“What?” Mickey narrowed his eyes. “I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“Uh huh.” Pops grinned. “You’re not the only guy who’s ever snuck around, Michael. I was young once too. You’re good, but you’re not that good.”

Mickey groaned and rubbed his hands over his face. “What will it take for you to stop talking about this?”

“Dinner with your vampire. Here with me. I wanna cook.”

“You can’t even walk!” Mickey protested.

“Yeah, but you can! You can help me!”

Mickey was a ruthless assassin who had murdered dozens of people without remorse, and yet here he was being manipulated by his helpless grandfather into having dinner with the guy he’d recently made a terrible habit of sleeping with.

“I’ll think about it,” Mickey grumbled.

“Michael Allan Tamerlane,” Pops warned, “there is no thinkin’ about it.” He narrowed his eyes. “What would your mother say about this, huh?”

“Oh, now that’s low.”

“You know she’d want you to settle down and be happy. That’s all I’m saying. And she didn’t get to live long enough to see it, but maybe I can.” Pops’ eyes were damp, but his face remained stern. “So, tell your vampire he’s coming over for dinner.”

“I’ll see what I can do,” Mickey ground out.

He wasn't going to mention he'd have to try and find time in his busy schedule, what with the stealing guns from other mobsters and trying to take over the city.

There was no reason for him to entertain this insanity except to pacify Pops, but the longer Mickey thought about it, the more he was having trouble denying his desire for Roger. Perhaps the crazy really was catching, or maybe it was that the rush of being able to command Roger's body was truly incomparable.

Forging a relationship out of their blistering chemistry wouldn't be the worst idea in the world, though Mickey had many reservations. The one thing he couldn't shake was how he'd thought about Roger when he'd been shot. He could blame the blood loss, but he knew that wasn't why.

Roger was constantly at the forefront of his mind, and he wanted him. He wanted him more than anything, and he decided then he was going to make Roger his. He didn't know how long it would last, but it would be incredible while it did.

Fuck it. Maybe he was crazy too. Insane or not, no one could give him what Roger could, and that was worth the risk.

Now he just had to tell him.

After the mission tonight, Mickey decided. They could have a little chat, maybe fuck in the safe house bathroom to celebrate. The mere thought was getting Mickey excited, and he wasn't sure when he'd last felt like this and it wasn't about killing someone.

Mission first.

Then Roger.

Mickey ordered Chinese for dinner as requested, and he pulled up a chair in his grandfather's room so they could eat together. He let his grandfather continue to plot the dinner date with Roger, listening to him suggest various meals they could cook together.

He hadn't seen Pops so excited since he'd gotten his own flat screen TV.

After finishing dinner, Mickey made sure Pops took his medicine and got settled back into bed. He shut the bedroom door behind him and started getting ready to head over to the club. He tucked extra magazines into his belt, adjusted his shoulder holster, and headed outside to his car.

He scowled at the broken window and made a note to himself to get it fixed. The duct tape currently blocking the opening looked atrocious. He could ask Duncan to follow him over to a car repair shop so he could drop it off. He could also set the piece of shit on fire and buy a new car.

The money wasn't a problem. He had thousands stashed away, but his priority was to make sure he could keep paying for Pops' medical care. Once the Gentlemen took the city, maybe then he would be comfortable blowing a bunch of cash on a new ride. It wouldn't matter then.

They'd all be rich.

Mickey couldn't fuckin' wait.

He arrived at Slick Rick's right on time, and he saw a white van parked around back. It was probably their wheels for the night. He saw the others were already there, and he hurried inside.

The bar was packed, the music blaring, and Mickey slipped through the crowd to the office. He smirked when he passed by the bar he'd bent Roger over, but he pushed the memory from his mind for now.

Alistair and Cold were seated at the table in the office, and Crybaby was pulling out uniforms from a plastic bag. Roger was stretched out across the couch, and Duncan was hovering near the door.

Mickey almost hit him when he walked in, nodding his head in greeting. "Hey."

Cold glanced at his watch. "Perfect."

"How's it going?"

"Everything is set," Cold replied. "We just need to get you all changed into your uniforms for the evening. They're... mm, quite fetching."

"By fetching, he means hideous," Crybaby drawled.

"Here." Cold helped Crybaby pass out the new uniforms. They were baggy gray jumpsuits with 'Easy-Air' embroidered across the back and smelled vaguely of ozone.

They were quite hideous.

Mickey accepted his, and he immediately felt Roger staring at him intently. Seeing him made his heart flutter unexpectedly, and he had no idea what to do with that.

Apparently he was gonna bring it home and cook it dinner.

Roger smiled when their eyes met and waved excitedly.

Shit.

Mickey ignored him, trying to focus on getting ready. He stepped into his jumpsuit with all his clothes on. The jumpsuit was loose enough to hide his shoulder holster, and a quick zip would let him reach inside to grab his guns.

"Roger! Come on!" Crybaby suddenly scolded.

Mickey turned to see Roger stripping down to nothing. "The fuck?"

"What?" Roger frowned. "Do you have any idea how hot it's gonna get in this damn thing?"

"Go to the bathroom or something if you're gonna get naked!" Crybaby snapped. "Fuckin' weirdo!"

"I think we all got enough of your bare ass earlier today." Alistair smirked. "Besides, you should at least keep your underwear on... we do have to return these."

"That's gonna be a problem." Roger shrugged. "Not wearing any."

Cold had politely averted his eyes, but he was smiling.

Roger shamelessly stepped into his jumpsuit naked, and Alistair groaned in protest. Duncan was struggling with his zipper, and Crybaby begrudgingly came over to help him.

Roger kept looking over at Mickey expectantly, and Mickey decided to say something to break the tension.

Mickey reached for Roger's arm and pulled him aside. "Hey."

Great.

Good start.

"Yes?" Roger batted his eyes. "If you wanna spank me again, kinda awkward timing, but I could totally be into it."

"No," Mickey growled, "but we do need to talk."

"Now?"

"No!" Mickey wished he had kept his mouth shut. "Later."

"Then why did you say anything? Why didn't you just wait until later?"

"Fuck! Forget it!"

"I'm gonna have so much anxiety not knowing what you wanted to talk about now." Roger pouted. "This is super rude."

Mickey stomped away, asking loudly, "Are we ready to go?"

"Ready," Crybaby confirmed.

"Yeah, ready." Duncan grimaced, wringing his hands. "So very ready."

"Good luck," Cold said with a stern nod. "Stay alert at all times, and don't forget what you're there for. I'll be waiting for you at the safe house with Alistair."

"We don't need luck. We got the plan." Mickey gave a small salute. "See ya in a few, Boss."

They loaded up in the van with Crybaby behind the wheel and headed over to the plant. The work permit got them through the gate, and they parked near the loading docks. Each one was numbered and had a ramp that led to a door beside the bay where the trucks would back up to unload.

Mickey and Crybaby grabbed some of the repair equipment from the back of the van to help maintain their cover, and they all went up the ramp of dock number three. The workers didn't pay them any mind, and the supervisor on duty directed them over to a large walk-in cooler.

From here, they could see the open bay door. There were dozens of pallets packed high with various meat products, all shrink-wrapped and labeled. A forklift was parked nearby, and Roger checked to see if the keys were in it as they walked by.

Judging by the way his face lit up, they were, but Crybaby gave him a very disapproving glare so he backed off.

Mickey dropped the equipment he'd brought and leaned against the side of the cooler. His body felt light, springy with the anticipation of what was to come.

Now all they had to do was wait.

Crybaby stood a few feet away, digging through the tools and making a show of pretending to work on the external AC unit. Duncan fluttered around, trying to help and look busy.

Roger leaned up against the cooler next to Mickey, saying cheerfully, "This place fuckin' reeks. It's very unique. Like rotten cheesy ass."

"I used to live around here." Mickey shrugged. "You get used to it."

"The fuck you do." Roger snorted. He looked over at Duncan and Crybaby, watching them mess with the unit for a few moments. "I wanted to thank you. For earlier."

"What?" Mickey frowned. "For spankin' you in the bar?"

"No!" Roger paused. "Okay, also that, but I meant the other thing. For getting all up in Salvatore's face for me. You were like a bald knight in shining gay bar."

"This should really fall under the 'let's talk about it later' category."

"This is later. Or do you only wanna talk about your mysterious thing, huh? We can't talk about my thing too?"

"Not now. For the love of fuckin' God."

"You're being super unfair right now."

"We can talk about all the damn things you want! But *later!*"

"Truck is here," Crybaby hissed under her breath, "so maybe you two lovebirds can fight some other time."

"We're good." Mickey was instantly focused, watching the truck back up slowly into the bay and park.

The driver was nowhere to be seen, as expected, and the dock workers were leaving now too. In a few minutes, the whole place would be cleared out. The supervisor gave a casual wave before following the rest of the workers out of the loading area and into the plant.

Now all they had to do was wait for the Luchesi family's men to show up, kill them, and take the guns.

Crybaby and Duncan took defensive positions near the bay door, and Mickey crouched down behind the forklift. Roger ducked out of sight by some pallets near the cooler.

Mickey heard a vehicle pulling up outside and saw the flash of headlights.

Taking a deep breath, he let his mind cycle through how this could go down. There would be at least four men, maybe more, but he and the others had more than enough firepower to take them out. Plus, they had the element of surprise on their side.

The Luchesi men wouldn't even see them coming.

It was strange there only seemed to be one vehicle when there was supposed to be two.

Mickey cautiously peered around the side of the forklift, and he counted five men coming up the ramp.

Not a problem.

The men unexpectedly coming from inside the plant behind them, however, were going to be a big problem.

Mickey didn't even have time to call out a warning before he was being fired upon. He shot back, rolling to the other side of the forklift to take cover. "Fuck, fuck, fuck!"

The loading dock instantly erupted into chaos, the Luchesi men pinning them down from both sides. Crybaby and Duncan managed to shoot their way away from the door and retreat behind the pallets where Roger was hiding.

Mickey was still trapped by the forklift, and there was nowhere for him to go. He popped out, fired two shots, and the five men at the door became three.

It was only a small victory because there were at least ten more men working to surround them. The bastards were using the maze of pallets for cover and steadily advancing.

There was no way those men snuck in while Mickey and the others were here. They would have seen them. The only explanation was that they'd already been here, waiting for them inside the damn plant.

This was a fucking trap.

Mickey slid to the other side of the forklift, peering out to fire again. Another man dropped, and all of the Luchesi men's firepower was now focused on him. He shrunk down, cursing loudly at the hail of bullets whizzing all around him. He was trying to think of what to do next, but then he heard Roger shouting.

"Eat this, you fuckin' cunts!"

Mickey had no idea what that could be—

The pallets beside him suddenly exploded, and Mickey was thrown back by the blast. His ears were ringing, and he tasted blood in his mouth. Groaning, he fought to get up and find new cover.

He was totally out in the open like this, but the whole room was spinning, and his vision was fuzzy. He didn't know which way to go for safety. He didn't even think he could stand up.

Crybaby was still shooting, screaming, "Fuck! Somebody! Grab Mickey! Come on! Ahh, *fuck!*"

Mickey watched in horror as she went down, and he turned to see who shot her.

Salvatore Luchesi was standing right there, having stepped around from the protection of the pallets to make the kill.

"You fucker!" Mickey snarled, trying to focus his aim as he fired.



The bullet grazed the side of Salvatore's face, and he fell back behind the pallets, howling in pain.

No!

Mickey had missed!

Fuck!

Mickey kept firing until his guns were empty, furious he had missed his target. He didn't want to give Salvatore a little scratch; he wanted to blow his head off! He managed to drag himself behind another stack of pallets near the bay door to reload, and he grunted as the entire building rocked from another explosion.

Roger was suddenly right beside him, yelling, "What the fuck is happening?"

"It was a fucking trap!" Mickey shouted back. He blinked several times, trying to shake off the disorientation. "We were set up!"

"I'm almost out of grenades! I've only got one left!"

"Who the fuck gave you grenades?"

"I had some tucked in my underwear!"

"What the fuck! You're not wearing any!"

"Where's Crybaby? I don't see her!"

Sirens blared in the distance, and Mickey roared furiously. "Now we've got fuckin' cops? Fuck!"

"Where is she?" Roger demanded. "Did you see her get out?"

"Where's Duncan?" Mickey quickly countered, ducking around the pallet to return fire.

"He ran, the little shit! After the first grenade, he just took off! I don't know where he is!"

"We've gotta go." Mickey closed his eyes and tried to steady his breathing. "If we stay here, we die or the cops will nab us."

"What the fuck do we do?"

Cold had told them to memorize escape routes, and Mickey's first plan would have been to retreat into the plant and leave through the front door. That was impossible, which left his second plan—cutting through the parking lot and grabbing the van.

Wait, shit, no. Crybaby had the keys.

Okay, new plan: cut through the parking lot and go over the fence.

Not his favorite idea, but they were out of options.

"Give me your fuckin' grenade and cover me!" Mickey holstered one of his guns and snatched the grenade from Roger's hand. He took a big breath and stuck his head out from the pallet.

Two men were still firing on them by the bay door, and the rest remained hidden in the pallets a few yards behind them.

Mickey ducked back down, grabbing Roger's arm. "Are you ready?"

"Ready!" Roger bared his teeth. "Go!"

Roger started shooting wildly, and Mickey quickly stepped out. He was exposed like this, totally vulnerable, but he knew he was fast.

He had to be.

Mickey pulled the pin and threw the grenade toward the cluster of men behind the pallets. He ducked back down with Roger, grimacing at the wave of bullets raining down on them.

"Listen to me!" Mickey pulled Roger close so he could hear him over the noise. "When it explodes, we run! Okay? We're gonna go over the fence! We run as fast as—"

The building rocked again, and the shooting stopped, the silence filled with frantic screams. Mickey leapt up like a bolt of lightning, charging forward to take down the men at the door with two quick shots each. Roger was right behind him, turning around to fire to cover their escape.

Mickey looked back only once, and he got a glimpse of Crybaby sprawled out on the ground.

She wasn't moving, and there was no sign of Duncan anywhere. One of Roger's grenades had somehow ended up inside the truck with the guns, and the entire trailer was now engulfed in flames. Another fire inside the plant was spewing out black smoke, and the sound of sirens was getting closer.

This entire night was a total disaster.

## CHAPTER 11

The sirens were still wailing as Mickey and Roger bolted toward the fence. None of the Luchesi men seemed to be coming after them, but Mickey sure as hell wasn't going to stick around and give them a chance to catch up.

He unzipped his jumpsuit, stepping out of it quickly and tossing it up over the barbed wire. He skillfully scaled the chain link, sliding over the jumpsuit to avoid the barbs and dropping to the ground on the other side.

"Fuck, hang on, Jackie Chan!" Roger grumbled, climbing up the fence after Mickey. "Shit, I am gonna break my fuckin' neck!"

"Come on!" Mickey hissed impatiently. "We have to go!"

"I'm fuckin' trying!"

"You can dance on a fuckin' pole, but you can't climb a fence?"

"The pole doesn't have barbed wire, asshole!" Roger teetered awkwardly on the barbed wire, but he managed to make it over unscathed. He dropped down beside Mickey. "Now what?"

"We get the fuck out of here!" Mickey grabbed Roger's arm and ran.

They bolted down the street away from the plant, taking a turn into an alley. Mickey led the way around a narrow corner and took them through a long row of dumpsters.

"Where the fuck are we going?" Roger demanded. "We can't just keep running!"

"I told you I used to live around here! Trust me!"

"Fuck you!"

"Fuck you! Stop following me then!"

"You fuckin' wish!"

They sprinted through trash-filled backstreets and dingy cutaways until Mickey stopped at a rusted door. It was the rear exit of the old apartment building he used to live in, and he knew it was never locked.

“Here!” Mickey pushed the door open, jogging through a small hallway and into the apartment’s security office.

It was used for storage when Mickey lived here, and nothing had changed. The small room was crowded with boxes, pieces of a sectional sofa, and a small coffee table. There were two desks hidden beneath more boxes near the far wall, and it smelled of bleach and mildew.

Mickey shut and bolted the door behind them, and he nearly collapsed. His legs were aching and his chest was on fire from running so far for so long. He fought to catch his breath, holding his arms over his head and trying to walk off the cramps in his thighs.

“We have to go back,” Roger wheezed, falling down to his knees as he gasped for air.

“The fuck for?” Mickey stared at Roger in shock. “No way. There’s nothing left back there.”

“Crybaby.”

“She’s dead,” Mickey said flatly, swallowing back a mouthful of bile as the image of her lifeless body flashed before his eyes. His pulse was finally starting to come down, and his breathing was slowing, but now he felt sick.

“We have to go back,” Roger repeated. “Now.”

“Roger. Listen to me. She’s dead. There’s nothing to go back to except a fucking dead body.”

Roger shook his head and shakily got to his feet. He checked his gun. “I’ve got half a magazine left. I can do it. I can make it.” He headed to the door.

Mickey rushed up behind him and grabbed his arm. “Make it where? Are you kidding me? What the fuck are you talking about!”

“She’s still out there!” Roger roared. “Let go of me! She could still be alive!”

“You’re done!” Mickey bit back, grabbing the gun from Roger’s hand. “You’ll die trying to go rescue a fuckin’ corpse!”

“You fucking bastard, don’t you fucking say that! Fuck you!” Roger swung at Mickey, clumsy with rage. “Give me back my gun!”

“You are the last fuckin’ person who needs a gun right now.” Mickey sidestepped the punch, disassembling Roger’s gun into pieces and letting them drop to the floor. Roger tried to punch him again, and he caught his arm. “Roger! Stop!”

“No! What the fuck did you do, you fuckin’ ninja prick?” Roger snarled, jerking away. “Fix my fuckin’ gun and let me go!”

Mickey took hold of Roger’s shoulders and shoved him up against the door. “No.”

“Let me go!” Roger barked furiously, his eyes damp as he struggled to get free. “You fuckin’ ugly, bald, fucked-up, snake-lookin’ motherfucker! Let me go right now!”

Mickey was not bothered by the insults, and he held Roger firmly. His chest felt heavy, but he knew there was nothing else they could do for her. “Crybaby is dead. If you go back out there, you’ll be dead too.”

Roger kept fighting, snapping his head forward and cracking Mickey’s nose. “Fuck you!”

Mickey growled, his nose immediately gushing blood, and Roger seized the opportunity to break away. He tried to open the door, but Mickey snatched him up again, roughly pulling him backward. They struggled, stumbling away from the door and crashing into the coffee table.

The table collapsed from their combined weight, and they landed in a heated tangle of limbs on the floor. Mickey was trying his best to restrain Roger and not hurt him, but Roger didn’t seem to care.

Roger picked up one of the broken table legs and smacked Mickey’s injured arm with it. “Get off me!”

“Ow! Fuck! Will you quit that?” Mickey pushed himself on top of Roger and wrestled the leg away from him. “Stop it, Roger! Stop it right the fuck now!”

Roger was still fighting wildly, but he was getting out of breath and tiring out. “No! Get the fuck off of me! Mickey, I will fuckin’ kill you!”

“No.”

“Bastard!”

Mickey’s head was absolutely pounding, but he refused to let up for a second. Their bodies kept rutting together, and the fury between them was absolutely boiling. He had never seen Roger this emotional before, and he hated to see him in so much pain.

Roger’s broad chest was heaving, his fingers curling defiantly into the front of Mickey’s shirt. Roger was clearly exhausted, but he was still trying to push Mickey away. “We have to... it can’t be... she can’t be dead...”

Mickey scowled. He was doing his best to be sympathetic, but he was in a lot of pain and his patience was thinning.

Though he didn’t feel Crybaby’s loss as deeply as Roger did, he was still upset. They might have also lost Duncan tonight, and they had all walked into one hell of a nasty trap. They had to contact Cold right away, but first Mickey had to get Roger to settle down before he ran off and did something stupid.

Mickey gritted his teeth, and he kept Roger firmly held down. “I’m sorry... but she’s gone.”

“No,” Roger protested, his lips drawn back in a terrible grimace. “I should have... we have to make sure... You don’t understand! She saved me! Okay? I owe her fuckin’ everything!”

“Shut up,” Mickey soothed. “It’s done. We will live to fight another day, we will survive, and we will put a bullet in Salvatore Luchesi’s head, I swear to you.”

Roger's eyes filled with tears, and he shook his head stubbornly. "I fucked up... I should have known... I should have known it was a trap!"

"Not even Boss Cold saw this shit show coming." Mickey scoffed. "How the fuck could you?"

"What do I do?" Roger tried to lift himself up, desperately trying to keep fighting. "What the fuck am I supposed to do, Mickey?"

"Breathe," Mickey ordered. "You take a fucking breath, and you get your shit together. We will figure this out."

"Fuck you," Roger sneered.

"No, fuck you! I am trying to be fuckin' nice right now, and you're being a fuckin' asshole!"

"God, I fuckin' hate you right now! It should have been you!"

"Shut the fuck up, you whiny bitch!"

Mickey wasn't sure who leaned in first, but their lips were suddenly crashing in a violent kiss, Roger's arms winding possessively around his neck. The kiss became scorching in seconds, tasting of blood and sweat, and Mickey fought for control as he slid his tongue over Roger's soft lips.

"Fuck!" Mickey groaned sharply when their noses bumped together, and he pulled away, wincing in pain.

"What the fuck?"

"I think you broke my fuckin' nose, you asshole." Mickey bit at Roger's neck hard.

Roger grunted pleasurably and nipped at Mickey's ear. "I think it's a fuckin' improvement."

"Fuck you, bitch."

"Let's fuckin' go. Right now."

"Fuck yeah," Mickey grunted, jumping to his feet and hauling Roger up with him.

The couch was the only available option, and they fell down on the cushions together. Mickey got on top of Roger, unzipping Roger's jumpsuit so fast the zipper broke.

"Mm, Mickey." Roger dragged him into a deep kiss, fumbling to help him get the jumpsuit off. He was just as wild as he was when they'd been fighting, and his hands were all over Mickey, pulling frantically at his clothes.

Mickey hated how his eyes watered in pain every time Roger bumped his nose, but it did little to slow him down. He took off his holsters and his shirt, watching Roger wiggle out of the jumpsuit.

Roger's body was beautiful, tan and chiseled. Mickey hadn't taken nearly enough time to fully appreciate how gorgeous he was, and he felt a wave of possession wash over him.

No one else would ever have this man again.

Never.

“God, you’re so fuckin’ hot. You look like some crazy ass batshit Greek god.”

“Yeah?” Roger smirked. “You look like somebody beat the fuck out of you.”

“Keep it up, and we’ll be fuckin’ twins,” Mickey warned.

“Yeah, yeah.” Roger pulled his wallet out of the jumpsuit pocket, rifling through it and holding up a single condom. “Make it fuckin’ count.”

“You ain’t gotta worry about that,” Mickey promised as he pushed his pants down around his knees, spreading Roger’s legs wide. “I fuckin’ got this.”

Roger tore the condom open with his teeth and quickly rolled it on Mickey’s cock. “Less talking, more fucking.”

“You even prepped?”

“Uh, duh.”

“You just walk around all lubed up, waiting to get fucked?”

“Doesn’t everyone?”

“For fuck’s sake.” Mickey rubbed his dick against Roger’s hole, only a few quick swipes before he was pushing inside of him. As promised, Roger was slick and ready for him. He’d expected to take Roger hard and fast right away, but something gave him pause.

He couldn’t explain it, but beyond the primal rage there was an unexpected tenderness now simmering between them. Crybaby and Duncan were probably dead, and they could have both died alongside them. None of them were meant to walk away from that plant, and yet here they were, together.

Mickey’s eyes were stinging with tears, and it wasn’t from his busted nose.

Roger appeared equally entranced, his hands gently tracing along Mickey’s smooth skin and cupping his cheeks. He swallowed audibly, and his voice was strained as he whispered, “We gonna fuck or what?”

Mickey snapped out of it, baring his teeth and rearing his hips back, then thrusting forward. He gasped at the sudden heat of Roger’s body wrapping up every inch of him, groaning as he pushed all the way in.

Roger’s head flopped limp against the cushions as Mickey went from zero to a hundred, fucking him savagely. He moaned hysterically and cheered him on, “God! Fuck yeah! Come on, fuck me, Mickey! God *damn!*”

Mickey was relentless, slamming his cock as deep as he could every time, pounding away at Roger’s tight body like a jackhammer. He grunted when Roger pulled him down for a kiss, savoring the taste of blood mixing in with their spit.

Roger pushed his tongue against Mickey's, and he groaned happily. He clung to Mickey's hips and smacked his ass. "Fuck, yeah! Come on, fuckin' get it! Fuck me! Fuck! Goddamn, Mickey!"

Mickey loved every second of it, flashing a wicked smile before hoisting Roger's legs up. He held onto his ankles, tilting his body back as he fucked him even deeper, bottoming out with a satisfied moan. "Fuck," he panted, "your ass feels fuckin' awesome."

"Goddamn right it does." Roger slipped his hand down to jerk himself off. He cried out when Mickey started fucking him harder, making his feet curl. "Goddamn, Mickey! Fu-uuuck!"

Mickey grinned, panting and sweating, but never slowing down. He absolutely ravaged Roger, their skin smacking in time with the frantic squeaking of the couch. "Takin' it like a fuckin' champ," he praised. "Fuck, you look so good takin' my dick."

"Shut the fuck up about it and give me some more." Roger yelped when Mickey gave him a particularly nasty slam.

"Roll the fuck over," Mickey commanded as he pulled out. "Maybe get your face down in those pillows so I don't have to hear your fuckin' mouth."

Roger cackled, turning over onto his stomach as he snapped back, "Oh, this works great for me. Now I ain't gotta fuckin' look at your fucked up mug."

"You're such a cheap bitch." Mickey rolled his eyes and mounted him again. He slid back in easily, immediately going for broke as he hissed in Roger's ear, "Lemme know when you come up with somethin' else, huh?"

"Ahhh, mm, fuck!" Roger couldn't respond, his fingers clawing at the sides of the couch as Mickey plowed him mercilessly.

Mickey was fucking Roger as hard as he'd ever dared fuck anyone, impressed with how the other man took it and moaned for more. He had to press closer, his hips rolling with more finesse now as he tugged Roger up by his hair for a kiss.

Roger whimpered against Mickey's lips, his eyes glassy and full of want. "Mmm, Mickey. Fuck..."

Mickey was getting close, his breathing more frantic. "Gonna fuckin' bust."

"Come on," Roger urged, slithering a hand beneath himself to grab his cock, feverishly stroking himself. "Get that goddamn nut, come on!"

"Did I fuckin' tell you that you could come?" Mickey hissed. As close as he was, he forced himself to stop and grab Roger's arm. He had to take back control at once. "Huh? Did I?"

"Mmm, Mickey! No! Please! Come on—"

"Uh uh." Mickey bit Roger's ear. "What the fuck do you call me when I'm inside you?"

"Ah, shit..." Roger rocked his hips back helplessly. "Master... come on, please. Master, I wanna fuckin' come."



Mickey pushed his cock all the way in and circled his hips, grinding slowly. The tease was delicious, but he couldn't hold off for too long. He wanted to come, but he was definitely gonna make Roger squirm first.

"Not yet," he said. "Not until I fuckin' say so."

"Please!" Roger cried, trying to push his ass back and fuck himself on Mickey's cock. "I wanna come, master!"

"No." Mickey stilled and slapped Roger's hip. "You didn't fuckin' ask me. You weren't even gonna, were you?"

"Master... please...! I... I forgot." Roger still kept trying to push back, and he moaned when Mickey popped him again. "God, mmm! I'm sorry! You feel too fuckin' good!"

"You're pathetic," Mickey hissed.

"I'll be so good for you, master." Roger went limp against the sofa, turning his head to peer up at Mickey imploringly. "I'll be whatever you want me to be, for fuck's sake! Please! I'll be yours!"

*Yours.*

That singular word made Mickey's heart clench, and it was pounding so hard he feared it was going to burst right out of his chest. Yes, his. He wanted Roger to be his. He wanted to claim him, to own every inch of his body, and to ruin him for any other lover.

Mickey was the monster Roger so desperately craved, and he was going to be the only one to hear his sobs of ecstasy and tortured cries ever again. He wanted Roger to bow, to *kneel* before him, and Mickey had no doubt that he would.

All Mickey had to do was say the word.

He'd never experienced such a sense of absolute certainty before, and for better or worse, he knew he was completely hooked.

Chuckling low, he leaned in close to murmur in Roger's ear, "Oh, baby... you're already mine."

"Yours," Roger whispered, reaching up to cradle the side of Mickey's face. "I'm yours. And you're mine."

"Your fuckin' master," Mickey confirmed with a low growl. He started to rock his hips forward, steadily picking up the pace. The connection was more intimate now, boiling hot, and Mickey pressed himself against Roger's back as he fucked him.

"Mmm, yes, my master," Roger moaned, arching into Mickey's chest. "You're my monster... my beautiful fuckin' monster... God, yeah, mmm... give it to me! Fuck!"

"You can come now." Mickey was sailing right back to the precipice of climax once more, and he was about to blow at any second. "But only because I said so... only because I'm allowing it..."

"Yes! Yes, master!" Roger wiggled, slipping his hand back down to grab his dick and jerking off feverishly. "Thank you! Mmm, yes, thank you so fuckin' much!"

Mickey growled, ferociously pounding Roger's ass until he came so hard his head throbbed. He could feel Roger's body clenching around his cock as he brought himself off, both of them shuddering together.

Fuck, it was always so good.

Mickey had to brace himself on the back of the couch, and he tilted his head back with a long moan.

Roger was struggling to catch his breath in the aftermath, grinning dumbly as he purred, "Mm... wow."

"Uh huh," Mickey panted in agreement, groaning as he rolled off of Roger. He flopped down on the far end of the couch, pulling off the condom and throwing it on the floor.

Roger turned onto his side, stretching out his body with a very pleased mumble. He reached down to grab his jumpsuit and retrieve a pack of cigarettes with a lighter inside.

"Didn't know you smoked."

Roger lit up, inhaling deeply as he chuckled. "After getting' fucked like that, anybody would need a fuckin' cigarette."

"Fair." Mickey smirked and raised up his arm in invitation.

Roger seemed surprised but accepted, scooting over to cuddle up against Mickey's side. He took a puff, blowing out a few smoke rings.

"Man of many talents," Mickey observed.

"Mmm, you just got to experience my very best one."

"Fuck yeah." Mickey closed his eyes, lightly brushing his thumb over Roger's shoulder. "You all right?"

"Not really," Roger replied honestly. "Still pretty fucked up."

"I know," Mickey said quietly, wishing he was better at being comforting. He pressed a quick kiss to Roger's forehead. "I swear to you. Somehow, some fuckin' way, Salvatore will fuckin' pay for this."

"We need to call Cold." Roger flicked his ashes on the floor.

"Yeah." Mickey grimaced.

"Probably should have done that first."

"No shit." Mickey stood and pulled his pants and underwear back up, getting his phone out of his pocket to make the call.

"What the *fuck* is going on?" Cold demanded furiously.

"The job went real fuckin' bad."

“I’ve heard.” Cold took a deep breath. “Carville called me. Said there was a shootout at the plant. At least eight men dead, two more in critical condition. Most of them have been identified as members of the Luchesi family. Apparently there was also some kind of explosion?”

“Roger brought party favors.”

“I’ve been waiting for you to call. I’ve been waiting for someone, *anyone*, to call me.”

“We just got safe. Me and Roger.”

Cold paused. “We need to meet.”

“Where? We’re good to go.”

“And it’s only the two of you?”

Mickey grimaced. “Yeah, Boss.”

“Come to Alistair’s. Right now.”

“Be right there, Boss.” Mickey hung up and sighed. “We gotta go. Boss wants to talk to us.”

“What did he say?”

“Not much. You know he doesn’t like talkin’ on the phone much.”

“Right. Because somebody could be listening.”

“After this shit, yeah, they just might be.” Mickey found his shirt and put it on. “We killed eight of those bastards at the plant, maybe two more. The news is gonna be all over this shit now, and the cops are gonna start digging in. It’s gonna get fucked up.”

“It’s already fucked up.” Roger scoffed, taking a final puff of his cigarette and putting it out on the arm of the sofa. “Crybaby’s probably dead, and that little snake Duncan ran off. He might be dead too.”

“If he’s not, I’m kicking his little ass.”

Mickey knew Duncan wasn’t a particularly brave man. He hated that he wasn’t surprised at all by Duncan’s sudden retreat, but it still pissed him off. They were supposed to be partners through thick and thin, not run away like a damn chicken when the other one was literally about to be pumped full of lead.

“Not if I beat you to it.” Roger smiled, but it was strained. He ducked his head down, cradling his head in his hands and pulling at his hair. His smile had faded and his shoulders shook with a quiet sob. “Fuck, it just can’t be... I can’t... I can’t believe she’s fuckin’ dead.”

“Don’t you worry about that now,” Mickey said firmly. “We’ll get this shit figured out. God help whoever fucked us over because I will personally introduce that bastard to a grand tour of their lower intestinal tract.”

“Sweet talker.” Roger barked out a short laugh, teary-eyed as he grinned up at Mickey.

“The fuckin’ sweetest.” Mickey smiled and offered his hand to help Roger stand. “Come on. Get your clothes on. We gotta grab a ride. We can talk about all the fucked up ways we’re gonna kill Salvatore when we find him, on the way over.”

“Damn.” Roger laughed again, wiping off his face and taking Mickey’s hand. “Here I was thinkin’ you’re a fuckin’ idiot, and then you go and have a genius idea like that.”

“Ha! Just shows what you know, ya fuckin’ dumbass.” Mickey tapped the side of his head. “I got plenty of good ones up in here.”

“Mmm, any real nasty ones rolling around in there?”

“You’ve got no fuckin’ idea, baby.”

## C H A P T E R 12

One hot-wired car later, they were on their way to Alistair's house.

"So, I'm thinking about starting out by pulling off Salvatore's toenails with my teeth and spitting them into his mouth," Roger said cheerfully. "What do you think?"

"I think you are fucking twisted, and that could work."

"Don't even get me started on what I'm gonna do to his dick." Roger scoffed. "Fuck. I'm just... I don't know what to fuckin' do. How did this even fuckin' happen?"

The rat.

Mickey didn't know who, but someone had to have betrayed them.

Again.

"I don't know, but Cold is gonna figure it out."

"He'd fuckin' better."

"He will."

"Yeah..." Roger sagged down into his seat. "I really hope so."

When they stopped at a traffic light, Mickey tried dialing Duncan. The call went straight to voicemail. "Shit."

"What's wrong now?"

"Duncan isn't answering his fuckin' phone. It's going right to voicemail."

"Maybe he's dead too."

"Fuck you."

"Fuck you!"

"Duncan is smart. He's probably hiding somewhere, keeping his head down." Mickey wasn't sure who he was trying to convince more, himself or Roger. "He's a slippery little fuck. He had to have

made it out.”

“Fuck him too.” Roger stared out the window. “Crybaby saved me. She’s the one who told Cold about me, all the shit I was in. Talked me up real big, said what a big asset I’d be. He was willing to buy out my debt so I could come work for him. I guess... when I think about it, they both saved me.”

“Cold saved me too,” Mickey said hesitantly.

“Yeah?”

“Had a payment disagreement over a job. Was gonna handle it like I handle all my problems.” Mickey paused, debating on how much he should say. “It was Tony Luchesi.”

“The guy the Don had killed a few months back? Was stealing money from the family or something?”

“Yeah. Except the Don didn’t order it, and he wasn’t actually stealing any money. I went there to kill him, and Cold and Jules were already there when I busted in. I helped them clean house, and Cold cooked up that crazy story to cover my ass.”

“Damn.” Roger whistled. “And, naturally, ol’ Raffaello took credit for it.”

“Yeah. But look, my point is that Cold’s always done right by me. That’s how I know he’s gonna get all of this bullshit figured out.”

“I want to believe that. I honestly do.”

“Believe it,” Mickey swore.

“Is that an order, *master*?” Roger asked coyly.

“Mm, if it is, will you listen to me?”

“The chances vastly improve.”

“You really like that shit, huh?”

“Oh, you’ve no idea.”

“Being bossed around? Spanked?”

“I don’t hear you complaining.” Roger batted his eyes.

“Trust me. You won’t.”

Mickey had only been to Alistair’s home once before, but he remembered the way. It was an old nineteenth-century brownstone right in the heart of downtown Strassen Springs. There was a small garage around back, and Mickey parked the stolen car there so no one would see it.

He and Roger came through the backyard, and Roger nearly tripped over the bricks surrounding a well-manicured flower bed. Once Mickey was sure Roger wasn’t going to break his neck, he went up and knocked on the door.

Alistair answered it, wearing a set of dark blue monogrammed silk pajamas and a very worried scowl. “You two look like shit. Get in here.”

“Thanks.” Mickey stepped inside with Roger right behind him.

The interior of the home reminded Mickey of a funky antique store, with velvet upholstered furniture, stained glass lamps, and heavy rugs. There was art everywhere—old landscapes to modern pop art pieces, all set in lavish frames.

Alistair led them into a den with a large fireplace, the flames still burning hot and crackling. There were two chairs and a sofa cradled around the warmth, and Cold and Jerry were waiting for them there.

Cold was wrapped in a dark blue silk robe with a familiar monogram, tense and brooding in one of the chairs with a glass in his hand. Jerry was standing by the mantle, and he looked equally grim.

“Boss.” Mickey kneeled in front of Cold, bowing his head. Of all the different emotions he was battling, it was then he felt overcome by failure.

He’d failed the mission, just as he had failed with Mr. Ricci. He hadn’t been able to save Crybaby, and that was perhaps the worst of all. He couldn’t bring himself to look at Cold, and he stared at the floor as he took Cold’s hand.

Cold allowed Mickey to kiss his hand, and he gently urged him to look up with a nudge on his chin. “Are you all right?”

“Still alive, Boss.” Mickey finally met Cold’s eyes and found nothing there but a steely concern. It took off the edge of the spiky ball of dread in his gut, though it did not remove it.

“Sit. Drink. Talk. In that order.” Cold waved at Jerry, who fetched two glasses and poured heavily.

Mickey sat down in the chair across from Cold as instructed, leaning back in the plush chair and chugging the glass Jerry gave him. It was scotch, warm and expensive. Roger sat on the couch and chugged his drink as well.

Jerry refilled their glasses wordlessly.

Mickey took another gulp before he began. “We get in, we’re waiting, everything’s fine. Truck shows up. Everybody leaves. Five Luchesi assholes come in, and we’re ready to jump. Then ten more of those fucking assholes come strolling out from inside the damn building with Salvatore Luchesi leading the way.”

“Inside the plant?” Cold narrowed his eyes. “They were already there?”

“Had to fucking be.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes, Boss. There’s no way that many fuckin’ douchebags came waltzing by us without us seeing them unless they came in through the front door and were in there waitin’ for us.”

Cold and Alistair exchanged a glance.

“Thought we had that supervisor guy on our side?” Roger scowled. “What the fuck?”

“Gregory Tucker.” Cold’s upper lip twitched. “And yes, we did. Or so we thought.”

“I’ll go see Gregory tonight.” Alistair frowned. “I don’t think he would have betrayed us, but maybe he knows who did.” He tilted his head. “Do you want me to pick up Patrick just in case?”

“I don’t think that will be necessary,” Cold replied. “Talk to Gregory. See what he knows. I’ll send Jules to get Patrick if we need to.” His icy eyes shifted back to Mickey. “Go on.”

“Right.” Mickey finished off his drink. “So, these assholes come on out, everybody starts fucking shooting. Roger had fuckin’ grenades and starts blowing shit up like a goddamn maniac—”

“Hey, what else could I fucking do?” Roger snapped. “We were getting fucking hammered!”

“Okay, whatever!” Mickey gritted his teeth. He didn’t feel like fighting with Roger, especially in front of Cold. He knew Roger was probably still upset about Crybaby, and he tried to stay calm. “It was good thinkin’ ’cause it’s honestly how we got the hell out of there.”

“I’m assuming that was the source of the fire?” Cold drawled.

“Yeah, Boss.”

“And the others? Where are Crybaby and Duncan?”

“Duncan took the fuck off before me and Mickey got out,” Roger sneered. “Little shit hauled ass.”

Cold glanced to Mickey for confirmation.

“He was just gone,” Mickey said. “We didn’t see him when we left, and I wasn’t sticking around to look for him. Tried calling him after we talked to you. Nothing.”

“And Crybaby?” Alistair asked sharply. “Where is she?”

Mickey closed his eyes. “Saw Salvatore shoot her. Saw her go down. She’s dead.”

Cold flinched, his hand tightening around his glass. “You’re sure?”

“Pretty sure. I looked back when we were running out of there. Saw her on the ground. She wasn’t moving.”

Alistair was visibly distraught, and Jerry turned the bottle of scotch up, saying something mournful in French. Roger was quiet, but he stood up to snatch the bottle away from Jerry.

Cold’s expression was curiously blank, but his entire body had tensed up. He was clearly struggling to rein in his fury and failing fast. His eyes were soon burning with an inhuman rage, and he bared his teeth in a silent snarl.

Alistair turned to Cold and put a hand on his shoulder. “Roderick, we need to—”

Cold suddenly jumped up, hurling his glass into the fireplace. “I’m going to kill him! I’m going to fucking rip him into pieces with my bare fucking hands!”



Mickey was so startled by the outburst that he nearly tipped out of his chair.

Cold grabbed onto the mantle to brace himself, absolutely seething. “It was perfect. The plan was fucking perfect. It should have worked! It should have fucking worked!” He punched the mantle, his robe slipping off his shoulder as he continued to furiously pound the brick.

Mickey had never seen Cold in such a rage, and he froze in place, unsure of what to do.

“Roderick,” Alistair said, his voice stern now. “Calm down.”

“I will not fucking calm down!” Cold barked, glaring angrily at Alistair. “Don’t you dare tell me to calm down! I should’ve killed them all when they came to the club! Every last fucking one of them! You said to wait, and what I should have done was murder every last one of them! I’m—”

Alistair silenced Cold with a hand on the back of his neck, holding on tight. The touch had an immediate effect; Cold was quiet, his shoulders slumped, and he relaxed.

The air was still tense, and Mickey’s stomach twisted up in dread. A quick glance at Roger and Jerry showed they didn’t know what the fuck to do either except watch and wait.

Cold leaned into Alistair’s hand, and he took a deep breath.

“There you go,” Alistair urged. “Breathe for me. Just breathe.”

Cold nodded, taking several deep breaths. The energy in the room settled, and Cold’s shoulders sagged. He bowed his head and held up his hand.

Alistair backed off.

Jerry hastily got another glass and filled it, offering it to Cold.

“Thank you, Jerry,” Cold said as he turned to take it.

The robe hadn’t been righted yet, and Mickey got his first real look at Cold’s bare chest and shoulder in the light of the fire. He tried not to stare, but he couldn’t look away.

The *scars*.

Cold didn’t have a right nipple. It was gone. There was a dark tear of skin snaking over his breast where it should have been. Another large scar was above that, with more along his shoulder, and Cold fixed the robe before Mickey could see any more.

Christ.

Mickey had heard rumors of the abuse Cold suffered at the hands of the Luchesi family and even his own father, but the gossip did little to prepare him for actually seeing it. He knew Cold had served time for killing his father, some fuckhead named Boris, and now he had a pretty good idea why.

“Cristian now absolutely knows we’re working against him,” Cold said, trying to regain his composure and sitting back down in his chair. “We must expect retaliation, but we also need to move forward with the plan.”

“Don’t we need him on our side?” Mickey asked cautiously.

“No.” Cold shook his head. “We’re going to lay low, stay out of the way, and wait this out. I’ve been meeting in secret with Rufus Corman. He’s a member of the Luchesi family who worked personally for the Don.”

“Corman?” Roger frowned. “Not Italian, I take it?”

“No, but he has the political connections we need, and he’s willing to support our claim to the city.”

“Awfully generous of him.” Mickey scoffed. “What’s in it for him?”

“He gets to be on the winning side,” Cold replied. “Now, we’re going to—”

“Roddy?” There was a little girl with curly brown hair and big blue eyes peering around the railing at the bottom of the stairs. She was holding a stuffed shark in her arms, and she looked very surprised to see so many new faces.

“Rowena.” Cold immediately went to her and kneeled down to scoop her up into his arms. “Hey, what are you doing out of bed?”

“I heard yelling. I got scared.” She clung to his neck. “I thought it was Daddy.”

“No, he’s not here,” Cold soothed. “You’re safe, I promise.”

“Pinkie promise?” she whimpered, sticking up her hand.

“Of course.” Cold linked their pinkies together and kissed her hair. “We’re both safe, Ro. He can’t hurt us ever again.”

“Okay.” She sniffled.

“Let’s get you back to bed,” Alistair urged gently, coming up to them and offering to take Rowena from Cold. “Come along, Ro-bow.”

“Here, go with Uncle Ally,” Cold said as he passed her over. “Let him tuck you back in.”

“Hey!” Rowena was instantly defiant. “But I wanna know what’s going on!”

“Bedtime,” Cold said firmly.

“This is bullshit! You get to stay up late!”

“Language,” Cold scolded. “I get to stay up late because I’m a grown-up.”

“That’s not fair! I am very grown-up! I can make my own popcorn!”

“We can talk about this later, Ro-bow.” Alistair started up the stairs, patting her hair. “Come on. Back to bed.”

“Still bullshit,” she mumbled. “Good night, jerk-face.”

“Good night.” Cold watched them for a moment before turning back to Mickey and the others. He grimaced. “My apologies. That was my little sister.”

“I got a brother that age,” Roger said with a small smile. “Stubborn little monsters.”

“Oh, you have no idea.” Cold chuffed, shaking his head. He sighed and came back to his chair. Picking up his glass from the floor, he took a long drink and checked his phone. “You’ll all be staying here tonight. Jules is on his way. He’s stopping to pick up Pym.”

“Are we gonna have a slumber party?” Roger joked, though it was clear his heart wasn’t in it.

“No.” Cold smirked. “Though you and Mickey are welcome to share the guest room upstairs.”

Mickey flinched.

Were they really that obvious?

“Thanks, Boss,” Roger said graciously. “We appreciate it.”

“What about...” Mickey glanced at Jerry.

“I’ll take the couch.” Jerry smiled politely. “It is no problem.”

“And Jules? Pym?”

“Jules will probably sleep in his car.” Cold snorted. “There’s another sofa downstairs in the basement. It will be fine. Just go.” He sipped his drink. “Rest. You’re going to need it. Luigi may be retreating, but we’re now at war with both Cristian and Matteo Luchesi. Yes, it was a war I expected, but not quite so soon.”

“We’re ready, Boss.”

“The plan remains unchanged,” Cold went on. “We’re going to get the murder weapon that we need, we’re going to continue pulling away the family’s resources, and we *will* kill Salvatore Luchesi. That I promise you.”

“Thanks, Boss,” Roger said quietly. “I appreciate that.”

“Go on.” Cold waved his hand. “Guest room is upstairs, down the hall, first door on the right.”

“Good night, Boss,” Mickey said, turning to head up the stairs. As he climbed the steps, he was suddenly overcome with exhaustion.

Almost dying was apparently quite tiring.

The door across from the guest room was cracked, and Mickey got a glimpse of a very pink bedroom.

“Are you guys sure Daddy isn’t coming?” Rowena was asking worriedly.

“I promise,” Alistair swore, kneeling beside her fluffy pink bed. “Your brother and I are going to keep you safe, little one...”

Mickey stepped into the guest room and turned on the light.

Bed, dresser, matching bedside tables, more art, lots of fringe.

Roger brushed by Mickey to hop on the bed and strike a seductive pose. “So, fair warning. I sleep naked, I will use you as my personal teddy bear, and I will steal all of the covers. All of them.”

“It’s fine.” Mickey saw a small lamp on the wall by the side of the bed. “Will you get that?”

“Yeah.”

When Roger turned it on, Mickey flicked off the overhead light. He began to strip out of his clothes down to his underwear, leaving his guns on the bedside table.

He could hear the bedroom door across from them close and Alistair’s footsteps retreating down the hall.

Roger was naked by the time Mickey came to lie down, and Mickey was too tired to care that they’d be sharing a bed tonight. That was honestly the least of their worries right now. His head hit the pillow, and he was ready to pass out.

“You okay?” Roger asked.

“I’m great.” Mickey regretted such a sarcastic response, asking more sincerely, “What about you?”

“I’m pretty fucking pissed off. Duncan took the fuck off like a chickenshit bitch, and I just lost my friend. So, yeah, not so good.”

“I’m sorry.” Mickey closed his eyes. “Duncan is a lot of things. Brave isn’t one of them.”

“Well, fuck him.”

“Not with your dick.” Mickey cracked a small smile.

Roger laughed, short but happy. “Ah, not your type?”

Mickey heard the click of the lamp as Roger turned it off, and he replied, “Apparently, crazy fuckin’ blonds are more my speed.”

“No shit? Good to know.” Roger wiggled closer. “Are you gonna freak out if I snuggle on you?”

“No, go ahead.” Mickey heard footsteps in the hallway, probably Cold coming from downstairs, and the sound of another door closing.

Roger instantly glued himself to Mickey’s side, sliding his arm over his chest. He pressed his head into the crook of Mickey’s shoulder and sighed contentedly.

It wasn’t the worst thing, Mickey decided, to have Roger cuddling up against him. He draped his arm around him, lazily rubbing his back. As tired as he was, he found himself fighting to stay awake so he could enjoy this a little longer.

Not to mention, he still had a certain invitation to offer.

“So.”

“So?” Roger was smiling.

“I was thinking...”

“What? Thinking about tying me up, huh? Maybe. Strong maybe. Depends on my mood. Do you remember the safe word?”

“I want you to come over for dinner,” Mickey ground out. “Okay? Great. It’s settled.”

“Wait, what?”

“Dinner. My place.”

“With you and the old man?”

“My grandfather, yeah.” Mickey sighed. “And you will be on your best behavior, do you understand me?”

“Oh, will I?” Roger sounded delighted.

“Yes.”

“Hmmpf.” Roger fidgeted for a moment and went still. “You’re really serious, aren’t you?”

“Wouldn’t have told you if I wasn’t.”

“You like me.” It wasn’t a question.

“Yes.” Mickey didn’t see the point in denying it.

“I like you too.” Roger sounded apprehensive now. “I’m not... I’m not good at this.”

“Neither am I.”

“But I do like you. I really like how you fuck me, and you’re an amazing kisser. You’re seriously hot when you’re fucking people up. You have a pretty awesome spanking swing too. Oh! And I don’t think you’re that ugly, seriously. The no hair thing? It’s kinda hot.”

“Thanks.” Mickey rolled his eyes. “It’s alopecia, you dick.”

“Alo-what now?”

“Alopecia. It’s why I don’t have any hair.”

“Or eyebrows? Or like any pubes?”

“That’s all fuckin’ hair, isn’t it?” Mickey huffed. “It’s an autoimmune disorder. My body attacks all my hair follicles like they’re germs or something.”

“Fuck. How’d you get that?”

“Just lucky, I guess. Started losing it when I was a kid.”

“Aren’t there... I dunno, some kinda treatments?”

“Tried some. Never worked.”

“Well, hairless or not, I still like you. You make me feel... well...” Roger moved again, cuddling in closer. “You make me feel safe.”

That was new.

“Safe from those Luchesi fuckwads, safe from Salvatore, even safe from myself.” Roger sighed. “I don’t exactly have a good history of making good decisions.”

“Like Salvatore?” Mickey ventured. He wasn’t sure if he wanted to open up this conversation, but he was curious.

“Everybody talks about these mafia guys bein’ willing to take a lil’ somethin’ for a lil’ somethin’, okay?” Roger rolled away. “And I tried working for them legit. I tried busting safes, boosting cars... but it was never enough for them. I just ran out of shit to sell ‘em. Until Salvatore asked me for that little somethin’, and I said fuck it. I thought, how bad could it be?” He made a buzzer sound. “Surprise! It was really fuckin’ bad.”

Mickey turned onto his side and reached for Roger. “Hey, come here.”

“Why?” Roger’s voice cracked as if he was going to cry. “So you can tell me what a fuckin’ idiot I am? Call me a stupid fuckin’ slut?”

“I happen to like how slutty you are,” Mickey said seriously. “It’s been kinda working in my favor.”

“Fuck you.” Roger jerked away from him.

“Goddammit, come here.” Mickey wrapped his arm around Roger’s waist and yanked him close. “Look, we all do shit we’re not proud of. Shit we wish we could change. But guess what? We can’t.”

“Wow, I feel better already.”

“Shut up. My point is you should try to focus on the future instead, on what isn’t set in stone yet. Think about what you want and go for it.”

“I want to watch Salvatore die very slowly, bury Crybaby, eat some lasagna, and fuck you. Like, a lot more often.”

“He will die, we’ll call a funeral home, I can figure out how to make fuckin’ lasagna, and we will definitely fuck more.” Mickey bit down on Roger’s shoulder to emphasize his point.

Roger moaned, immediately melting into Mickey’s hold. “Mmm, promise?”

“Absolutely.”

“I gotta call Scout,” Roger said suddenly. “Shit.”

“Crybaby’s lady?”

“Yeah. She doesn’t know.” Roger was getting upset again. “Fuck, fuck, fuck. She doesn’t know yet.”

Mickey hugged Roger. “Hey, easy now. We can worry about that shit tomorrow. Okay? That’s tomorrow’s fuckin’ problem.”

“Stop telling me to shut up.”

“Stop sayin’ dumb shit and getting all freaked out—”

“I will fuckin’ punch you in the dick—” Roger started to snarl.

A low groan from down the hallway made them both freeze in place.

“Is that...?” Roger gasped.

There was another groan followed by deep grunting, and the very distinct sound of skin on skin. It was hard to tell who was who, but it was definitely Alistair and Cold.

“Yup. That’s exactly what it sounds like.”

“Called it!”

Chuckling, Mickey agreed, “I had my suspicions.”

“I fuckin’ knew it. Alistair totally has this ‘Fuck me harder, Daddy’ vibe thing going on. Pretty sure Cold tops, though.”

“Oh, definitely.”

Roger grinned. “Long live the fuckin’ gay mafia.”

## CHAPTER 13

Mickey awoke the next morning with no covers, and he had been pushed to the very edge of the mattress. Roger was comfortably curled up in a ball and in possession of all the blankets. He'd never woken up with someone before, and it was nice to reach over and pull Roger back into his arms.

It felt... good.

Roger's hand slid down Mickey's stomach, slipping into his underwear and grabbing his cock.

*Very good.*

"Good morning to you," Mickey mumbled.

"Morning." Roger smiled sleepily, thumbing over Mickey's piercing. "How'd you sleep?"

"Not bad." Mickey breathed in slowly as he savored Roger's warm touch. "Not fuckin' bad at all."

"Wanna fuck around?"

"Like you have to fuckin' ask." Mickey snorted. "Come here. Bring that ass up here." He patted his chest.

"Oh, am I giving you breakfast in bed?"

"You're giving me that ass to eat up while you suck my dick. Come on."

"And they say romance is dead." Roger pretended to be bothered even as he climbed up on Mickey's chest to present him with his rear.

Mickey smoothed his hands over Roger's cheeks and spread them wide to gaze over his hole. He stuck out his tongue, licking from Roger's balls up around his tight entrance with a lusty growl.

"Mmm, yeah." Roger shoved Mickey's underwear down and grabbed the base of his cock. He lapped around the piercing beneath the head of his dick, sucking it lightly. "Fuck, that's so hot."

"Come on, suck it already," Mickey scolded, pressing his mouth around Roger's hole and pushing his tongue against it. He slipped in the tip of his finger to work him open, and he groaned when Roger's lips wrapped around his cock.



Roger bowed his head, taking Mickey down until he hit the back of his throat. He sucked fast and hard, and he reached down to lightly squeeze Mickey's balls.

"Ahhh, just like that," Mickey grunted. He grabbed Roger's cock between his legs and stroked him, lapping more earnestly at his asshole.

Roger sucked harder in reply, drooling profusely over Mickey's cock. He swirled his tongue up and down, and he focused in on the piercing before deep throating him again.

"Fuck, yeah." Mickey groaned appreciatively, palming Roger's ass and giving him a solid spank. He felt Roger jerk, heard him let out a muffled cry, and he spanked him again.

Roger suddenly pulled off, panting erratically. "Mickey! God, that feels so good!"

"Did I say you could fuckin' stop suckin' my dick?" Mickey snarled. He loved the shiver he felt run through Roger's body, and he smacked his ass cruelly. "Get back to work."

"Mmm! Yes, yes, master." Roger jumped back on Mickey's cock with renewed vigor, whimpering in between each eager bob of his head.

"There you go, good boy." Mickey kept his hand going on Roger's dick, and he stuck his tongue back between his cheeks. He licked and mouthed around Roger's ass, trying to get him open enough to push inside.

It was impossible to focus with the fantastic way Roger was sucking him, and he had to give up in favor of breathing. He continued to jerk him off, bucking up into his mouth as he hissed, "Come on. Take that fuckin' cock. Fuck, I'm gonna come so hard."

Roger moaned his encouragement, albeit it was dampened by the cock currently stuffed down his throat. He grinded into Mickey's hand and let his jaw hang loose so Mickey could thrust as hard as he wanted to, his lips still wrapped tightly around his shaft as he took it all.

Mickey's head tipped back, and he roughly fucked Roger's mouth. He smacked Roger's ass, tugging at his cock in time with the pounding of his hips. "Fuck! There, come on, take it just like that. Take my cock."

It couldn't last at this rate, but it felt so damn good. The rush was delightful, and the hot friction of Roger's mouth and tongue was making Mickey's thighs tremble. He let himself go without warning, his body clenching as one final thrust took him over the edge, and he came hard down Roger's throat.

Roger groaned, and he held Mickey's cock deep inside his mouth as he swallowed his load obediently.

"Mmmm, yeah, baby. Suck it all down." Mickey's hips finally dropped when he was spent, and he chuckled low. "Fuck."

Roger popped off with a breathless moan, running his tongue around the head of Mickey's cock. "Can I come, master? Please? I wanna come so fuckin' bad."

"Yeah," Mickey breathed, tightening his grip back on Roger's dick and jerking him off quickly. "You did so fuckin' good. And you remembered to ask me this time. You can actually learn, who fucking

knew?”

“Yes, master. God, mm, yes!” Roger lapped around Mickey’s dick.

It was almost too much after coming moments ago, but Mickey liked Roger’s tongue working over his piercing. He let him keep going and stroked him faster, urging, “Come on, baby. Get that fuckin’ nut for me.”

Roger grunted, his deft tongue withdrawing only when he finally came. His cock pulsed in Mickey’s hand, dripping down onto Mickey’s chest and stomach as he moaned. “Fuck, yeah!”

Mickey worked him through it and gave his ass another firm smack, praising, “Good boy. Fuck, you’re hot when you come.”

“Yeah?”

“Yeah. You’re not talking.” Mickey smirked and licked his hand clean, making a face. He didn’t care for the taste, but he didn’t have anything to clean it up with. There was still the rest of the mess to deal with, and he had an idea. “Come here.”

“Mmm, what?” Roger rolled off of Mickey, his legs splayed briefly as he righted himself to face him.

“Lick it up,” Mickey ordered, nodding to the cum from Roger’s load.

Roger’s eyes widened and then closed to lusty slits, and he groaned. “Oh, fuck yeah, master.” He was on Mickey in a second, running his tongue up his stomach and eagerly swallowing his own cum.

Mickey shouldn’t have been surprised by such an enthusiastic response, and he liked watching Roger’s tongue roaming over his skin. That immediate response was thrilling as well, and he petted Roger’s hair. “Mmm, good boy. Just love all that cum, don’t you? Like a little slut?”

“Yes.” Roger sighed, smiling as his tongue slid up Mickey’s chest to finish his task. He looked like he was in heaven, his eyes closed as he moaned softly around the last lick. He looked up at Mickey and smiled. “All done, master.”

That smile made the entire world vanish, if but for a single moment, because Mickey knew it was just for him.

Mickey dragged Roger up to kiss him, not even caring how wet Roger’s lips were with spit and cum. The slick slide made Mickey’s chest light, and he dragged a hand through Roger’s hair, holding him close as the kiss deepened.

Roger pressed into Mickey’s embrace, and he seemed calmer now. He felt relaxed, his arms lazily curling around Mickey’s neck. Even when they broke the kiss, they stayed close enough to trade breath, and Roger suddenly laughed.

“What is it?” Mickey murmured, enjoying the hypnotic spell.

“You seriously need to brush your teeth.”

“Thanks, cum-breath.”

“Hey, you were just literally eating my ass. Easy on the name calling.” Roger smirked and slid out of bed to grab his jumpsuit from the job last night.

Mickey rolled his eyes and stretched, groaning as a few joints popped and clicked. He couldn’t have thought of a better way to start the morning, though the sore throb in his injured arm was a nasty reminder that the last few days had been far from perfect.

After he got dressed, he quickly checked his phone. He was hoping for a message or a call from Duncan. There was nothing, and he began to fear the worst was true.

“So, we still on for dinner?”

“What?” Mickey looked up, having been distracted by his phone.

“Me, you, promises of lasagna and sex.”

“Right. Yeah.” Mickey hated how awkward this felt. It was easy when they were fucking, and he didn’t have to think.

“Just say when, and I’ll be there with bells on.” Roger winked. “Or nothing at all.”

“Later.”

Mickey promptly headed downstairs with Roger in tow, finding a small crowd in the dining room sitting around the kitchen table.

Alistair and Cold were both dressed in sharp suits, Jules definitely looked like he’d slept in his car, and Jerry was bustling back and forth to the kitchen making sure everyone had coffee and a full plate of food. There was no immediate sign of Pym.

Rowena was sitting down between Cold and Alistair, and her stuffed shark was peeking out from her lap. She waved at Mickey and Roger as they walked in. “Morning!”

“Rowena, this is Roger and Mickey,” Cold said. “They’re friends of mine.”

“Good morning.” Mickey tried to offer a friendly smile.

Judging by the grimace Rowena gave him, it wasn’t a welcome sight.

His appearance could be daunting, and people had a habit of staring at him in public. There was always something not quite right about his face that they couldn’t figure out until they finally realized he didn’t have any eyebrows.

Those were apparently important for a normal face.

“Hi!” Roger sat down across from Rowena, obviously much more comfortable with children. “It’s nice to meet you, Rowena. I like your shark.”

Rowena regarded Roger suspiciously, but she wiggled the shark’s fin at him to mimic it waving.

“Does he have a name?”

“Her name is Princess Snaggleteeth, and she’s a Great White.” Rowena narrowed her eyes. “They can have up to three hundred rows of teeth and eat sixty-six pounds of meat in one sitting.”

“Wow. That’s a lot of meat. There’s no way I could eat that much!”

Mickey valiantly resisted the urge to comment.

“It’s totally real! It’s in one of my books!” she said excitedly. “It has pictures too! I can show you after breakfast!”

“After breakfast, you are going to get ready for your tutor. You will be very busy studying,” Cold said, taking a leisurely drink of his coffee.

“Lame!” she groaned.

Cold ignored her. “We’ll conduct our business then, Gentlemen. Please keep the conversation... appropriate.”

“You got it, Boss,” Roger agreed. He smiled at Rowena. “Any other cool sharks in your book?”

“Like, so many!” Rowena dropped her voice to a whisper. “I can show you later when Roddy isn’t here. He doesn’t like sharks or anything fun. He’s dumb.”

Cold nudged her. “Eat.”

Jerry brought Mickey and Roger plates packed with crispy bacon and wet-looking scrambled eggs. “Coffee?”

“Please,” Roger replied, “and bring me all the sugar and creamer ever.”

“Yeah, thanks.” Mickey immediately dug in. The scrambled eggs were more goopy than what he preferred, but he ate them anyway.

“Any, uh, good news?” Roger asked hopefully. It was obvious he was inquiring about Crybaby.

“No.” Cold frowned. “Nothing.”

“What about Duncan?” Mickey asked. “Have we heard anything at all?”

“No.”

Mickey’s heart sank, and Roger’s hand took his beneath the table. He was grateful for the comfort, though he didn’t allow it for long.

Jerry handed them each a cup of coffee, and he set down a small pitcher of cream and a sugar dispenser.

“Who’s Duncan?” Rowena asked loudly. “Is he a Gentleman? Or he is a bad guy?”

“Since you suddenly have all of this time to talk, you must be done with your breakfast,” Cold scolded Rowena. “Go on.”

“But I wanna hear more about all the gangster stuff!” she argued.

“No.”

Rowena stuck out her lower lip defiantly.

“Now.”

Rowena lifted up Princess Snaggleteeth and made several loud growling sounds upon her haughty exit from the table. Head held high, she stomped as loudly as possible back upstairs.

Mickey waited for Roger to finish fixing up his coffee before he reached for the creamer.

It was empty.

Roger smiled sweetly. “Oh, I’m sorry. Did you want some?”

“You greedy bitch,” Mickey muttered. He opted to drink his coffee black and made a mental note to settle up with Roger over this later. He half wondered if he’d done it on purpose.

“I’ve got some cream for you right here.” Roger gestured beneath the table with a loud meow.

“Shut the fuck up, you fuckin’ weirdo.”

“Do you need some, Mickey?” Jerry asked politely, retrieving the empty pitcher.

“No, I’m fine. Really.”

“Gimme some more of that bacon,” Jules piped up as he tried to hand his empty plate to Jerry.

“Eh, *non*. I am not your servant, you overgrown ape!” Jerry snapped. “You can get your own bacon.”

“Hey, fuck you!” Jules argued. “You was offerin’ to get Mickey somethin’! I thought—”

“A thought? You? Truly? You have thoughts? Will wonders never cease.”

“Wait a damn second.” Jules scowled. “Are you callin’ me stupid?”

“Get your own damn bacon, you *imbécile*.”

“Gentlemen, I’ve already had enough childish behavior this morning if you’d all be so kind as to rein it in,” Cold warned impatiently. “Now.”

“Sorry, Boss,” Jules grumbled. He got up, glaring at Jerry as he headed over to the stove. He defiantly shoved a handful of bacon into his mouth and flipped Jerry off.

“Oh, so very mature of you,” Jerry snorted.

Cold drank more coffee and sighed deeply, as if in great physical pain.

Alistair leaned over to pat his arm, but Cold brushed him away.

“We’ve had no news about Duncan or Crybaby, but Detective Carville has been in touch,” Cold said, keeping his voice low as if Rowena’s innocent ears might still be listening in. “The police are handling this as a dispute between conflicting factions within the Luchesi family.”

“Our names ain’t even on their lips,” Jules chimed in between bites of bacon.

“Yet,” Cold amended. “Should our worst fears be realized and we’ve lost Crybaby and Duncan, the police will be able to identify them.”

“And that includes their known associates,” Alistair said. “Which means all of us.”

“It’s fine. For now.”

“What’s the plan, Boss?” Mickey asked. “What are we gonna do?”

“We keep our heads down,” Cold replied. “The rest of the plan is moving along well. Jules was able to procure the very special evidence we need, and I’m currently working on giving the city’s assistant prosecutor a promotion. He’s much more sympathetic to our cause than the current one.”

“We trying to set somebody up for murder?”

“Yes.”

Mickey waited for more information, but Cold went back to his coffee. He wasn’t going to push since Cold didn’t seem interested in sharing, but Roger blurted out, “Who are we framing?”

“All in good time,” Cold assured him.

“You don’t trust us,” Roger accused sourly.

“Shut up,” Mickey hissed. “Just leave it alone. He ain’t gotta tell us everything.”

“Fuck you, I wasn’t talking to you.”

“Fuck you!”

“Gentlemen.” Cold held up his hand for silence. “I want to trust all of you, but the situation we’re in requires a certain degree of caution as we move forward. Someone leaked our plans to spare Mr. Ricci, and Mickey was almost killed. Someone then decided to share our plans for taking the gun shipment at the plant, and we may have lost two more of our Gentlemen.”

Jerry said something hastily in French, and it did not sound kind.

“That as well,” Cold agreed. “Yes, it could still be someone working for Cristian and bad luck, but I am not certain. Until then, I am keeping some elements of the plan on a need to know basis.”

“There’s a snitch!” Rowena gasped from where she was peeking out from the bottom of the stairs. “Are you gonna whack ‘em?”

“Upstairs! Now!” Cold shouted, starting to rise up from the table.

Rowena squealed and immediately vanished.

“Spunky little thing,” Roger noted.

“You ain’t got no idea.” Jules laughed. “That little girl is gonna grow up to be one bad bitch.”

Cold scowled.

“What?” Jules scoffed. “She don’t take shit from you, she ain’t gonna take shit from nobody. And if somebody tries to mess with her, they’re gonna have a real bad day.”

“Speaking of people having bad days,” Mickey began carefully, “did we find out what was going on with that Gregory guy from the plant?”

“Yes,” Alistair replied. “It wasn’t him.”

Mickey narrowed his eyes. “Are we sure?”

“Oh, we’re very sure,” Jules chimed in. He plopped back down at the table, and he looked quite proud of himself. “I’m very persuasive.”

Jerry swung around the table to collect the finished plates. He rolled his eyes at Jules’ boasting, but he didn’t say anything.

Pym appeared then, perhaps from the basement, and he didn’t have his glasses on. He looked like he’d just woken up. Squinting and rubbing at his eyes, he said urgently, “Hey, you guys gotta turn on the TV. Right now.”

“What is it?” Cold demanded.

“It’s the club.”

Jules was closest to the television in the den, and he got up to go turn it on.

“What’s going on?” Alistair asked, glancing back at Pym and following Jules worriedly.

“I heard something on the radio about a fire,” Pym replied. “I think it’s Slick Rick’s.”

“—Strassen Springs Fire Department is currently investigating the cause of the fire,” the reporter on the television was saying, “but they have not released any official statements at this time. The fire was first reported this morning at four o’clock, and the building was totally engulfed—”

The screen showed the block of the city where the club once stood, the charred remains surrounded by a crowd of fire engines and other emergency vehicles. It was still smoking, but there was nothing left except blackened chunks and what may have been the remnants of the steel cages eerily peeking through the ashes.

“What the absolute fuck?” Jules growled.

“Slick Rick’s,” Mickey said stupidly, staring at the blackened husk on the screen. “It’s gone.”

Alistair was immediately on his phone and stalking out of the room toward the stairs.

“Well, now, Gentlemen.” Cold sighed, his eyes never leaving the television screen. “It seems we are officially at war.”

“Think this is a little Luchesi love note, Boss?” Mickey asked.

“What else? Considering we destroyed all of their guns and killed their men, this was a logical target for retaliation.”

There was a knock at the back door, drawing everyone's attention and their weapons.

"Who the fuck is that?" Jules snarled.

"Mickey, Jules." Cold jerked his head at the door. "Go."

Guns pointed forward, Mickey charged toward the door with Jules beside him. His heart was pounding erratically, and he was ready to blow away whoever was waiting on the other side.

Jules stood beside the door and cautiously peeked through the curtains at the window beside it. "Holy fuck."

"Who is it?" Mickey hissed.

"It's fuckin' Duncan." Jules kept his gun at the ready, but he opened the door.

Duncan was standing there, bleary-eyed and exhausted. He was absolutely filthy, and he smelled awful. "Hey! Fuck, it's so good to see you guys—!"

"Get in here!" Jules grabbed Duncan by the top of his head and dragged him into the house.

"You son of a bitch! You're okay!" Mickey put his guns away and hugged Duncan close. He didn't linger because whatever Duncan was covered in was truly pungent, but he couldn't deny how good it felt to see his friend. "We thought you were dead!"

"I thought I was too!" Duncan exclaimed. "Fuck! You won't believe the night I had! Listen, somebody burned down the club this morning! And that's not all, I think—"

"We know," Cold said smoothly. He, Pym, Roger, and Jerry were watching from a few feet away, and Cold's expression was mute. "We just saw the report on the news."

Roger slowly crept toward Duncan.

"Shit. Right." Duncan popped his forehead. "Of course it's all over the news. But hey! Boss! I've gotta tell you—"

"You!" Roger suddenly lunged forward. "You chickenshit little bastard! You left us!"

"Hey!" Duncan gasped as Roger slammed him up against the door. "The fuck, Roger?"

"You left us to fuckin' die!" Roger seethed, giving Duncan a violent shake. "I'm gonna fuckin' murder you, you worthless little fuckface! You're fuckin' maggot food!" He froze abruptly and grimaced. "And what the fuck is that smell?"

"Let go of him!" Mickey grabbed Roger's arm and tried to pull him away. "Come on!"

"Fuck! Get off me, you damn nut job!" Duncan swatted angrily at Roger. "Look! I'm fuckin' sorry, but I'm trying to tell you—"

"What?" Roger snapped.

"Crybaby is alive!"



## CHAPTER 14

“*A* live?” Roger was so shocked that he let go of Duncan. “She’s alive?”

“Yes!” Duncan scrambled away and hid himself behind Mickey. “She’s alive! Look, one of the men under police watch at the fuckin’ hospital just happens to be a woman. Who else could it be? It’s gotta be her!”

“We’ve gotta go get her!” Roger exclaimed frantically. “Right now!”

“Wait.” Cold held up his hand for calm and beckoned Duncan over to the table. “You, sit down. I have questions first.”

Roger looked like he was going to explode on the spot, and he dragged his hands through his hair. His expression was both anguish and relief, and he turned to press his brow to Mickey’s shoulder. “She’s alive. Okay, she’s alive. It’s fine.”

Mickey gently pried Roger’s fingers out of his hair, soothing, “Easy. Get yourself together.”

Roger nodded and pushed away. He seemed to be settling down, but he couldn’t keep still and paced around the kitchen.

“Tell me what happened last night,” Cold ordered, fixing Duncan with an icy stare. “In detail.”

“Right, so, uh.” Duncan sat down and wiped his hands off on his thighs. “We’re at the job, everything was going fine until it wasn’t. We see the Luchesi guys roll up, but when we’re about to start blasting, a shit ton more came outta nowhere! Shit starts gettin’ nasty, and... and...”

“And?” Cold pushed.

“I got scared, okay?” Duncan cowered in his chair. “There were so many fuckin’ guys there, and I got fuckin’ scared. So, I ran. I ran. I thought maybe if I could get out, I could call you or Jules! I could try to get some help!”

“And?” Cold pressed again.

“I made it to the fence, but I couldn’t go over. I didn’t know how to get over the fuckin’ wire, and so I crawled down in this drainage ditch pipe fuckin’ thing. I just, I just got in and hid there.”

Mickey wrinkled his nose.

A night in a ditch would certainly explain the smell.

“My phone got soaked so I couldn’t call anyone,” Duncan went on. “It was toast. I didn’t know what else to do, and I stayed there all night until this morning. There were these cops walkin’ around, searchin’ for shit, and I heard them talkin’ about the two suspects they nabbed up at the hospital!”

“Did they say it was Crybaby?” Roger demanded.

Cold gave him a warning look, but he waved his hand at Duncan for him to answer.

“Not by name, no, but they were talkin’ about one of the suspects bein’ a woman!” Duncan replied. “Said she was in real bad shape, didn’t know if she was gonna make it or not. Said she got all fucked up, but they said she’s fuckin’ alive, I swear.”

Gritting his teeth, Roger turned away to keep pacing by the back door.

“How did you get away?” Cold asked.

“I waited until those stupid cops left and took off through the gate. Plant is shut down now, and there won’t be anybody workin’ there.”

“Why didn’t you try to do that earlier?”

“Because I was still fuckin’ scared, Boss! I kept hearin’ the Luchesi bastards huntin’ around, and then the cops and fire guys all showed up. I didn’t think I could get away without someone seein’ me.”

“Until right after you happened to overhear two officers divulging priceless information about our dear Crybaby?”

Duncan’s eyes widened. “What do you mean, Boss?”

“I find it interesting you decided to flee when you knew two officers were in the immediate area. They had to have been close for you to hear them, after all.”

“Wait, Boss, what are you saying?”

“Yeah, what are you saying?” Mickey felt alarmed. He didn’t know what Cold was trying to imply, but it didn’t sound good.

“Nothing.” Cold tilted his head. “Just making observations.”

“As soon as I heard them talkin’ about Crybaby, I knew I had to get outta there! I wasn’t thinkin’ about any of that!” Duncan protested. “I just had to get back and let you guys know!”

Mickey didn’t like how Cold was looking at Duncan. He didn’t like how Jules was looking at him either.

“Duncan isn’t the enemy here,” Mickey said firmly, resting his hand on his friend’s shoulder. “He says he was scared, I believe him. He’s not tryin’ to pull anything.”

Cold regarded Mickey with a curious expression, and he glanced back to Jules, who shrugged. His icy eyes flickered back to Mickey. “You trust him?”

“With my life.” Mickey stood up straighter. “He might be a coward, but he’s no fuckin’ snitch.”

Duncan grimaced.

Okay, so it wasn’t a glowing recommendation, but Mickey was doing his best.

“Fine.” Cold seemed to accept that, but he was still short when he addressed Duncan again. “Did you come straight here from the plant?”

“No, I went by the safe house first. Nobody was there, so I came here. I didn’t know where else to go.” Duncan fidgeted, and he glanced nervously between Cold and the others. “I tried the club too... but... well...”

“We already know.” Cold looked thoughtful, and he was quiet for a long moment.

Duncan looked relieved he didn’t have to be the one to share that exciting news.

“Whatcha wanna do, Boss?” Jules spoke up. “We need to move.”

“Let me think.” Cold reached up and rubbed his forehead. “First, we need to confirm the person at the hospital is Crybaby. Then we need to find out if she is in a stable enough state to move. If she’s still critical, we’re better off leaving her where she is for now.”

“But she’s been arrested!” Roger protested. “And we don’t own all the fuckin’ cops! What about the fuckin’ pigs watching her? What if the Luchesi fucks wanna come finish the job? I’ve seen *The Godfather*!”

“I’ll talk to the newly promoted Detective Carville and make sure that she only has very friendly company. I promise you, we’re going to keep her safe.”

Roger seemed to accept Cold’s sincerity, but he continued to pace.

“The rest of you need to stay close,” Cold went on. “No one goes anywhere alone. If you have to leave for any reason, you take someone with you.”

“Are we safe here, Boss?” Pym spoke up.

“Yes. I expect the Luchesi family is targeting our residences by now, but they don’t know about this house.”

“It’s not Alistair’s?”

“Technically, but it’s not in his name.”

“What about Rowena’s teacher?”

“That dummy doesn’t know my real name!” Rowena suddenly replied. She was peeking around the bottom of the stairs again, shark in hand. “We never use my real name ’cause we don’t want the pigs catchin’ wise!”

Cold wordlessly pointed.

“Ugh, fine!” Rowena stomped back upstairs.

“I need to move my grandfather,” Mickey said. “If they’re trying to strike back...” He didn’t want to even finish the thought. “He’s not safe.”

“Go,” Cold said immediately. “Take Duncan with you.” He glanced around the room. “Anyone else?”

Pym and Jules shook their heads, and Jerry said no. Mickey didn’t think any of them had any family unless he counted present company.

“My mom and my kid brother are here,” Roger said worriedly. “Should I... what should I do?”

“Do you have any other family outside of Strassen Springs?” Cold asked.

“An uncle. Somewhere up fuckin’ north.”

“Tell them to go have a little visit. They need to be out of the city as soon as possible. Take Jerry with you and make sure they’re safe. Jules, Pym. Go pick up Crybaby’s partner.”

“She ain’t gonna like it,” Jules warned.

“I don’t care what she likes. She has a sister in Moultrie. Take her there.”

“Any ideas where I can take my grandpa?” Mickey asked. “He still needs to see his nurses and shit. His doctors.” He glanced around the house. “Gonna get a little too crowded here.”

Cold knew Mickey didn’t have any other living relatives, and he mused, “A hotel perhaps. Under a pseudonym.”

“I know a place.” Duncan hesitated. “It’s still in the city, but it’s off the Luchesi family’s radar.”

“Where?”

“Strassen Springs First Baptist. The basement used to be a soup kitchen and a homeless shelter. There’s plenty of beds and shit, kitchen still even works.”

Cold looked to Jules.

“Went ass up when the city cut the fundin’ for the shelter,” Jules rumbled. “Church has been closed for a while. I know it.”

“Yeah?” Mickey glanced between them. “It’s safe?”

Jules shrugged.

That wasn’t very reassuring.

“I swear it’s legit,” Duncan replied. “Nobody uses it now.” He perked up. “We can totally hide out there. All of us. We could move everybody outta here. All the Gentlemen, Crybaby’s lady—”

“No.” Cold frowned.

“But Boss! We’re gonna be right on top of each other here. We can’t stay here forever. That church has got so much room—”

“Take Mickey’s grandfather and only him. Go. Quickly.”

“Let’s go.” Mickey was already headed to the back door. “We’ll be back soon.”

“Be safe,” Cold said, waving farewell. “Call if you see any sign of the Luchesi family.”

“You got it, Boss.”

“Hey.” Roger stopped Mickey and grabbed his arm. “Watch your ass, okay?”

Their eyes met, and Mickey’s stomach felt light. He cleared his throat. “Yeah. You too.”

“Can’t fuck me if you’re dead.”

Mickey almost kissed him.

He and Duncan took the stolen car, rolled down all the windows, and drove on over to Mickey’s apartment. His piece of shit sedan was still at whatever remained of Slick Rick’s, and he had no idea if it had even survived the fire.

He wasn’t gonna go poking around there to find out.

“You’re taking a fuckin’ shower as soon as we get there,” Mickey ordered.

“Yeah, yeah, I know.” Duncan was staring out the window, and he was suddenly quiet. He was never this quiet.

“You really okay?”

“Yeah. I’m great.” Duncan forced a fake smile. “Spent a night in some stinkin’ sludge, Boss doesn’t wanna listen to my ideas, and oh! Had my best friend call me a fuckin’ coward.”

“What the fuck do you want me to say?” Mickey scowled. “Cold is actin’ suspicious of everybody now. I was tryin’ to fuckin’ help!”

“By calling me a coward.”

“If the shoe fuckin’ fits,” Mickey mumbled.

“Fuck you!”

“Fuck you,” Mickey shot back, tapping the brakes sharply. He enjoyed watching Duncan lurch forward, and he barked angrily, “For fuck’s sake, Duncan! You stayed all fucked up in a damn ditch! I thought you were fuckin’ dead!”

“But I wasn’t, I was just—”

“Shut up! Listen to me. That’s all I need you to do. Fuckin’ listen to me, and I can keep your little ass safe, okay?” Mickey hated to sound so desperate, but he was worried. “If Cold is gettin’ suspicious of you, you need to watch yourself, okay?”

“Suspicious? Of fuckin’ what?” Duncan’s voice hit a higher pitch. “What, that I’ve been ratting him out?”

“That maybe you’ve been ratting all of us out.” Mickey glared. “Shit’s been goin’ wrong that doesn’t

have any damn business goin' wrong, okay? I don't wanna see you get pressed for somethin' you didn't do 'cause you are acting guilty as fuck."

Duncan hung his head.

"You're my best friend. My partner. We've been through some serious shit together." Mickey hated to talk about this kinda crap, but he wanted Duncan to understand why he was so upset. "If you're mad I called you a coward to save your ass, then be fuckin' mad."

"Whatever." Duncan stared back out the window.

Mickey gritted his teeth and decided to give up. There wasn't anything else he could do. He certainly couldn't take back what he'd said, and Duncan would get over it eventually.

He always did.

Duncan still wasn't speaking to Mickey when he went to go take a shower, but Pops was at least excited to leave the apartment. He didn't bother asking why they had to go in such a hurry. He said he was looking forward to a change of scenery, and he went right along without complaint.

Mickey packed up clothes, linens, medicine, and all the soup in a cup he could find. He called the nurse to let her know that his grandfather would be moving temporarily and avoided her curious questions about the new location. He lent Duncan some fresh clothes and once he was ready, they all loaded up in the car.

Strassen Springs First Baptist was a small stone church nestled between million-dollar condos and towering office buildings. It looked small and meek; a little mouse lost in a sea of steel lions preparing to pounce at any second. The grounds were neglected, and it didn't seem like anyone had been there in some time.

Mickey broke in through the back door and quickly explored. The sanctuary was dusty, Bibles ripped up and scattered everywhere, and some of the pews appeared to have been defecated on. The offices and classrooms were in a similar state of disarray, but the basement level was untouched, the door having been hidden behind stacks of old file boxes.

There was indeed a large kitchen and several rooms with beds and furniture. One even had a television, and Mickey was pleasantly surprised to find there was still cable and electricity running. He made up the bed in the room with the TV, laid out the clothing and medicine, and took the soup to the kitchen.

The basement was only accessible by the door Mickey had found, and it was at the end of a hall behind the sanctuary. Easy enough to push some of the boxes back into place when he wasn't here. The church itself had three entry points; the back door Mickey had broken, a side door that led down into some classrooms, and heavy front doors for the sanctuary that were chained and padlocked.

"It's good," Mickey told Duncan when he came back to the car. "It's a real good spot." Duncan's face lit up and Mickey kept going, "I'll talk to Cold about maybe some of us setting up here too."

"Thanks, Mickey." Duncan smiled warmly. "I appreciate that."

“Yeah, man. I got you.”

“Thanks.”

“You’re my partner. It’s what we do, right?”

“Yeah, totally.”

Mickey thought Duncan looked oddly sad for a second, but he wasn’t sure why. He turned his attention to his grandfather, helping him out of the car. “Come on, Pops.”

“Yeah, yeah. I’m comin’.” Pops was weak, and he was shaking as soon as he stood up. “Ah, shit.”

“I’ve got you.” Mickey scooped him up into his arms, figuring this would be easier than trying to help him wobble inside. “Duncan, can you get the doors?”

“Yeah, man.” Duncan walked ahead of them to hold open the door, letting them pass through before he slipped inside to head to the basement.

“This is ridiculous,” Pops complained. “Put me down, Michael. I can walk.”

“Like a drunk turtle,” Mickey griped back. “Just hang on. I’m not gonna drop you.”

“I’ll kick your butt if you do!”

Pops was light, bordering on frail, and Mickey held him a little closer. For the first time in his life, Mickey felt a ping of regret for his chosen profession. Not because he was ashamed of the things he did, but it was the knowledge that it had put the most important person in his life in danger.

Everything he’d done was to take care of his grandfather. He’d carved out a life for them with blood and violence because there was no other path available to him. He hadn’t qualified for any pension from the military, he didn’t have the money for an education, and his one and only skill was taking human life.

He couldn’t stop now, and the consequences were heavy; such a contrast to how light his grandfather felt in his arms as he carried him down into the basement.

Whatever it took, he had to keep Pops safe.

“Here we go,” Mickey said as he eased him down into the bed. “See? Didn’t drop you.”

“Smells musty in here.” Pops wrinkled his nose as he got settled in with all the pillows Mickey had gathered. “How long am I gonna be staying here in this luxury suite?”

“Just for a little while, Pops.”

Pops reached for Mickey’s hand. “Are you in some trouble, son?”

Mickey froze, glancing warily at Duncan, who was hovering by the doorway.

“I’ll, uh, go wait in the car.” Duncan smiled at Pops and waved as he left. “Good to see you, sir.”

“See you later, Duncan.” Pops waved back. “Take care of yourself.”

“Bye!”

Mickey didn't say anything, and he sat down on the edge of the bed. Pops was still holding his hand, and it felt like old paper. He didn't want to look at him.

“So.” Pops smacked his lips. “Are you? In trouble, I mean. 'Cause I can't imagine you brought me down here to enjoy the smell.” He cocked his head. “I'm not stupid, Michael.”

“I know.” Mickey didn't know how to respond. He didn't want to tell Pops the truth, but he didn't want to lie. They'd managed to make it this far without discussing the exact nature of Mickey's job, and he wanted that veil to remain.

“I've seen all the guns. The ammo. I've seen the blood in the bathroom before.” Pops squeezed his hand. “You ain't that slick, kiddo.”

Great.

Mickey scowled.

“Well?” Pops pressed.

“I'm not in trouble. Not exactly.” Mickey hesitated. “Things are getting... heated at the office. We're attempting this merger. Well, more of a takeover.”

“Uh huh.”

“It's gonna be okay,” Mickey said with more confidence. “My boss has a plan, and it's all gonna work out. But we gotta protect our assets for a little while.”

“Oh?” Pops grinned. “I'm an asset, huh?”

“Yeah.” Mickey smiled crookedly. “You are to me.” There was suddenly a tickle in the back of his throat. “You're... you're all I got.”

Pops laid his other hand on top of Mickey's, pulling him in to kiss his cheek. “Don't start that now. Come on. What about your little vampire, huh?”

Mickey scoffed, and he turned his head as his cheeks began to warm up.

“I'm still expecting dinner, you know.”

“Might be a little while, Pops.”

“Nonsense.” Pops patted Mickey's hand. “This place got a kitchen, right?”

“Yeah.”

“Take your little ass to the store, get some real food down here, and let's cook.”

“Ha!” Mickey laughed. “You're serious?”

“As a heart attack.” Pops settled back in the pillows. “I'm not waiting around for your 'office' to get their shit together. I wanna have dinner with my grandson and his boyfriend.”



“Boyfriend is a strong word.”

“Fine! The one you’re doing the horizontal hokey pokey with.”

“Pops!”

“No? Too much?”

Mickey sighed and kissed Pops’ hand before standing up. He found the television remote and gave it to him. He also set Pops’ cell phone with the charger up on the bedside table. “You need anything, you call me. Your nurse is gonna be coming by tonight to check on you.”

“And dinner?”

“I’ll see what I can do.” Mickey paused. “You know how to make lasagna?”

“Lasagna?” Pops grinned. “Somebody is looking to impress, huh. Kinda a lot of effort for a not-boyfriend.”

Mickey stared.

“Fine, fine. Yes, I can make lasagna. I’ll send you one of those text things with the ingredients and what we’ll need so we can make homemade lasagna for the vampire who isn’t your boyfriend.”

“Thank you.”

“I love you, Michael. Be safe out there.” Pops smiled encouragingly. “Business takeovers can be dangerous, okay?”

“I love you too. I will be.”

They both knew this wasn’t about business takeovers, and Mickey was grateful that the facade remained intact.

It was better this way.

Mickey kissed Pops goodbye one more time and left. He moved some of the boxes back to hide the door, making a mental note to give the nurse a nice bonus for what she was going to have to do. He shut the back door and pondered the broken lock.

“What’s wrong?” Duncan had been waiting a few feet away, and he came over when he saw Mickey messing with the door.

“I busted the damn lock when I broke in.”

“I’m sure it’s fine.” Duncan shrugged. “I mean, the nurse has gotta get in, right?”

“Yeah. I’ll pick up some new locks or somethin’. Roger’s real good with this kinda shit. Maybe I’ll ask him.”

Duncan smirked.

“Shut up.” Mickey headed back toward the car. “Let’s go.”

“I’m just saying...”

“How about you say nothing?” Mickey considered driving away immediately and leaving Duncan here to avoid this conversation. He got behind the wheel, eyeing him and daring him to continue.

Perhaps sensing Mickey’s anger, Duncan waited until he was safely in the car and buckled up to comment, “I think you two are really cute.”

“I’ll show you fuckin’ cute.” Mickey sped off, tires squealing, whipping the car around a corner so hard it felt like the car might tip.

“Jesus fuckin’ Christ, Mickey!” Duncan howled as he braced himself against the dash. “Come the fuck on!”

Mickey smugly relaxed his driving after that, and he enjoyed how Duncan continued to cling to the dashboard for the rest of the trip back to Alistair’s house. He parked the car in the rear again, noting Jules’ El Camino was there too.

Alistair answered the door when Mickey knocked and ushered him and Duncan inside. He looked tired and angry, but he asked, “How did it go? Any trouble?”

“No. He’s set up good, and we didn’t see any Luchesi scum. Where is everybody?”

“In here. Come on.”

Cold was sitting in front of the fireplace, and the other Gentlemen were all gathered around him. He lifted his head in greeting when Mickey and Duncan came in. “Perfect timing.”

Roger was standing by the fireplace next to Cold, and he offered Mickey a playful little smile.

Heart fluttering, Mickey tried to ignore him. He couldn’t stop the way he smiled back, though. He quickly focused on Cold. “What’s up, Boss?”

“The female patient at the hospital is indeed our Crybaby,” Cold began. “Detective Carville is going to arrange for the police detail to leave. There will be a misunderstanding in the schedule, and we will have a window between approximately five forty-five and six thirty this evening to transport Crybaby out of the hospital and to a secure location.”

“Which is where?”

“A new safe house that will have the proper facilities for her to stay and be looked after. Doc Brown is going to help us.” Cold looked to Jules. “He’ll be calling you soon and giving you instructions on where to pick up the equipment. Pym, you’re going with him.”

“Why me?” Pym blinked.

“Because Jules will need the technical assistance to set it up.”

“Got it.”

“Mickey, you and Duncan are going to the hospital to get Crybaby.”

“We gonna dress up and put on scrubs to sneak in?” Duncan asked dryly.

“No. Suits.”

“Huh?”

“Stephanie Cox is going to be declared dead at six o’clock while the police are absent, and the charge nurse will be calling a funeral home to make the removal from the floor instead of the morgue by the family’s request. Security will clear you, you’ll take the stretcher up to her room, and wheel her right out the back of the hospital before the next shift of police arrive.”

“It’s only been a few hours.” Mickey was stunned. “How the hell did you pull this off, Boss?”

“Many, many phone calls.” Cold smirked. “The man who gives me an apple has a brother who owns a funeral home in Moultrie. He had numerous suggestions for how to proceed and only asked for a favor to cash in on a rainy day.”

“But that’s like an hour from here.”

“Ah, but the funeral home is willing to make the removal. The driver will just happen to be in the area, and he will stop at Mr. Leon’s store for gas where you two will relieve him of his vehicle.”

“I wanna go,” Roger piped up. “I should be there.”

“Only two people are needed to make a floor removal at the hospital. More than that will look suspicious.”

Duncan timidly raised his hand.

“What?” Cold asked sharply.

“I... I don’t have a suit.” Duncan winced.

Cold’s upper lip twitched.

“Oh! I do!” Roger exclaimed. “I totally do! It’s a fuckin’ Brooks Brothers!”

“That’ll work,” Mickey said casually, trying not to show how pleased he was. After all, he needed to talk to Roger about securing the church.

“Fine,” Cold drawled. “Roger and Mickey will go get Crybaby, and Jules and Pym will prepare the new safe house. Does everyone understand?”

“What about me, Boss?” Duncan asked. “What am I gonna do?”

“You’re going to sit over on that couch and stay very quiet.”

Duncan shrank. “Right. Got it.”

“Well!” Roger beamed at Mickey, teasing, “Ready to blow my mind again?”

Mickey sighed haggardly.

Yup.

This was the man he wanted to cook lasagna for and introduce to his grandfather.

The crazy really was catching.

## CHAPTER 15

At precisely five forty-five, Mickey was wheeling a stretcher down the hallway into the ICU at Strassen Springs General with Roger right behind him.

The driver from the funeral home had met them at the gas station as planned, and he passed over the keys for the van, no questions asked. There was a diner a few blocks away, and he would wait there for them to return the vehicle.

Roger certainly cleaned up well, and his suit looked great on him. It was a dark blue pinstripe that brought out his eyes, and Mickey definitely appreciated the fit of his pants.

Mickey's suit was black on black, and he thought it was fitting for playing the role of a funeral director. And if Roger's ogling was anything to go by, it looked pretty good.

Roger had been eerily quiet on the drive over to the hospital, and Mickey let him be. This was much more personal for Roger, and Mickey was fine with giving him some space. If he felt the need to reach over and wordlessly pat Roger's leg to reassure him, it wasn't a big deal.

This was an important mission, and time would not be on their side.

Apparently, neither was the damn equipment.

They had a little bit of trouble getting the stretcher out of the van. Something went wrong with the wheels not locking, and the damn thing collapsed with one end up and the other flat on the ground.

It was then Roger broke his silence and cursed frantically, kicking the stretcher. "Fuck, fuck, fuck! Come on! Piece of shit fuckin' thing!"

"Calm down," Mickey hissed. He picked up the end of the stretcher that had collapsed and tried to use his foot to kick the wheels down. When that didn't work, he found a handle beneath the bed and pulled. He heard a click, and the wheels dropped and locked into place. "See? No problem."

Roger pushed his hands through his hair. "Sorry, I'm sorry. I'm just... I'm just nervous. This has gotta be perfect. We've gotta get her out of there."

"It will be," Mickey insisted. "Shut your mouth and get your shit together." He stared Roger down. "That's an order from your fuckin' master. Do you understand me?"

“Yes, sir,” Roger breathed out. He immediately relaxed, and his eyes became glassy. “I got it.”

Mickey wasn’t about to debate the morality of using Roger’s penchant for submission to get him focused.

They had a job to do.

And if it got Mickey kinda hot, well, that was something they’d take care of once Crybaby was safe.

Hospital security ushered them through, confirmed their paperwork, and gave them directions to the ICU unit. There they went, Mickey pushing the stretcher down the hallway while Roger followed. They stopped at the nurses’ station and were waved on to Crybaby’s room.

Mickey was very pleased to see there were no cops present, and he and Roger were able to slip inside and shut the door behind them.

Crybaby was unconscious, pale and limp in a faded hospital gown. She had multiple IVs in her arms, but they weren’t currently hooked up to anything. After all, a dead person wouldn’t need any fluids.

Roger’s calm expression was strained, but he kept it together as they pushed the stretcher next to the bed. Together, they carefully pulled her over onto the stretcher. Roger cradled her head and adjusted the pillow beneath it. Mickey buckled the straps and gently draped the stretcher cover over her.

“Ready?” Mickey whispered.

“Yeah. I’m good, sir. Let’s go.”

They wheeled Crybaby out of the room and said farewell to the nurses. One of them commented on their speedy arrival, and Mickey assured her it was because they were very dedicated.

The charge nurse smirked, but she said nothing.

Mickey gave her a little salute and off they went.

All of this was going so smoothly, and Mickey’s heart was pounding as they headed back outside. They had to wheel Crybaby down a long ramp to get to the van, and Roger jogged ahead to open the door.

Mickey pushed the stretcher up to the back of the van, but something was wrong. The wheels weren’t folding down. “The fuck.”

“What?”

“How the fuck does it go back in?” Mickey tried pushing again, but nothing happened.

“Here, sir.” Roger reached down, his hand ghosting over Mickey’s groin as he reached for the handle underneath the stretcher. “I think you gotta grab this.”

Mickey’s cock twitched with immediate interest, but he stayed on task. “Go on. Pull it.”

Roger did, and the stretcher’s wheels finally folded so Mickey could load Crybaby inside the van.

“You good?” Mickey asked, trying to gauge Roger’s mental state.

It appeared to be somewhere between horny and worried.

“I’m good, sir.” Roger smiled. “I’m gonna ride in the back with her.”

“Whatever you need to do.”

Roger climbed into the van and squatted down beside the stretcher, and Mickey shut the door. He got behind the wheel, glancing back at Roger and Crybaby.

Roger had pulled the cover off Crybaby’s face and was smoothing a hand over her hair. Her eyes were closed, and she looked rather peaceful.

“She okay?”

“She’s still breathing,” Roger replied hesitantly. “I mean, that’s good, right?”

“Yeah. I’m sure she’s gonna be fine.” Mickey began to drive to the new safe house. Cold had given him the address before they’d left, and Mickey knew exactly where to go.

It was an old house near the edge of town, a dilapidated Victorian wedged between a parking garage and an equally run-down apartment building. He pulled the van around back, parking near the rear patio doors.

Jules was waiting for them outside, and he came over to open the van. “Hey.”

“Hey.” Roger waved from where he was still perched next to Crybaby inside. “You guys ready?”

“Yeah. We got all the shit set up, and Doc’s waitin’ inside.”

Mickey hopped out and came around to help unload Crybaby. “Now be careful. When we did this before, the damn thing—”

Jules pulled the stretcher out, and it promptly collapsed like before, the end with Crybaby’s head dropping down on the ground.

Crybaby groaned loudly.

“Shit!” Mickey quickly grabbed the fallen stretcher, trying to lift it up.

“Fuck!” Jules scrambled to help him. “What the fuck did I do?”

“You’ve gotta make sure the wheels lock or some shit!” Mickey grunted as he struggled. “Fuck, she’s fuckin’ heavy!”

“Be fuckin’ careful!” Roger snapped.

“I’ve got this! Fuck!” Jules heaved the stretcher back up with one arm, giving Mickey the chance to pull the handle and kick the wheels back into place.

“What a piece of shit!” Mickey griped.

“Jesus Christ,” Roger groaned as he frantically petted Crybaby’s hair. “Shit, is she okay?”

“Come on,” Jules urged. “Let’s get her inside.”

“Don’t drop her again!”

Jules took one end of the stretcher and Mickey the other, and they wheeled her through the patio doors.

The doors led into a dusty parlor with a hospital bed and various medical equipment. Pym was adjusting one of the machines with Doc Brown, a dumpy frog of a man, supervising.

“Hey there,” Brown said, turning to greet them all. “Is this the patient?”

“No, this is just some lady we kidnapped,” Jules retorted dryly. “Yes, this is the fuckin’ patient.”

“Watch your mouth, smartass,” Brown warned. “I’ll remember that the next time I gotta stitch you up.”

Mickey and Jules slid the stretcher over beside the bed, and Mickey unbuckled the straps as Jules walked around to the other side. In one smooth motion, Jules pulled Crybaby onto the bed.

“Here, here. Let me see.” Brown brushed Jules out of the way and began to hook up tubing to her IV’s. He tugged the sheets up over her lap and lifted up her hospital gown.

There was a large bandage on Crybaby’s stomach and another up under her ribs. Mickey turned his head respectfully, just in case, and he asked, “Everything okay, doc?”

“She’s fine. Surgeons did a good job stitching her up.”

“When is she gonna wake up?” Roger sounded worried.

Mickey stepped over beside him and found himself resting a firm hand on his shoulder. He didn’t like seeing Roger upset, and it was doing something to his chest.

“Hard to say.” Brown’s fuzzy brows furrowed up. “She lost a lot of blood, but she’s breathing on her own. She may wake up in a few days, she may not. It’s gonna take weeks for her to fully recover.”

“But she will recover, right?” Roger’s tone made the question sound like a threat.

“Who the fuck is this guy?” Brown complained, gesturing at Roger in annoyance.

“I’m the fuckin’ guy who is gonna break your face and shit down your fuckin’ throat if you don’t fuckin’—”

“Roger!” Mickey snapped.

“You’d better fuckin’ save her, I swear to fuckin’ God!” Roger growled and suddenly lunged across the hospital bed, trying to grab Brown.

“The fuck!” Jules shouted, pushing Brown out of Roger’s reach. “Roger! The fuck are you doing?”

“Easy, easy!” Mickey snatched Roger back and dragged him away, urging him into the next room. “Come on, Doc is on our side, okay?”

“How do we know, huh?” Roger tried to push Mickey off. “How do we know he’s gonna take care of her?”



“We gotta trust him,” Mickey soothed. He refused to let go, and he pressed Roger up against the wall. “He’s good, okay? I fuckin’ swear.”

“And if she fuckin’ dies?” Roger demanded, panting hard as he continued to struggle.

“Then you can kill him.”

“Yeah?” Roger’s face suddenly lit up.

“Totally.” Mickey smiled. “Now, will you settle your little ass down?”

“Yes, master.” Roger relaxed, letting Mickey pin him willingly now.

Oh, hearing those words sent a flood of heat right down in Mickey’s loins. He hadn’t forgotten that little tease at the hospital, and Roger did look so very delicious in his suit.

Roger surged forward and kissed Mickey hard. “Thank you. For fuckin’ everything.”

“Crybaby’s one of us.” Mickey didn’t know what else to say, and he went in for another kiss. “She’s a Gentleman.”

“Yeah, but still. Thanks.”

Mickey kissed him again to shut him up, pressing him flush against the wall and grinding their hips together. He caught a glimpse of Pym peeking around the corner, but he quickly retreated.

Roger clawed at the back of Mickey’s head, and he started to rock forward. “Mmm... come on, master...”

“Dinner,” Mickey panted as he slid a hand down to grab Roger’s ass.

“Huh?”

“Dinner. Tonight. With my grandfather.”

“Yes, sir. Whatever you want. Fuckin’ don’t stop—”

“Gentlemen.” Cold’s voice was like a bucket of ice water.

Mickey pulled away immediately, wiping Roger’s spit from his mouth. “Boss.”

Roger slumped against the wall and grinned. “Oh, hey, Boss.”

Cold looked mildly amused. “Celebrating, were you?”

“Yeah, somethin’ like that.” Mickey adjusted his tie. “Everything okay, Boss?”

“Doctor Brown is optimistic about Crybaby’s recovery, and it would appear we’re all safe.” Cold pursed his lips. “For tonight anyway.”

“What’s the plan?”

“Jules and Pym will return the van to the driver from the funeral home and stay here overnight with Crybaby. The rest of us will head back to Alistair’s.”

“Could I stay too?” Roger asked hopefully.

“No. You make Doctor Brown nervous.”

“Totally fair.”

“Is it okay if we maybe go out for a little bit, Boss?” Mickey didn’t know why, but he suddenly felt like a little kid asking for permission to have a sleepover.

“To go where exactly?” Cold frowned.

“I gotta fix the door at the church. Busted it up getting in. Don’t feel good about it being open, but it’s a real sweet setup, seriously. If we need more space, just saying, it would be a real good spot.”

“I’m very sure Mr. Gill will appreciate your saying that. Is that all?”

“I was gonna cook up some dinner for Pops.”

“A dinner I imagine you were also planning on sharing with Roger?” Cold drawled, glancing between them knowingly.

“Yeah.”

“Secure the church, cook dinner, and take yours to go,” Cold commanded. “While I appreciate how well you two are getting along, the priority remains taking the city.”

“Make sure you two screwin’ don’t screw up the plan!” Jules chimed in as he came over to stand next to Cold.

“Got it,” Mickey confirmed. “We won’t be gone long.”

“Fine.” Cold seemed to be thinking something over, but he wasn’t sharing. After a moment, he said, “Jules, give Mickey your keys. You will drive my car. Follow Pym so you can pick him up after he drops off the van. I’m staying here with Crybaby until you return.”

“Here.” Jules offered Mickey a set of keys. “I took Duncan’s car.”

“Thanks.” Mickey had a feeling Duncan hadn’t been too pleased about that. “We’ll catch up with you guys later.”

“Stay safe,” Cold said quietly.

Mickey couldn’t shake the damn look on Cold’s face. He could practically smell the fire from the gears turning in that man’s big brain, but he still didn’t have a clue what it was all about.

Admittedly, he was a little distracted. He told himself it was because he was worried about his grandfather, but he was equally eager to get his hands on Roger in a much more private setting.

Roger took a brief moment to say goodbye to Crybaby, and then they left. Mickey checked his phone before starting the car, and he smiled when he saw he had a grocery list from Pops for the lasagna.

At the end was a simple message:

*Love you Mickey*

“So, dinner?” Roger chirped as he slid into the passenger seat next to Mickey.

“Mm, definitely. Gotta be quick though. You heard the Boss. He wants us back before too long.”

“Huh. Damn shame.” Roger grinned slyly. “We are gonna be so late getting over to that church though.”

“Oh?”

“Because first I’m gonna show you how very, very grateful I am.” Roger reached, sliding his hand up Mickey’s thigh.

“And just how grateful is that?”

“Mm, so *very* grateful.”

Very grateful turned out to be sucking Mickey’s dick while he tried to drive to the nearest grocery store.

“Ah, fuck!” Mickey grunted as Roger immediately took his cock all the way down his throat, and his foot accidentally tapped the brakes. “Goddamn, Roger!”

Roger made a pleased little sound and started to suck, massaging his tongue around the head and toying with Mickey’s piercing.

It was incredibly difficult to concentrate with Roger going at it like that, and Mickey was struggling to breathe normally. He clenched the steering wheel, doing his best to ignore Roger’s hot mouth. It would be far too easy to close his eyes and accidentally drive them up on the damn sidewalk.

Roger kept sucking, pushing his face right down into Mickey’s lap.

“Fuck!” Mickey’s foot jerked and hit the brakes again.

Roger’s head bumped into the steering wheel, and he pulled off with an annoyed huff. “Fuckin’ watch it, will you?”

“I got it!” Mickey impatiently pushed Roger back down.

“Mmph!” Roger mumbled as he took Mickey back into his mouth, bracing his hand on Mickey’s thigh.

Mickey was able to drive steadily until they hit a traffic light, and he had to stop. As soon as he did, he thrust a hand down into Roger’s hair and greedily pulled. “Fuck, there you go, baby. Get it. Suck me good, baby.”

Roger bobbed his head, taking full advantage of the still car. He came up almost all the way off before slamming back down with a swirl of his tongue. He was excited, a little rough, but Mickey didn’t even mind the faint scratch of his teeth.

He liked the quick flashes of pain, and the clinking sensation when Roger hit his piercing was new and sort of fun. He kept his foot firmly pressed on the brake and arched up into Roger’s mouth. “There

you go, fuck. Just like that.”

Roger was absolutely relentless, and Mickey’s stomach and thighs flexed. The urge to bust was building back behind his balls, and his eyes were glued to Roger’s lush mouth wrapped around his dick.

Fuck, he couldn’t imagine anything more beautiful than this.

Roger’s lips were so pink and wet, and the way he went down on Mickey like a man starved for cock was making his knees weak. He pulled at Roger’s pretty blond hair, bucking up against his tongue, so close, almost fuckin’ there...

A horn honked.

“The fuck!” Mickey snarled breathlessly, his climax stolen away by surprise.

The light had turned green.

Mickey flipped the driver off through the back window. “Fuckin’ asshole!”

“Ugh, what’s wrong?” Roger popped up again and wiped his mouth.

“Nothing. Get back to sucking.”

Rolling his eyes, Roger went back down, but he licked up the side of Mickey’s cock with hungry little mewls. He squeezed the base and stroked up with his lips, gently nibbling at his foreskin and kissing around Mickey’s piercing, deliberately teasing against the metal with his teeth.

Oh, now that was definitely interesting.

The pressure of having his piercing pulled like that flirted with pain, but it was good. It was so tender and sensitive, and the slightest touch was now electrified.

He glanced down before hitting the gas, and he couldn’t tell what was Roger’s spit and what was pre-cum. It was hard to see anyway with Roger’s head in the way.

“Mmm, okay. Nice and easy.” Mickey ran his fingers back through Roger’s hair and settled his hand on the back of his neck. “Feels good, baby.”

“Good,” Roger breathed. “I like making you feel good, master. I like all the noises you make, I like how your cum tastes...”

“Keep goin’ and you’re gonna get a nice big fat load,” Mickey promised.

Roger chuckled and sucked Mickey back into his mouth. He only went about halfway, stroking what wasn’t in his mouth with his hand and using his tongue to lavish the head of Mickey’s cock with long laps and twirls.

“Yeah, keep going,” Mickey urged as he put both hands back on the steering wheel. He’d nearly swerved into the other lane of traffic, and he had to keep his eyes on the road.

Damn, if Roger wasn’t making him work at it.

He planted his hips firmly down on the seat so he wouldn't be tempted to thrust. He stared ahead at the road, and he did everything he could to ignore what Roger was doing. He could do this. He was strong, he had the willpower of steel, he had...

Just missed the turn he needed for the grocery store.

“Ah, fuck!”

“What is it now?” Roger groaned.

“Hang on. I gotta turn around.” Mickey tapped the brakes and quickly turned left, veering across the road to the complaints of several drivers.

“The shit!” Roger ducked his head against Mickey's thigh and laughed. “You've lost your fuckin' mind!”

“No one told you to stop sucking my cock,” Mickey warned, smacking the back of Roger's head.

“Are you sure you want me to?” Roger grinned. “Do you need directions?”

“Fuck off. Come on. I'm trying to get this damn nut before we fuckin' get there!” Mickey slapped the steering wheel impatiently.

“Oh, yes, master. I'm all over it.” Roger snickered as he lapped over Mickey's cock once more.

When Mickey was sure he was back on the right path to get to the grocery store, he focused on Roger's incredible blowjob skills. He was impressed Roger hadn't shown any signs of slowing down or tiring out yet, but that led to an intrusive line of thinking.

How many dicks had he sucked? How many at once? Did he like that?

Mickey let his hips roll up, and he grinned when he heard Roger gag. Snatching Roger's hair, he took full advantage of the straight stretch of road he was on and pounded his way down Roger's throat.

He could see Roger's eyes watering, and his cheeks were getting red. Ah? But his hand, his hand was caressing Mickey's thigh so reverently.

Roger could suck all the dicks he wanted in the world. How many gave it to him just like this?

None.

Mickey had to take a break as he turned into the grocery store. He headed to the back of the lot, gasping as Roger bit at his piercing. Fuck, he almost hit someone walking across the lot.

When he was finally able to park, he shoved Roger's head roughly down on his cock. “Fuck, come on. Suck me, come on, baby. Come on, make me come. Fuck, you've been driving me fuckin' crazy!”

Roger's responding cries were eager and wet, punctuating the obscene slick thrusts as Mickey fucked his face. He opened his mouth wide and groaned as Mickey slammed harder.

The orgasmic rush about to crash over Mickey was hot, shivering, and desperate. He'd already been denied so many times that he swore he would lose his mind if he didn't come now. He closed his eyes

and roared from sheer relief as cum finally filled Roger's mouth.

He kept thrusting, listening to Roger's mumbling moans and little gags until his cock couldn't take the stimulation another second. He pushed Roger off for what felt like the tenth time, but now he pulled him up to meet his lips for a deep kiss.

The taste of his own cum was on Roger's lips, and he sighed contentedly. He slid a hand down to slip inside Roger's pants and grab his cock. He stroked him fast, very pleased with how wet and hard he was.

It didn't take long for Roger to find his end, gasping against Mickey's lips and humping his hand erratically. The kiss pressed on for long moments until Roger grunted, "Mmm, come on, master. We got lasagna to go make."

"Very good point. Let's get cleaned up, hmm?"

Roger was more than happy to take care of the mess. When they were both presentable again, Roger led the charge into the grocery store to help Mickey gather up all the ingredients. It was weirdly refreshing to do something so normal for once, and Mickey was all smiles as they loaded up the car.

He was looking forward to dinner with Pops more than ever, and he didn't even care when Roger took his hand to hold while they drove.

This was nice too.

Before Mickey made the turn into the rear of the church where Pops was staying, something at the front doors caught his eye. All the happy feelings that had been circling around him evaporated. He slowed down and came to a full stop when he saw one of the doors was wide open.

The chains were gone.

"Shit."

"What?" Roger blinked. "What's wrong?"

Fear lurched deep within Mickey's stomach, and he parked the car right there on the street in front of the church. He was already drawing his guns as he headed up the steps, his pulse thudding violently.

No. It couldn't be.

"Mickey!" Roger was right behind him. "What the fuck?"

The chains were strewn across the floor just inside the doorway, and in the light pouring in behind him from the streetlamps, Mickey could see they'd been cut.

Roger saw them too. "Where's your grandpa?"

"Downstairs." Mickey stalked down the aisle of the sanctuary, guns at the ready, listening for any sign of a possible intruder.

*Maybe it was some homeless guys bustin' in here for a place to sleep. Maybe a bunch of kids sneaking in to screw around. Maybe it was nothing at all...*

As Mickey turned the corner to the basement door, he saw a body lying on the ground. The person was wearing scrubs, face down, but Mickey recognized her as one of Pops' nurses.

"Shit," Roger whispered. "Who the fuck is that?"

Mickey said nothing, suddenly surging forward to the basement door. The boxes had all been pulled away, and the dread in his gut twisted up tighter. Panic was seeping in, making his muscles electric and light, and he bolted down into the basement, his chest heaving.

No.

No, no, no.

Although he heard Roger calling for him, it sounded far away. All Mickey could focus on was getting to his grandfather's room as quickly as possible.

It couldn't be. No, it just fuckin' couldn't be.

He kicked open the door with a snarl, and he froze in horror at the sight before him.

Pops was in bed, nestled comfortably amongst his pillows, and he appeared to be sleeping.

Mickey already knew the truth, though.

The moment he saw him, Mickey knew he was dead.

## CHAPTER 16

Mickey dropped down beside the bed, his fingers shaking as he reached for Pops' hand. He was so cold, and Mickey was overcome by a blinding despair. He kept squeezing Pops' hand, wishing it wasn't true and that this was a horrible nightmare.

But it was real.

His grandfather was dead.

"Fuck." Roger stood at the doorway, staring at Pops in bewilderment. "No. It can't be. He's...? He's not... is he?"

"He's dead," Mickey said flatly. He worked to bury the pain down deep, trying to wall it off so he could think straight. "Smothered. He's already getting cold."

"How the fuck did they find him?" Roger hissed. "What about the rest of our people? My fuckin' mother? My brother?"

"Shut up! I don't fuckin' know!"

Someone could have followed them, or maybe the nurse decided to share her information for a price and it cost her her life.

There was a noise upstairs, and Mickey's mind instantly refocused. They weren't here alone now. This was a trap, he realized. Whoever had killed his grandfather knew they were going to come here to see him.

The text message.

Pops *never* called him Mickey.

Was that meant to be a warning? Was Pops even still alive when that was sent?

No matter.

There was only one immediate priority:

Revenge.



“Stay here,” Mickey ordered, rising up from Pops’ bedside and taking his guns in hand once more. “Call Cold. Tell him what’s happened and make sure everyone else is safe.”

“But Mickey—”

“Shut the fuck up and do what I fuckin’ tell you to.”

Roger held his furious gaze, unblinking, and he nodded obediently. “Yes, sir.”

“Good boy.”

With that, Mickey left the room and began to make his way back upstairs. He could hear the old floors creaking with passing footsteps, and he guessed there were around six men. He took a deep breath, the familiar flow of adrenaline washing over him and drowning out his pain.

He would take his time to mourn Pops, but not now.

First, he had six men to kill.

As he came up to the open doorway that led into the hall, he got a glimpse of a figure waiting for him on the other side. He immediately ducked down, hissing as a barrage of gunfire blasted by him. He shielded himself behind some of the old file boxes, and he waited for the shooting to stop.

He came around from the boxes, aimed, and fired twice.

The man dropped dead.

Mickey stepped over his body and then the nurse’s, heading into the sanctuary. There were three men clustered by the front doors, one sitting in a pew, and another standing next to the pulpit, lazily flipping through one of the old Bibles.

A million possibilities flashed before his eyes, his mind calculating all the different ways this could go, and every single scenario ended with all of these men dying.

“Mickey,” one of the men spoke up from the doorway. It was Salvatore Luchesi, that bastard, and he was standing right there, smiling nastily. “How’s your grandfather? Oh, right. He’s dead. Don’t worry. We’re gonna send you along to see him.”

Shit.

Mickey’s rising fury made him hesitate, and the men began to fire upon him. He ducked back through the doorway, cursing at himself for being so foolish. He never let his emotions interfere when he was working, and he struggled to rein them in.

It didn’t matter.

This was still going to end the same way.

Taking a deep breath, he waited for a break in the onslaught of bullets before diving back into the sanctuary. He took out the man at the pulpit with two quick headshots and kicked his body out of his way, ducking behind the thick wooden structure to shield himself.

“You’re dead, Mickey!” Salvatore screamed. “You and the rest of your little fuckin’ Gentlemen friends are fuckin’ dead!”

Mickey ignored the threat, waiting patiently before popping out to return fire. Salvatore and the other men took refuge behind the pews, and Mickey boldly strolled out from the pulpit and down the aisle, his guns at the ready.

Oh, this was too easy.

Every time one of the Luchesi men popped their head up, Mickey shot them. Even when two tried jumping up at the same time, he nailed them both. It was eerily beautiful to hunt in the glow from the old stained-glass windows, and the streetlights from the open doors created all sorts of fractured shadows and shapes.

As he advanced closer to the door and out of the darkness, he gave each fallen man a few more shots to make sure they were dead. After all, by his mental calculation, he had ammo to spare.

The last man begged, but Mickey barely heard him. It was all a nagging fuzz in his ears, and he emptied both of his guns into him.

As he reloaded, he forced himself to refocus and look around the church. Everyone was dead, but he didn’t feel any better. He was angry, sick, and his chest ached. He heard the sound of tires squealing outside, and he then realized Salvatore Luchesi wasn’t here among the dead.

That son of a bitch!

He must have snuck out while Mickey was pinned down behind the pulpit.

Mickey holstered his guns and sighed heavily. None of the carnage he’d left behind would bring his grandfather back, and there was now a painful emptiness burrowing its way deep inside of his chest.

“Hey!” Roger was calling out to him, tentatively creeping into the sanctuary. He looked all around with wide eyes, and he walked the aisle, seeing the dead bodies Mickey had left in the pews. “Holy shit balls.”

“What did Cold say?”

“He said to blow. To get the fuck outta here.” Roger surged toward Mickey and reached for his arm. “We gotta go. Now. I know this isn’t the best neighborhood, but someone had to have heard all that. They’re gonna call the cops.”

“Right.”

“Okay, yes. Let’s go. Why aren’t we moving? Why are you just standing there?” Roger frowned. “Mickey, are you fuckin’ listening to me?”

“I should have been here,” Mickey said quietly, ignoring Roger and looking up at the stained glass windows. The glow was beautiful, but it was also suffocating. The emptiness inside of him was twisting into an agonizing void. “This was... a mistake.”

“What are you talking about?” Roger scoffed. “Come on.”

“No,” Mickey hissed with a sudden surge of anger, his rage breaking free. He couldn’t keep calm now, and he glared at Roger. “I should have been here! Salvatore was here. He fuckin’ did this. I should have been here to keep him safe!”

“How the fuck could you have known?”

“I should have killed him at the fuckin’ club. I should have fuckin’ blown him away at the fuckin’ plant. He got away from me. *Again.*”

Roger tried to reach for him again. “Get a grip, Mickey! Let’s go!”

“Get the fuck away from me!” Mickey roared, pushing Roger away. “It’s you! If I hadn’t been fucking around with you, I would have been here!”

“Oh, what?” Roger threw up his hands. “So, now it’s my fault? Fuck you, Mickey!”

“If I hadn’t been fuckin’ around with you, he might still be alive!”

“What in the actual fuck are you talking about?” Roger stared at Mickey in bewilderment. “Are you hearing yourself right now? If those Luchesi motherfuckers were planning to kill him tonight, it wouldn’t make a fuck if you were here or not!”

“But I was supposed to be, I was supposed—”

“Mickey! For fuck’s sake!” Roger grabbed his shoulders and wouldn’t let go. “If we hadn’t been late, they might have killed us too!”

“Bullshit!”

“Someone knew we were fucking coming here, they would have been expecting us, and this was…” Roger trailed off when sirens started to wail outside. “Ah, *shit.*”

Shit was right.

“The back door. Now.” Mickey squashed down his rage and ran as fast as he could. He burst through the door, and he didn’t stop running until he and Roger were on the other side of the block.

“Duncan’s car!” Roger panted. “We’re just gonna leave it?”

“Fuck it! I’ll buy him a new one!”

“Idiot!” Roger snapped. “They’re gonna find our prints all over it!”

“And inside the church!” Mickey scolded. “Use your head. They’re gonna be looking for both of us either way!”

“Fuck!”

“Shut the fuck up.” Mickey turned and began walking down the sidewalk, struggling to maintain a casual pace. He didn’t want to draw any unwanted attention, and they had to get back to Alistair’s house as soon as possible.

“I was just trying to help!” Roger argued. “You just killed the shit out of like five guys! One doesn’t have a fuckin’ face now! Did you forget that part? Making that guy’s face disappear? Forgive me for being a little tiny bit concerned!”

“Keep your fuckin’ voice down, you fuckin’ idiot! Do you want everybody in the city to know we’re fleeing a fuckin’ crime scene?”

“Fine! Whatever!” Roger did make an effort to lower his voice, and he grumbled, “God, you are such an asshole.”

“Shut it.”

“No, not until you fuckin’ apologize to me.”

“Are you serious right now?” Mickey groaned.

“Apologize.”

“Fuck you.”

“No, fuck you!” Roger spat. “I’m real fuckin’ sorry your grandpa is dead, but it’s not my fault! You can be mad at God, Salvatore, and everybody else, I don’t care! But don’t you dare take this out on me!”

“All you ever had to do was stay the fuck away from me!” Mickey suddenly snapped. “You just couldn’t help yourself, huh? You crazy piece of shit, you really can’t stop, can you?”

“Fuck you, Mickey!” Roger scowled furiously, and his eyes were getting damp. “Don’t you do this. I am not fuckin’ crazy. This is real. What we have, this, this, this is fuckin’ real. Don’t you fuckin’ do it. Don’t call me that.”

“I’ll do whatever the fuck I want,” Mickey sneered cruelly. “I’m done with you. Do you hear me? We are fuckin’ done.”

“No,” Roger protested weakly, falling behind. “You don’t... you don’t really mean that. Come on! No. You’re upset, I get it. Just apologize, and we can figure this shit out later.”

“Do I have to make it an order?” Mickey scoffed. “Tell you that your master never wants to see you again, call you a good boy when it finally clicks in that thick ass *crazy* head of yours? Is that what it will take for you to get the message?”

Roger was visibly stung, and he stopped dead in his tracks. “You son of a bitch.”

“Yeah, and? Shouldn’t that be ‘you son of a bitch, *sir*’? Try again.”

“No, no, no.” Roger shook his head, and he grunted angrily. “You’re not my master. You’re not my fuckin’ anything, do you fuckin’ hear me? You’re not even my damn friend. You’re fuckin’ nothing!”

“Now you’re getting it.” Mickey grinned savagely. “I don’t give a fuck about you. You were a fun piece of ass for a short while, now we’re done, and I wanna get back to fuckin’ Alistair’s so I can figure out how I’m gonna kill Salvatore.”

Mickey was too angry to care about the damage he was doing. He was in so much pain, and the only thing making him feel like he had any control was hurting Roger.

Roger suddenly smiled. Even though it was sad, it was still so beautiful. He sighed, his shoulders dropping defeatedly as he whispered, "Fuck you, Mickey."

Mickey kept on walking, refusing to look back, but he didn't hear Roger's footsteps after a few moments. He turned his head to see what he was doing, but Roger was gone.

He looked all around, and there was no sign of him.

"Well, fuck."

\* \* \*

In the weeks that followed, the streets of Strassen Springs ran red.

The Luchesi brothers had declared war on each other and the Gentlemen. The alliance between Cold and Cristian was over, and no one was safe now.

While Christian and Matteo fought each other, Cold began a series of targeted assaults on them both, taking out any and all Luchesi strongholds he had knowledge of. He'd worked for the family all of his life, and he knew exactly where to hurt them. With Jules, Jerry, and Mickey at his side, it soon became a regular slaughter.

The Luchesi numbers were dwindling, and Cold's influence with the city's police was growing fast. Many of them were tired of being under the Luchesi family's heel and were more than happy to look the other way. Cold was very appreciative and made sure to thank them generously for their assistance.

The loss of Slick Rick's was small compared to the progress they were making, and Cold soon controlled the entire southern half of the city. Although they were doing well, Mickey was still mourning the loss of his grandfather.

He hadn't even been able to have a funeral. He couldn't go claim his body because the police were looking for him in connection to the massacre at the church. Granted, the police were not looking that hard thanks to Cold's new influence, but it was still a risk they couldn't afford to take.

Going back to the apartment to clear out his arsenal had been risky enough, and Mickey hated seeing his grandfather's empty room. It reminded him of what he'd lost, and he almost cried when he saw the keys for Pops' lady hanging by the door on his way out.

He didn't feel right taking them, but he didn't want the cops or anybody else to have them either, so into his pocket they went.

There they'd stayed, and Mickey swore to himself he'd never let them out of his sight.

Crybaby had woken up and tried to escape the safe house twice to join the other Gentlemen in their fight against the Luchesi family. It was only after Cold threatened to chain her to the bed that she

agreed to stay put and focus on her recovery.

Jerry and Jules stayed close to Cold and took the brunt of the dirty work. Mickey was eager to do his part, but Cold would sometimes leave him behind to watch over Alistair and Rowena. He didn't like being given babysitting duty, but he knew it was an honor to guard those most precious to their Boss.

Even when one of those people stubbornly insisted on 'gangster tea parties' with a stuffed shark when they were supposed to be in bed. A gangster tea party, Mickey learned, was when Princess Snaggletooth hosted a tea party for all her stuffed animals and whacked anyone who didn't attend.

Mickey was put in charge of the whacking.

Duncan and Pym, meanwhile, lacked a certain flair for violence against both stuffed animals and the living, and they were relegated to more simple tasks. They ran out for food and supplies, made sure Doc Brown had whatever he needed for Crybaby's care, and did anything else Cold asked of them.

Duncan was more anxious than usual, and he constantly offered his condolences for Mickey's grandfather. He didn't stop offering until Mickey told him he was going to shoot him in the foot. He knew Duncan meant well, but every single time was another reminder Pops was gone.

And not just Pops...

Roger.

Mickey had only seen Roger in passing since that night at the church after he ran off. According to Duncan, Roger was refusing to stay at Alistair's because Mickey was there. He came around to help Cold with some things and seemed to be spending most of his time over at the safe house with Crybaby. Somehow, he'd managed to sweet talk his way back into Doc Brown's good graces.

Maybe he fucked him.

Not that Mickey cared.

Because he absolutely didn't.

It wasn't like he missed Roger, and he certainly didn't regret what a bastard he'd been to him. It was better this way. He didn't stay awake at night thinking about his kisses, his laughter, or that damn perfect smile. He never jerked off to the memories of being inside of him and how his hand felt cracking over that perfect ass.

Oh, and his pulse was definitely not beating faster knowing he was going to see Roger later today.

Cold had called a meeting at their new club, La Belle et la Bête, and he wanted all of the Gentlemen there. They were going to show up in full force, including the new men they'd recruited to work for them. The Gentlemen had grown beyond their inner circle, and they had dozens of people now. Cold had even arranged for a police escort for himself and Alistair.

It was an absolutely vulgar display of power, and Mickey knew Cold was doing it to rub it right in the Luchesi family's faces.

Their time was nearly up.

Mickey walked into the club, and he nodded his greeting at the guards posted by the door. The club was under renovation now, and there was plastic draped everywhere and buckets of paint all about. It had great potential, and it was going to be a serious moneymaker once it was fixed up.

Jules was busying himself behind the bar, and Mickey almost didn't recognize him because he was wearing a suit.

Everyone was, he realized, when he saw the rest of their gang sans Crybaby milling around. Even little Pym did, though he looked a touch like a kid playing dress up in his dad's clothes. Mickey understood now why Cold had asked him to wear his suit today, the one with the mandarin collar; he wanted them all to look their best.

There was a blond man Mickey didn't know, and he stayed to himself by the end of the bar. He looked like a starved cobra, and Mickey had the oddest urge to punch him.

Just had one of those faces.

Roger was here, of course, and he was wearing the same slick black suit from the other night. His tie was missing now and his shirt was undone, and Mickey tried not to stare. Damn, he looked good.

He swore he saw some fresh bruising beneath Roger's collar, and he couldn't explain the anger that suddenly came over him. He shouldn't give a fuck what or who Roger had been doing.

It wasn't any of his damn business.

Roger noticed Mickey and very purposely looked away, ignoring him.

Mickey ignored him right back, but he didn't have long to stew because Cold was waving them over toward the stage where a long table was waiting for them. There was a small spray of calla lilies in the center, identical to the ones Cold used to keep in Alistair's office at Slick Rick's.

"Gentlemen, it's time." Cold took his place at the head of the table. "Let's get started."

Alistair and Jules grabbed the seats next to him, and the rest of the Gentlemen got settled in the other chairs. Roger, however, chose to perch on the edge of the stage.

Cold didn't seem to mind, and Mickey was glad for it. He didn't want to be anywhere near Roger right now, and the farther away he was, the better.

The blond man remained standing, but he came over to the table when Cold beckoned him.

"Thank you all for coming today," Cold said. "We have a very special guest with us. This is Rufus Corman, former member of the Luchesi family. He's recently had a change of heart, and he would like to join the Gentlemen."

"Oh? Really?" Mickey raised his brow. "Just like that?"

"Mr. Corman has been hesitant to join us officially, but he has many friends in politics, including several of the judicial variety. His first show of loyalty was to ensure Marco Luchesi made bail."

"That piece of garbage is out on the streets again?" Duncan made a face. "What the fuck for?"

“A personal grievance that I’m going to take care of very soon.”

Mickey frowned, but he didn’t bother asking. He didn’t think Cold would tell them, and he already had a pretty good idea. “You need some help, Boss?”

“No, thank you,” Cold said briskly. “I will be handling it on my own.”

“I was happy to help,” Rufus gushed. “Marco will deserve whatever is coming to him.”

“Agreed. Now, moving on.” Cold cleared his throat. “Luigi has officially surrendered his claim to the family and fled the city. His supporters have either followed him or defected to one of his brothers. Now it’s us against Cristian and Matteo. Matteo is weak, thanks to both our efforts and his brother’s, and it will not be long before he’s out too. Which then leaves us with Cristian. My plan for him is nearly complete, but there is one particular obstacle still in our way. The city’s prosecutor, Mr. Marcus Head. Mr. Robert York, the assistant prosecutor, is a friend of Mr. Corman’s, and he is much more sympathetic to our cause. He would like us to remove Mr. Head from the picture so he can assume his position.”

“Yeah?” Mickey perked up. “Want me to go get him?”

“Mr. Head is aware his life is in danger, and he’s been placed under police protection,” Rufus said. “The Luchesi family has some beef with him too, and he’s being kept tucked away at an undisclosed location, but he still arrives to work every weekday morning at precisely nine o’clock.”

“At the Strassen Springs Courthouse, which is crawling with fuckin’ pigs as it is,” Jules chimed in. “It’s way hot. They’re postin’ uniforms all over the place, the whole block. Fuckin’ suicide to go after him there.”

“Shit.” Mickey scowled. He thought it over and looked to Cold. “I’ll do whatever needs to be done, Boss.”

“I’d rather not risk losing you to Strassen Springs’ finest, although I appreciate your dedication as always,” Cold drawled. “No. I do not think trying to take out Mr. Head at the courthouse is wise. The danger is too great. We must find where he’s being kept or discover some other way that he might be vulnerable.”

“Family?” Jerry asked hopefully. “Maybe a wife? Girlfriend?”

“No. Not even a dog.”

“Damn.”

“Who drives him around? The cops?” Roger scratched his chin thoughtfully. “Maybe we can arrange our own little transportation service?”

“I believe he’s being driven personally by SSPD, but it may be worth looking into,” Cold mused.

One of the guards approached, saying politely, “Hey, Boss? I’m sorry to interrupt your meetin’, but I got a situation.”

“What is it?” Cold demanded.



“There’s an old guy and some scrawny little kid here,” the guard replied. “Says they got info about the fire at Slick Rick’s.”

“Oh?” Cold glanced over at Alistair. “Bring them in, please.”

“You got it, Boss.” The guard returned to the lobby, coming back a moment later with the unexpected guests.

The old man was gray and gaunt with long hair and wild eyes. The kid was indeed scrawny, a bean pole stuffed in an oversized hoodie, and his eyes had the same feral look as the old man’s. Their clothes were dirty and patched in several places, and Mickey swore he heard the kid’s stomach growling as they got closer.

“Hello, your Coldship,” the old man said in a grand voice that might have once graced a stage. “My name is Francis Von Valdemar. This is my grandson, Francis Von Valdemar III. We like to call him Thirdsies. He has something very important to say to you, sir.”

Cold narrowed his eyes and leaned across the table as he looked them over, his fingers steeped in front of him. “Proceed.”

The kid stepped forward, nervously tugging at the pocket of his hoodie. He took a deep breath and mumbled, “I’m sorry for burning down your club.”

“You did that?” Alistair roared furiously. “You fuckin’ little worm—!”

The kid immediately cowered.

Mickey almost laughed.

This tiny kid toasted the club? It was ridiculous.

Cold held up his hand to silence Alistair, remaining calm as he asked the kid, “And what inspired you to do that?”

“These fancy guys asked me to make a bomb.” Thirdsies fidgeted. He was clearly uncomfortable with everyone staring at him. “Somethin’ Italian somethin’ Lucheesy. Gave me a thousand bucks to do it.”

“The Luchesi family came to you to make them a bomb?” Cold tilted his head curiously. “How old are you?”

“Thirteen.” Thirdsies stood up straighter.

“There has been a terrible misunderstanding here, sir,” Valdemar said sternly. “My boy is a good boy, and he wouldn’t have done that had we known it was your club. He’s a huge fan of yours, Mr. Cold, sir.”

Cold actually smiled at that.

“He’s gay,” Valdemar whispered loudly. “You’re his idol, really. Like Cher, but with a touch more death.”

“The fuck!” Thirdsies wailed, totally mortified. “Come on, you don’t have to tell him all that!”

“I thought it would be beneficial, my boy!”

“Have you made many bombs, Mr. Thirdsies?” Cold asked. He didn’t seem upset at all, and Alistair was right there stewing beside him.

“Oh! Like dozens of ‘em!” Thirdsies’ face lit up like a Christmas tree. “My grandpa taught me all about making fires and these crazy gases with chemicals, but I love blowing stuff up the best.”

“You don’t say.”

“Yeah! I mean, I do say! And, uh, again, I’m real, real sorry about burning down your club. I always dreamed about goin’ there one day. You know, when I was old enough to get fake ID.”

“The chatter on the streets suggested a most violent end for whoever was responsible for its loss.” Valdemar held his head high. “If you must have your blood debt, then I ask that you take it from me, sir.”

“I don’t think I will be taking any blood today,” Cold mused. “I have something else in mind.”

“What’s that, your Coldness?”

“Do either of you have any experience making car bombs?”

“Oh, Boss Cold.” Thirdsies’ eyes widened, and he was absolutely grinning. “Do you want one that goes boom on a timer or one that goes boom on command?”

“That’s exactly what I wanted to hear.” Cold smirked. “I think this is the beginning of something beautiful. Mr. Valdemar, Mr. Thirdsies. I would like to cordially extend an invitation for you both to join the Gentlemen.”

## CHAPTER 17

The meeting went on with Cold and his newest Gentlemen conspiring a plan to take out the city prosecutor. Valdemar apparently had a very impressive history of arson beneath his belt, and Thirdsies was ‘way stoked’ to be a gangster.

“Just a small one,” Cold had said with a sly smile.

He would forgive the fire at Slick Rick’s in exchange for Valdemar and Thirdsies’ help and offer them protection from the Luchesi family in case they ever came around looking to tie up loose ends.

Alistair probably wasn’t happy about the destruction of his club going unpunished, but he didn’t say anything. There had been a distinct shift in the relationship between him and Cold, so much that Mickey was asked to sleep down in the basement with Pym because Cold would now be sleeping in the guest room.

On the surface, everything was business as usual. Cold remained calm and collected, and Alistair was as smug as ever. Even now as they discussed the details of planting a car bomb to take out that Mr. Head guy, nothing seemed amiss. In fact, a strange synergy was beginning to take shape.

Pym, who was usually quiet as a mouse, was offering to help Thirdsies track down the specific parts he would need and offering advice to ensure they were untraceable. Rufus claimed he could find out where the escort vehicles were kept when they weren’t being used, and Roger boasted he could break in anywhere Cold needed so they could plant the device.

Everyone was working together so well, and Cold looked quite proud of the motley little gang he’d brought together.

Mickey wasn’t really needed for this mission, and he found himself zoning out from the intense plotting. It wasn’t like him to be unfocused when he was working, but thoughts of his grandfather were invading his brain.

He’d read the ingredients for the lasagna at least a hundred times now, and he still wrestled with whether or not that final text was actually from him or some Luchesi prick. He hadn’t deleted it yet and sometimes found himself staring at it, debating if he should let it go.

There was nothing he could do about it now except wait for that bastard Salvatore to rear his ugly head again. During their recent rampage, there had been no sign of him, and Mickey was aching to put

a bullet in him.

He knew Salvatore was the one responsible for Pops' death, and he'd been wrong to blame Roger. He couldn't take back all the horrible things he'd said, and regret had begun to eat its way around the grieving hole in his chest. He had chosen to ignore it, but it was impossible with Roger only a few feet away now.

Mickey's grief was tearing him apart inside, and he longed for relief, for comfort, anything to ease the agony. He knew he was yearning for Roger, to have him back in his bed and in his arms once more to get a reprieve from all of this pain.

What he'd felt when he was with Roger was truly without compare. No one else would ever be able to give him that sweet rush. He felt equally confident Roger's new lover, whoever he was, could never fuck him like Mickey could. He couldn't make Roger scream like he did.

The wicked sting of envy made Mickey grind his teeth unconsciously, and he found himself fantasizing about finding this mysterious lover who had dared leave those marks on Roger's neck and...

Damn.

He logically had no right to feel this way because Roger wasn't his, but he couldn't stop it. The urge to claim Roger right there on the stage in front of everyone was overwhelming, and it was in immediate opposition with his pride insisting he didn't want Roger at all.

Shoving down the swirl of conflicting feelings, he tried to catch up with the current conversation.

"It would be nothin' to kill the cameras at the precinct parking lot," Duncan was saying. "A quick little power surge, let Roger slip in, and then hey, turn them back on before anybody catches wise."

"I can loop the security feed," Pym said. "As long as they don't look too closely at the time stamp, it'll totally work."

"And if they do?"

"Then we're fucked."

"We'll need a plan B," Jules insisted. "Just in case your fancy tech shit don't work."

"Fires can be very distracting," Valdemar said with a happy smile. "Should Mr. Lorre's safety become compromised at any time, a small blaze would certainly draw away the police officers' attention."

"Fire could totally fuckin' work." Jules beamed.

"Mr. Lorre, Mr. Pym, Mr. Valdemar, and Mr. Thirdsies," Cold ordered, "you four stay. The rest of you may go. Stay close and stay safe. We may own this part of the city now, but the danger remains."

"You got it, Boss," Jules confirmed.

"I'll be around," promised Duncan. "Later guys."

Jerry said something in French, and it sounded nice. Alistair, on the other hand, said something in French and it sounded absolutely foul. Given the twitch of Cold's upper lip and the shock on Jerry's face, it probably was.

Nothing else was said, French or otherwise, and those not participating in the mission made ready to leave. Mickey made an effort to not look at Roger, and he headed outside with the others.

The work ahead seemed fairly simple with Pym's technical skills, and Mickey didn't think there was any lock on the planet that could keep Roger out. With the added bonus of arson, what could possibly go wrong?

*You're worried about him...*

There wasn't any need to qualify the 'him' in Mickey's thoughts. It made him angry and though he couldn't say why exactly, the car keys in his pocket felt heavier. It gave him pause once he hit the sidewalk, and he actually forgot what he was doing until Duncan nudged him.

"Hey, you okay, man?"

"Yeah." Mickey frowned. "I'm fine."

Duncan hardly seemed convinced, but he wouldn't push. Not after being threatened with foot violence. "Yeah, well, you let me know if there's anything I can do."

"There is something, if you've got the time."

"Yeah, man. Of course. What is it?"

"I need a ride."

"But you've got a ride?" Duncan glanced over to Mickey's car parked across the street.

It was a modest sedan given to him by Cold to replace the one lost at Slick Rick's. It was totally legal, serviceable, but Mickey could not shake the weight of his Pops' keys.

"It's yours. To make up for the whole, you know, gettin' yours impounded at a crime scene."

"Uh, thanks?" Duncan flinched and promptly dropped the keys Mickey threw to him. "Where are we going?"

"I gotta go see a lady."

Mickey hadn't been out to the storage facility since Pops was killed. It didn't feel right coming here by himself, and Duncan was understanding enough to keep the conversation to a minimum before dropping Mickey off there.

The Nova was there waiting for him, untouched and sleek as ever.

Standing in front of the open door, Mickey didn't move for a long time. He was remembering how excited Pops used to get when they came out here and how his face would light up when that door rolled up. Pops loved talking about how important it was to take care of a lady, to make sure you showed her a good time and made her feel pretty.

The conversations seemed silly at the time since Pops was talking about a damn car, but Mickey's gut felt heavy realizing he'd never have any of them again.

There wasn't anything he wouldn't do to hear his grandfather's voice one last time waxing the values of a well-loved lady.

*You take care of her, and she'll take care of you.*

He tentatively reached out to touch the hood of the car, and he frowned when he realized there was a thin veil of dust. It was barely anything at all, but he was already taking off his jacket and looking for a bucket.

Mickey spent hours washing and detailing the Nova. He scrubbed it down and dried it by hand, waxed every inch, polished all the chrome, and made sure the tires were gleaming. He dusted the inside, cleaning every dial and switch with the utmost care and attention. He even found a bottle of car leather conditioner to treat the upholstery with.

Only when he was done did he finally sit down behind the wheel, looking over his work with a small smile.

Pops would have been proud.

He took the keys out of his pocket and stared at them for several moments. It was a set of two with an acrylic rectangular keychain that read 'Privacy is a real blessing when you fart in the bathtub.'

It made him smile again, and he cranked up the car.

As the engine roared to life, the radio came on at ear piercing levels. Lipps Inc.'s "Funky Town" was blaring away, and he instinctively smacked at the dash to silence it. After about the third round of the titular hook, the music finally cut off.

Ears ringing, Mickey slumped down in the seat with a haggard sigh.

That empty feeling in his chest was back full force, and it was hard to breathe. He wanted to find Salvatore and rip him into pieces with his bare hands, to take his time and make it hurt.

Wait, who was that walking up now?

Scowling, Mickey saw that it was none other than Roger Lorre.

Great.

Roger was wearing tight jeans and an even tighter t-shirt, and he appeared freshly showered.

Mickey turned off the car and stepped out to cut him off from getting any closer to the car. "What the fuck are you doing here?"

"I live here, jackass." Roger snorted. "Remember?"

"Thought you had a job."

“Already done.” Roger pursed his lips. “You know, it’s kind of alarming how fast that Thirdsies kid can make a bomb. I blame the internet. It’s a terrible influence on today’s youth.”

“So, it’s all set?”

“The party is scheduled, yeah.”

“Good.” Mickey started to walk back to the car, but he noticed Roger was still standing there expectantly. “You can fuck off now.”

“I’m fuckin’ worried about you,” Roger blurted out. “You are a total dick mongrel, but you’re not... you’re not acting right.”

Mickey wasn’t sure what to do with that. “There is nothing to worry about. Now, go.”

“You’re such a liar.”

“Fuck off.” Mickey’s pulse was rising, and he was getting angry. He was still trying to figure out what to do with all of his grief, and Roger’s very presence was irritating him.

It was also reminding him of certain physical acts, none of which required clothing, and how much he wanted to get his hands on Roger again. The memories of Roger’s taste, the heat of his body, and how sweetly he begged were inescapable.

Mickey didn’t like being out of control like this, and he didn’t know how else to assert himself to make Roger leave except to be an asshole.

“You could have called me.” Roger took a few steps closer. “I mean, even just to talk or something. You could, like, scream at me some more or whatever, you know, if you think it would help.”

“And interrupt you and your latest fuck buddy?” Mickey sneered, trying to focus on his anger and ignore how his desire began to grow. “Wouldn’t dream of it.”

“You have some serious fuckin’ balls tryin’ to talk to me about who I’m fuckin’!” Roger exploded passionately, suddenly right in Mickey’s face. “I was tryin’ to be a concerned fuckin’ friend and you had to go and say that shit?”

“Fuck you, you stupid fuckin’ slut!” Mickey hated how good Roger smelled this close. “You really do go around lettin’ anybody hit it, huh?”

“We’re done, remember?” Roger snarled. “Your exact fuckin’ words to me!”

“Fuck you!” Mickey snatched Roger by the front of his shirt. “I bet you fucked hundreds, huh? Couldn’t have your precious monster so you just spread like fuckin’ butter—”

“Maybe I did!” Roger laughed madly. “Maybe I fucked a whole goddamn army!” He shoved Mickey back. “It wouldn’t be any of your damn business!”

“It sure as hell fuckin’ is! You can’t just run around, slutting it up like that!” Mickey roared.

“Oh? What happened to I’m just a piece of ass that was fun for a while? Did you hit your big stupid bald head on something and forget—”

“Oh, wow! The *whore* thinks I’m stupid? Ouch, that really hurts.”

“Stupid *and* fuckin’ ugly! Fuck you!”

“No, fuck you!” Mickey seethed. The rage boiling between them was palpable and intense, and he grabbed Roger’s shoulders. “God, how I fucking hate you.”

“I hate you too!” Roger snapped, clawing at Mickey’s grip. “You arrogant, stupid bastard!”

“Go on.” Mickey refused to let go. “Call me all the fuckin’ names you want. Go whore yourself out to the whole fuckin’ city. I don’t care because no matter what you fuckin’ do, you’re *mine*.”

“Mickey—” Roger’s eyes widened, and his lips looked so lush and pink.

Fuck it.

Mickey snarled and grabbed a tight fistful of Roger’s hair, dragging him into an angry kiss.

“Mmph! Get off me!” Roger growled and bit Mickey’s lip, his fists pounding into his chest in protest. “You fucking scum sucking bastard!”

“Ball gargling skank,” Mickey shot back, licking at his bleeding lip. “You’re mine. Every slutty fuckin’ inch of you.”

“No!” Roger pushed as hard as he could, but Mickey didn’t stop.

“Spread your fuckin’ legs for the whole city, I don’t fuckin’ care!” Mickey kissed him again. “Let everyone line up and take turns droppin’ a load in you. It doesn’t make a fuckin’ difference to me, Roger Lorre. You’re fuckin’ *mine*.”

“Oh, Mickey.” Roger moaned quietly, his resistance fading. “Fuck, I love it when you talk dirty.” He grabbed Mickey’s face, kissing him deeply and grinding as close as he could.

Mickey kissed Roger back fiercely, his hands all over him. His shoulders, his hips, his ass; God yes, his ass. He’d thought about that ass for days, thought about getting a good handful and squeezing hard.

Roger gasped, their teeth hitting as their kiss deepened, and he pulled at Mickey’s shirt. It was still damp from washing the car, and his fingers slipped clumsily over the buttons.

“Uh uh.” Mickey pushed Roger up against the side of the car. “Pull down your fuckin’ pants. Right now.”

“Fuck yeah.” Roger scrambled to comply.

“The fuck do you say?” Mickey demanded, grabbing a fistful of Roger’s hair.

Roger moaned, and his head tilted back into Mickey’s grip as he smiled blissfully. “Ah... yes, master.”

“Good boy.” Mickey smoothed down Roger’s hair to reward him, and he watched as his plump ass was bared. There was a plastic clunk, something falling out of Roger’s back pocket as he shoved his pants down. “The fuck is that?”



Roger laughed. “Oh, just a little something.”

Mickey kneeled down to see what it was, and he snorted as he picked up a small bottle. “You brought fuckin’ lube?”

“I’m an eternal optimist.”

“Fuckin’ freak,” Mickey said affectionately. He stood and pocketed the bottle for now, sliding his hand over Roger’s ass.

Christ, he could feel Roger *shudder* at his touch.

Not wasting another moment, Mickey swung back and smacked Roger’s ass.

“Yes! Fu-uccck!” Roger wailed, his knees nearly buckling. He had to hold onto the side of the car to steady himself, pushing his hips back for more.

There it was; that delicious rush he’d been missing. The thrill of taking total control, putting Roger in his place and watching him writhe. He spanked him again, harder, captivated by the way Roger’s cheek bounced and pinked up where he’d struck him.

“God, fuck yeah.” Roger’s breath was labored, and he cried out when Mickey popped his ass with even more force.

“This is for showin’ up with that fuckin’ mark on your neck. Rubbing it in my damn face you fucked someone else, even though this ass is mine.”

“Mmm, I’m sorry, sir... so very sorry.”

Mickey spanked him hard enough to make his hand sting, several strikes in quick succession. He loved how Roger took it all, moaning and crying his name so beautifully. He’d missed this so much.

Pulling out the lube from his pocket, Mickey poured some on his fingers and rubbed over Roger’s hole. He roughly pressed in one finger, savoring the slick heat.

He shouldn’t have been surprised by how soft and open Roger already was, and he easily slid in two more fingers. “Someone had some real high fuckin’ hopes about how this was gonna go down.”

“Like I said, very optimistic.”

“Spread your ass for me. Right now.”

Roger reached back and grabbed his cheeks, pulling them apart to bare his hole.

Mickey pulled out his fingers, eyeing Roger’s asshole and aiming a light smack there. He watched Roger jerk in surprise, listened to him moan, and he spanked him a little harder. He wanted to punish Roger for letting anyone else fuck him, and he wasn’t going to stop until he was satisfied. “This? This fuckin’ hole here? It’s mine.”

Whimpering, Roger nodded. “Yes... Fuck, it’s yours.”

Mickey spanked his asshole again, relishing in the wet smack it made and how pink the skin around it began to turn. He reached between Roger's legs, grabbing his cock and pulling it back between his legs. "Close your fuckin' legs."

"The fuck?" Roger sounded dazed. "You want me to make a fuckin' fruit basket?"

Mickey yanked on Roger's dick. "Do it. Now."

"Fuck. You can't be serious! What are you—"

"Now." Mickey pulled again, hard enough to make Roger yelp.

"Okay! Mmm, fuck!" Roger reached down, pushing his balls and cock back between his thighs and closing his legs tight. "Mm, like this, master?"

"Yes. Was that so fuckin' hard?" Mickey smirked as he ghosted his fingers over Roger's dick, lightly rubbing the dripping head. He palmed his balls, stretched and certainly tender like this, and he spanked them softly.

"Oh, fuck." Roger's next moan was breathless, deep, and he shuddered against the car.

"Like that, hmm?"

"No... mmm, no, I fuckin' don't." Roger didn't sound very convincing.

Mickey tapped Roger's balls again with more force, entranced by how he twitched in response. Mickey slid his fingers down, and he spanked Roger's cock against his thighs.

"Ah! Master!" Roger moaned, clinging to the side of the car for support. "Please... I can't...!"

"Yes, you can." Mickey spanked his cock again, stroking him lightly before popping him once more. "You can, and you will. You've been a filthy little slut, and I've gotta punish you, remember?"

"No... I..." Roger's head dropped down, and he weakly pushed his hips back toward Mickey's waiting hand. "Yes, master. I remember. I just... I just wanna be good for you."

"And you're gonna let me spank your cock, aren't you?"

"Yes, master."

"You really do like it, huh?" Mickey spanked his cock harder, and he watched as Roger's legs trembled. He grabbed his dick and squeezed down hard, smiling when he saw how much precum he was leaking. "Look at you. You're getting so fuckin' wet."

"I don't, I don't like it," Roger argued.

"No?" Mickey pressed his fingers back inside of Roger's ass, pushing deep as he smacked at his balls. He could feel Roger's body clenching around his fingers, and he loved how he trembled before him. He smacked his balls again, as hard as he dared, and Roger let out a shout that made Mickey shiver.

“I can’t... mmm... master...” Roger sounded drunk, his breathing erratic as he grinded back on Mickey’s hand. It almost seemed to be unconscious, his body naturally drawn to having something inside of it and fucking it. “It’s too much...”

“Just a few more,” Mickey soothed as he thrust his fingers, rearing back with his other hand to spank Roger’s cock, several cruel smacks back to back. He could hardly believe how Roger kept squeezing down on him, crying and sobbing for him as each little spank drove him toward the edge.

Yes, that’s what was happening. He was gonna make Roger come just by spanking his dick like he did back at the bar. He could force Roger to orgasm just like this and leave him whimpering on the ground like the little slut he was.

Mickey traced a single finger down Roger’s cock, flushed a deep shade of red from all the intense spanks. He swirled around the wet head and brought his finger to his mouth to taste him.

Roger didn’t deserve to come.

Not yet.

“Do you understand who you fuckin’ belong to now?” Mickey asked.

“Yes, master.” Roger groaned desperately. “I do. I’m yours. I’m all yours, okay?”

“Did you let your fuck buddy do this shit to you? Would you let him spank your cock like I do?”

“No, master. Never! Only you, I swear. Only you get to do that.”

“Good boy.” Mickey tapped Roger’s legs so he would spread them and release himself. He crowded behind him, reaching around to grab his cock and pet him roughly. “Mmm, you’re hurting, aren’t you?”

“It’s okay, master.” Roger’s head dropped back against Mickey’s shoulder. “I was bad. I had to be punished. I’m such a slut...” He sighed as Mickey started to stroke him. “Just, mmm, just a little tender.”

Mickey’s chest felt too tight holding Roger like this, and the way he surrendered himself over made his heart stumble over its rhythm like a drunk trying to stand up. He would probably never understand why, but Roger had chosen to give this exquisite power over his body to Mickey and him alone.

“Come on. Get in the car,” Mickey ordered, pushing Roger away and opening the door. “I wanna fuck you in the backseat.” He moved the seat up and ordered, “Face down.”

“Yes... Yes, master.” Roger flashed a weary smile and wiggled the rest of the way out of his pants. He brushed by Mickey and shakily crawled into the back of the car. He stretched out on his stomach and arched his ass up.

Mickey checked his wallet and made a face when he realized he’d never restocked on protection.

Fuck it.

Roger was his, and he could fuck him however he wanted to.

“Master, please. I need your dick.” Roger spread his legs enticingly, one of his feet fumbling on the floorboards as he tried to get comfortable.

“Be right there.” Mickey dropped his pants to his knees, gave his cock a slathering of lube, and climbed into the back on top of Roger. He shoved Roger’s face against the seat as he said, “I’m gonna fuck you bare. Like the little slut you are.”

“Mmmm, yes, master,” Roger groaned loudly. “God, yes. Yeah, fuck me, fill me up. Make me yours, please, please, make me fuckin’ yours.”

“Oh, Roger... you already are.” Mickey laughed, tracing the outline of his own handprints as he parted Roger’s cheeks. He pushed up against his wet hole, thrusting in to the hilt. “Goddamn!”

Roger groaned, gasping sharply as Mickey began pounding into him. “Fuck! Master! Yes!”

Mickey had to concentrate on holding off or he was gonna bust on the spot. The inviting grip of Roger’s hole was pulling him in deep, and every slam was pure heaven.

Roger lifted up his ass, trying to rock back. “Fuck! God, yes. Just like that, just like that.”

Mickey fucked him hard, and their breath was already fogging up the back windows. Growling ferociously, he let his legs and hips do the work, drilling Roger’s body down into the seat.

“Fuck, yeah,” Mickey snarled passionately. “I don’t care who you fuck! Fuck a million guys, I don’t give a fuck! Nobody else can fuck you like I can. Mm, fuckin’ no one!”

“Only you, master,” Roger whimpered, sobbing against the leather. “Ah, fuck! Only you fuck me so good. Just you!”

Mickey pressed his body down until he was completely flush against Roger, hissing in his ear, “When they fucked you, did you think of me? Did you wish it was me inside of you?”

“Yes, sir,” Roger whispered, trying to turn his head back to look at Mickey. “They were never enough... no matter how many... they weren’t enough.”

“How many?” Mickey pushed in as far as he could, grinding slowly.

“Master, mmm...”

“Tell me how many. What, two? Three?”

Roger closed his eyes. “Seven, sir.”

“Oh, you fuckin’ *slut*.” Mickey reared his hips back and slammed into Roger as hard as he could. He fucked him without mercy, their bodies crashing together violently. The car began to rock, its wobble fueled by Mickey’s furious hips.

Roger screamed and grunted, and his lips parted in absolute bliss. He clawed at the seats, letting Mickey fuck him as brutally as he wanted. He shouted when Mickey bowed his head and roughly bit his shoulder. “Oh, fuck!”

Mickey clamped down on the bruise and sucked, determined to cover it with his own mark. He wanted everyone to see who Roger belonged to. Seven or seven fuckin' hundred, it didn't matter.

Roger Lorre was his.

Mickey kept thrusting, but his thighs were burning and he couldn't get good leverage in the cramped backseat. He slowed, sliding his hand down Roger's arm and tangling their fingers together. His thrusts were still hard, but he was taking his time, pushing in deep and slow.

Roger grunted when Mickey bottomed out inside of him, and he squeezed Mickey's hand. "Fuck... I... I missed you, master."

Mickey kissed the side of Roger's face, his ear, sighing breathlessly, "I missed you too."

"I'm yours, master. Always. I'm all yours."

"Mine." Mickey mouthed along Roger's throat and jaw, the intensity no longer fueled by rage but by something deeper.

Roger was an itch he couldn't scratch away, a fucking splinter stuck under his skin he couldn't dig out no matter how hard he tried. Even knowing Roger had sought out other men, his desire wasn't diluted in the slightest.

In a strangely maddening way, it made him want Roger even more.

Roger was crying out from every adoring slam, tilting his hips up to perfect the angle. He dragged Mickey's hand to his mouth, and he kissed and sucked at his fingers.

Mickey slid his thumb over Roger's lower lip, kissing his cheek, picking up the pace once more. "Fuck, gettin' close..."

"Come on, master." Roger's tongue flicked out over Mickey's knuckles. "Get that fuckin' nut. Fill me the fuck up."

Mickey hammered Roger's body mercilessly, and he could feel the singular pulse in the head of his dick as he came. He roared, spilling everything he had deep inside Roger's ass. Every pulse was hot, the silky clench of Roger's body around him making every shiver more intense.

"I can feel you," Roger whimpered. "Fuck, yes... give me every fuckin' drop."

"There you go," Mickey soothed, rocking his hips slowly, loving how slippery slick Roger was now with his cum. "All nice and full."

"Mm, thank you, sir."

"Come on. I wanna watch you come."

Roger reached underneath himself, starting to stroke himself to completion until Mickey snapped, "Not on the fucking seat! Roll the fuck over! I just fuckin' cleaned!"

Roger huffed as Mickey pulled out and moved off of him, swinging his body around so he was on his back.

Mickey grabbed one of the dirty towels from the front seat and slid it under Roger's ass.

"You're so thoughtful." Roger pulled Mickey down for a damp kiss, sighing appreciatively when Mickey grabbed his cock.

"There you go," Mickey mumbled, jerking him faster and faster, making him twitch and whimper. "Come on. Get it, baby, come on."

Roger kissed Mickey hard, his hips stuttering as he came all over himself. It was fast, messy, and his stomach was covered in cum. His head smacked against the seat, and he grinned happily as Mickey worked him through it. "Fuck, yeah..."

When Mickey was sure Roger was finally spent, he offered him his hand to lick up the mess. He watched Roger's tongue, feeling a rush of heat despite having just come. "Mm, good boy."

"Uh huh. Fuck, we're good at that."

"Yeah."

"So," Roger sat up and adjusted himself.

"So?" Mickey echoed as he shifted over in the seat to give Roger room. He was too tired to pull his pants up just yet.

"We doin' this again?" Roger asked, trying not to sound too hopeful. "Because while this is an awesome way to apologize, I don't like the screaming and shit that comes before it."

"Depends on you."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah, whether you can keep your dick in line," Mickey replied bitterly.

"How about you fuckin' apologize for being such a major cock stain and maybe I'll think about it?"

Mickey gritted his teeth. "I'm sorry, okay? Happy?"

"Very," Roger said smugly.

"Great."

"Are you?"

"What?"

"Are you happy?"

"That's a stupid fuckin' question." Mickey made a face. He didn't know how to answer it, and he ended up staring out the windshield.

"Well, I'm here. You know, for whatever." Roger reached for his hand. "And I don't want anyone else but you. I mean it."

Mickey hesitated, but he gave Roger's hand a small squeeze. He met Roger's gaze, searching his face

for some degree of certainty. “Don’t make me fucking regret it.”

“Can’t make a promise I might not be able to keep.” Roger fidgeted. “But I’m gonna try... as long as you try to not be such a raging dick fungus.”

“Fair.”

The car smelled like hot leather and sex, and for the first time in days, the empty pit inside of Mickey had been filled. He didn’t know how long it would last, but he was going to enjoy it while he could.

Although, he was curious...

“You really fuck seven guys?”

Roger grinned.

“What the fuck?” Mickey stared at him. “You lied to me?”

“Duh.”

“How fuckin’ many was it?”

“It was one, you big baby.” Roger cackled. “Oh, the look on your face!”

“Why the fuck would you lie about that shit?”

“Uh, so I could get my insides rearranged in a manner to my satisfaction. Spoiler, you fuck like a god when you’re pissed off.”

“Noted.” Mickey smirked at the compliment. “So, does this mean you’re gonna make a habit of pissing me off?”

“Strong maybe.”

“Good, it gives me something to punish you for later.”

“See? Win win.”

“I still owe your ass for drinkin’ up all that creamer.” Mickey leaned in and stroked his hand up Roger’s thigh. “And I’m sure there’s a bunch of other stuff I’m forgetting that I need to square away with you.”

“Oh, probably a ton,” Roger agreed, spreading his legs. His eyes fluttered, and he smiled. “So many things. I mean, I’m just fuckin’ awful.”

“The worst.” Mickey pressed his fingers against Roger’s asshole, swirling around in the wetness. That was his cum inside of Roger, and he loved the new sense of ownership it gave him.

Roger rocked gently down on Mickey’s hand, asking, “Are we fucking again? ’Cause it kinda feels like we’re fucking again.”

“Uh huh.” Mickey kissed his cheek as he pushed his fingers inside. “Mmm, but you... you’re not gonna come for a while.”

“What?” Roger squirmed. “Why?”

“Because this is a punishment. Remember?”

“Fine. In that case, I fucked *eight* guys.”

“Oh, you fuckin’ dirty slut.”

Roger grinned. “Yeah, but mmm, I’m your slut, master.”

“Damn right, you are.”



## CHAPTER 18

For the first time since the church, Roger came back with Mickey to Alistair's house. The fellow Gentlemen were not surprised, but no one commented on it. Except Jules.

"Nice to see you two finally fucked and made up!"

Roger cackled, and Mickey rolled his eyes.

Hiding a smile, Cold said, "I believe new sleeping arrangements are in order. Mickey, Roger, you two will stay with Crybaby at the safe house along with Valdemar and Thirdsies. Pym, Jerry, Duncan, Jules, you will stay here."

Duncan frowned. "Can't I go to the safe house?"

"No." Cold's tone left no option for debate.

"You good with splittin' us up?" Jules rumbled. "Think that's safe?"

"Considering the large number of very exuberant armed guards now at our disposal, yes."

Looking around the current crowded state of the house, it was probably for the best.

Jules and Jerry were passive aggressively scooting away from one another on the couch while Cold lounged in the armchair. Thirdsies was kneeling down in front of the fireplace at his feet like a dog while Valdemar hovered near the stairs.

Pym had pulled over one of the chairs from the breakfast table, and Duncan stood next to him. With no clear place to sit, Roger plopped on the bottom step. Mickey opted to lean against the doorframe.

There was no immediate sign of Alistair or Rufus Corman.

Huh, but where was—

"Are you guys doin' gangster stuff?" a little voice whispered from the top of the stairs.

"Rowena!" Cold scolded. "Why aren't you in your room studying?"

"Because my dumb teacher is in the bathroom!" she replied.

Roger turned to look up at her and waved.

“Hi, Mr. Roger!” Rowena waved back excitedly.

The front door was directly in front of the stairs, and Mickey could see Rowena peeking around the banister at the top. He attempted a friendly wave.

“Hi, Mr. Mickey!” Rowena grinned. “I need your help! Lady Archibald Doobie Doo didn’t show up for teatime again!”

Mickey bowed his head. “I’ll do what needs to be done.”

“Rowena.” Cold did not sound amused, but he was smiling. “Go.”

“Hey! You don’t get to boss me around!” she challenged. “I’m not a gangster person!”

“Go now or Princess Snaggleteeth sleeps with the fishes.”

“Jokes on you! She *is* a fish! She’ll be fine!”

“Rowena!” Cold raised his voice.

Rowena squealed and scurried back down the hallway out of sight.

Sighing, Cold reached to gently massage his temple.

Jules stifled a short laugh.

“To business,” Cold said briskly. “According to our new friend Mr. Corman, Matteo and the bulk of his men are staying at the Lancet House just a few blocks from here. It’s a three-story home in the historic Mordecai suburb. It is guarded twenty-four seven, and there are at least two dozen men, all heavily armed. They brought in enough food to last for weeks, and they have no intention of leaving the city. We need to snuff him out as soon as possible.”

“How the hell are we gonna do that?” Jules grunted. “You want us to go in heavy?”

“Not quite. We’re going to fire a single shot at the door, draw them out in small groups, finish off who we can before the authorities arrive. A direct assault would be suicide, and we cannot risk lingering for too long. It is no guarantee that we will be able to take out Matteo, but that is not our goal.”

“Thought that was the idea?” Mickey raised a curious brow.

“No. For my final plan to take the city, it’s more advantageous if Matteo survives. Our aim here is to further weaken what remains of his men. We need to eliminate him as a threat, but allow him to remain a tool.”

“Pretty sure he’s always gonna be a tool,” Jules said, chuckling under his breath.

“Fair point, Jules.”

“I’m very good at eliminating threats,” Mickey crossed his arms over his chest. “You sure you don’t want me to scope out this place for a few days?”

“You are the very best, Mr. Tamerlane. That is not the issue. Time is. We need to do this quickly, and I cannot say when Matteo would show himself for you to take a shot. They’re set to stay there for weeks, and that is not acceptable.”

“Excuse me, your Coldness?” Valdemar raised his hand. “While that is a brilliant plan, just totally and absolutely dazzling, there is another way.”

Cold was obviously annoyed, but he waved for Valdemar to elaborate.

Valdemar cautiously approached him, his eyes shining. “You said our foes were shackled up in the Mordecai district, yes? Those houses are antiques. Ancient. Classic—”

“Yes?” Cold pressed.

“But they were renovated!” Valdemar exclaimed. “There was a terrible fire in the eighties, jumped from house to house, nearly took everything, and oh, the repairs! That’s what will do it! Nearly all new construction in the last fifty years utilizes a lovely bit of engineering called an I-joist! Oh, good sir, how they would *burn*.”

Now Cold was interested, and he leaned forward. “Explain.”

“I-joists are two pieces of wood with a section of oriented strand board glued between them. Great for reinforcing roofs and making floors that don’t have pesky creaks, but they are not fans of fire. They will fail in a matter of minutes. Collapse, destruction, all very good!”

“How quickly would it burn?”

“If you started the fire on the top floor, it could potentially consume the home in fifteen to thirty minutes if left unchecked. Fire needs to breathe, you see. Once it’s broken through the roof, it can get all the delicious oxygen that it needs to grow. I imagine the home is furnished with modern trappings, yes?”

“That matters?”

“Oh, yes, your Coldness,” Valdemar gushed. “Modern furniture is made with many synthetic materials that burn quite well. Not like all of this here.” He waved around them. “Older homes such as this actually take much longer to burn. Mm, they can smolder for hours—”

“Focus, Mr. Valdemar.”

“Yes, my apologies, good sir.” Valdemar beamed. He seemed very proud of himself. “I mean to say that a fire would be a very, very viable option if you want to draw out all of the Luchesi plebeians in a timely manner.”

Cold seemed to be considering it, and he looked to Jules.

“Fire fuckin’ works for me,” Jules said. “Just think. They’re all gonna come runnin’ outta there. It’ll be easy pickin’.

“But how exactly would we get into this top floor to start the fire, hmm?” Jerry asked Valdemar. “They’re not going to let you just stroll right in.”

“Of course not, dear boy!” Valdemar laughed. “That’s why you must first injure the external air conditioning unit, forcing them to call a repair shop and we pose as repairmen!”

“How could you possibly know which one they will call?”

“Most of the homes in that area were last serviced under a warranty plan, and there is only one such shop that possesses the contract for HVAC work. A simple snatch of the company vehicle when they’re en route and voila! You have a uniform, a van, and the proper credentials to pass through the home...” He grinned. “And up into the attic to check the secondary unit.”

“How the fuck do you know all this?” Jules demanded. He looked a bit awestruck.

Mickey had to admit he was impressed too.

“Oh! Yes!” Valdemar’s smile turned sheepish. “Because that’s what I was planning to do to burn it down again.”

“Again?” Cold raised his brows.

“Ah, of course. The fire I mentioned. The one in the eighties. That was me. Some of my more reductive and primitive work, I admit, and I was never satisfied with the result.”

“Aw, don’t be so modest!” Thirdsies exclaimed. “Come on, Grandpa. That was a great fire. There was so much property damage.”

“Thank you, my boy. That’s very kind of you. I was such a young arsonist. I didn’t even know the true joys of using accelerants then.”

“How long until the repair shop answers the call to come check the air conditioner?” Cold asked, redirecting the conversation back on track.

“It can take a few days for them to schedule an appointment.”

“What’s stoppin’ us from goin’ ’round and helpin’ ourselves to a van to speed that up?” Jules asked with a grin.

“Why, nothing at all!” Valdemar grinned back.

Cold appeared to still be thinking about it. “A fire is much more risk than I was anticipating... although it has the element of surprise.”

“My boy here can create a timer to start the fire whenever you’d like. Not an explosion, but a simple device to spark the accelerant and allow the flames to spread. They’ll never know it’s coming until the entire house is already starting to fill with smoke.”

“What about smoke detectors? Alarms?” Roger asked. “I mean, pretty much every home ever has them.”

“Easy enough to check those little buggers while I’m there and disable them. Complimentary battery check!”

“Oh, so you’re going?”

“Naturally!” Valdemar puffed up his chest. “I’m a master of disguise.”

“And the Luchesi bastards don’t know him,” Thirdsies chimed him. “They only ever met with me.”

“Mmm, they’re quite familiar with the rest of us, that’s true,” Cold mused. “How about this… the last fire you started there. You said it spread, yes?”

“Oh, yes!” Valdemar was beaming again. “Those homes are so close together, it’s nothing for the fire to reach out and make new friends.”

“Instead of walking into the house they’re currently occupying, why not start the fire next door, hmm? Less risk, same results.”

“I’ll do you better than that, my liege! We can start fires in the houses on either side of our Luchesi foes and box them in. They will have no choice but to promptly evacuate!”

“And run right into our waiting arms,” Cold concluded. He was smiling now. “How soon can you and your grandson be ready?”

Valdemar and Thirdsies exchanged shrugs, and Thirdsies replied, “I mean, like a few hours maybe? I have most of the stuff I’ll need in my backpack.”

“One never knows when the urge to destroy might arise,” Valdemar said mysteriously.

“Jerry,” Cold said. “Go disable the units at the houses flanking the Luchesi’s hideout.”

“Too easy, *Monsieur*. I’ll drain out all the freon.”

“Oh, very clever!” Valdemar cheered. “That’s what I would have done!”

“Jules, Pym.” Cold looked to them now. “Confirm the home warranty contract and which repair shop will be called. We’ll need to borrow some equipment, so case the property as needed.”

“Done, Boss,” Jules confirmed.

“All over it!” Pym said.

“Mickey, stay ready,” Cold ordered. “I’m trusting your aim to make short work of the Luchesis when they flee the house.”

“You got it, Boss.” Mickey nodded.

“What about me?” Roger asked. “What do you need me to do?”

“Yeah, and me?” Duncan frowned. “I wanna help too.”

“The safe house needs provisions,” Cold replied shortly. “Doc Brown has made a list.”

Duncan seemed disappointed by the menial task, but Roger grinned.

“Whatever you need, Boss,” he said. “I’m on it.”

“Once the air conditioner has been sabotaged, it may take some time before the homeowners contact the warranty company for repairs.” Cold rose from his chair, approaching the liquor cabinet to pour

himself a drink. “When they make that call, we move.”

“We’ll have the van, the goods, all that ready to go,” Jules continued. “All Valdemar’s gotta do is set up the fire shit in the homes, yeah?”

“Absolutely,” Valdemar confirmed. “Let my boy know the time you desire, and he shall adjust accordingly.”

“I will select the time.” Cold smirked as he took a leisurely sip. “Mickey will take the lead to dispatch as many of the Luchesi men as possible as they flee the home. Jules, Jerry, Roger, and myself will assist him.”

“Not telling ol’ Rufus, huh?” Jules got up to help himself to a drink.

“No, we are not.”

That was fine by Mickey. There was something about that man’s punchable face he did not like at all.

“Until I have selected the time, I would ask that you all restrict your activities to either here or the safe house.” Cold took another sip. “Also, I would suggest none of you are out and about tomorrow morning. Say, around nine o’clock. Maybe a little before.”

Mickey smiled.

That was the time that Mr. Head, the city prosecutor, was due to arrive at the courthouse.

Thirdsies looked pretty pleased with himself, and Mickey almost expected Cold to reach down and give him a pat on the head as walked by to sit back in his chair.

“I guess you’re still not gonna tell us why you’re so keen on killing the prosecutor?” Duncan ventured warily. “Or why you wanna keep Matteo alive?”

“I believe you have some shopping to do,” Cold replied, well, coldly.

Mickey stared at Duncan and wished he could throttle him or somehow telepathically instruct him to shut his trap.

“Right. Of course, Boss.” Duncan sagged. “Come on, Roger. Let’s go get this over with.”

Roger gave Mickey a quick smile before moving to follow Duncan to the door.

Mickey hated how easy it was to smile back, and he ducked his head when he felt his face getting warm.

In the middle of a gang war vying for control of the city was a strange place to meet someone special, but... it was nice.

“Remember to behave yourself,” Mickey warned.

“Yes, sir,” Roger replied coyly, winking before he slipped outside.

Mickey allowed himself to enjoy the flicker of heat those words gave him, and he cleared his throat, quickly schooling his face back to a neutral expression.

“If there’s nothing else,” Cold drawled, “I have to go check on my little sister and make sure she hasn’t locked her teacher in the bathroom or made any whacking attempts.”

“Very good, sir,” Valdemar chirped. “The boy and I will travel to the safe house to prepare the incendiary devices.”

“Excellent.”

“I’ll go take care of the air conditioners,” Jerry said. “With any luck, the forecast will be blistering.”

“We can only hope.”

One by one, the Gentlemen all departed to take care of their respective assignments or retreat to various corners of the house. Cold remained by the fireplace, staring at the ashes while he finished his drink.

Mickey found himself lingering, having no immediate task.

“Would you like a drink?” Cold waved to the cabinet.

“I’m okay, Boss.” Mickey tried to smile. “Thanks, though.”

“As you wish.” Cold turned his glass up and rose from his chair. He was heading to the stairs, but he paused. “I hope you know that when this is over, I’m going to pay for your grandfather’s funeral. Whatever his final wishes were, I would see them fulfilled.”

The offer took Mickey by surprise, and he was once again hyper-aware of the keys in his pocket. “I appreciate that, Boss. Thank you.”

“Of course.”

“I’m gonna head over to the safe house if that’s all right. See how Crybaby’s doin’. See if Val and Thirdsies need any help.”

“And wait for Roger?” Cold smiled.

Ah, there was that heat again.

“That too.”

“Go on. There’s not much we can do right now. I’ll contact you if there are any new developments.”

“Thanks, Boss.”

“Stay safe, Mr. Tamerlane.”

Mickey left and drove the Nova over to the safe house. He was excited about the new job waiting for him, eager for a chance to take out more of the Luchesi trash. He wanted another chance to kill Salvatore, but that cowardly shit was still on Cristian’s side so they wouldn’t be seeing him anytime soon.

He hoped Cold didn’t have any plans that involved keeping that bastard alive because Mickey wanted to handle that blood debt personally.

And preferably very slowly.

Daydreaming away of terrible carnage, he parked the Nova around the back of the safe house. Valdemar's rusty Volkswagen van was here, as was Doc Brown's sleek Jaguar. Being a doctor for the mob was apparently quite profitable.

Mickey knocked at the door, waiting for someone to let him in.

Valdemar answered it, and he greeted, "Ah, hello, dear boy! Come along, come along!" He ushered Mickey inside. "What brings you here?"

"Cold told me I'm staying here," Mickey reminded him. "Thought I could see if I could help."

"Ah, of course!" Valdemar shut and locked the door behind them. "The boy does well on his own, but we'll be sure to ask if we need anything."

Mickey found Thirdsies at the rickety dining room table with some tools, bits of gears, and some wires. He had changed out of his suit back to his hoodie again. He was hard at work on some troublesome looking device, and he didn't even raise his head up when he spoke. "Watch the cord."

Glancing down revealed Mickey had nearly tripped over the cord for a soldering iron. "Thanks, kid."

"Yup." Thirdsies' eyes remained glued to his work.

Mickey headed into the parlor where Crybaby was set up, still hooked to a bunch of tubes and machines. She was sitting up, bright-eyed, and her color looked good.

"Hey, Mickey." Crybaby waved. "How the fuck are you?"

"Better than you," he replied fondly.

"Yeah, yeah, wouldn't take much." Crybaby rolled her eyes.

"How's it goin'?"

"Can't complain. Wouldn't do any fuckin' good if I did."

"Fair." He came over to her bedside and gave her a firm handshake. "Damn good to see you."

"I've been right here! You coulda come seen my gorgeous mug anytime you wanted."

"Busy."

"Yeah, I know. I've heard. Just you wait. I'm gonna get outta this bed and get mine."

"You still need several more weeks to fully recover, Miss Cox," Doc Brown said, walking out of the kitchen with a glass of water and a handful of pills. "Doctor's orders."

"Which means they're Cold's orders," she grumbled as she begrudgingly took the pills. She chugged them back with the water and grimaced.

"Thank you." Doc Brown took the empty glass back to the kitchen.

"So, you guys are gonna burn down the Mordecai district?" Crybaby asked.



“Only a little!” Valdemar called out from the other room.

“What he said.” Mickey smirked. “Gonna make ourselves a lovely little shooting gallery if it all goes well.”

“Too bad Salvatore won’t be there,” Crybaby griped. “Any sign of that prick yet?”

“No.” Mickey scowled sourly. “He’s staying close to Cristian. We haven’t seen him. Trust me. I’ve been looking.”

“I know.” Crybaby’s face softened. “I’m real sorry. You know. About your grandfather.”

“Thanks.” Mickey kept his expression blank. He didn’t want to talk about it, so he asked, “You hear anything from your lady?”

Crybaby laughed. “Oh, yeah. Scout’s a fuckin’ pistol. She’s been calling me everything but a child of fuckin’ God. Wants to come back to the city. She ain’t real happy with me right now.”

“Buy her some jewelry?”

“She’s more of a whiskey and grinding her oats to make scones kinda gal.”

“Really?”

“Yup.” Crybaby laid back and rested her head on the pillow. “God, I can’t wait for this shit to be over.”

“Not getting soft on me now, are you?”

“No, I wanna get fuckin’ laid.”

Mickey barked out a short laugh.

“What are you laughin’ about?” Crybaby grinned. “Don’t act like you’re not gonna make up with Roger and knock some boots again.”

Mickey smiled, and he looked away. This was another subject he didn’t want to discuss, but at least this one made him happy.

Huh. Yeah. Roger made him happy.

Weird.

“Oh.” Crybaby’s grin grew. “That is the face of a man who already done had his today, eh? Good for you, Mickey. Glad to see you pulled your head out of your ass.”

“No comment.” Mickey smiled slyly.

“None needed. I see you clear as day.”

While Mickey would neither confirm nor deny Crybaby’s suspicions, they continued to chat until her medicine made her too drowsy to keep up with the conversation. He left her to rest and went upstairs to check out the bedrooms. There were four, and Valdemar and Thirdsies had each already claimed

one judging by the trash bags full of clothes.

He also noticed new garment bags hanging by their closets and at the foot of their beds, gifts from Cold no doubt.

Mickey picked the larger of the two rooms that remained, and he sat down on the bed. It was musty but clean, and he wondered if Roger would sleep in here with him.

*He will if you order him to.*

The thought made him smile, and he stretched out across the bed.

Roger would do anything for him—crawl across the floor, beg for a taste of Mickey's cock...

All too easily, he remembered the rush of filling Roger's tight hole with his load, and his cock flexed in his pants.

Jesus, what was Roger doing to him?

He tried to will his cock to stand down, and his attention was immediately drawn downstairs when he heard a crash. Bolting from the bed, he drew his guns as he hurried down the stairs to see what was happening.

It could be an attack, the police busting in...

Or Duncan, stumbling in from the back door and losing his grip on an armful of grocery bags with Roger right behind him.

"Honey! I'm home!" Roger declared.

"What the fuck?" Mickey quickly dove in to intercept one of the bags and help Duncan not drop everything. "What is all this shit?"

"Cold's fuckin' list!" Duncan huffed. "We got medical tape, bandages, sanitary pads, baby wipes, some fuckin' extension cord thing, and a fuck ton of food. We even got a fuckin' lasagna pan!"

"Lasagna?" Mickey snorted, and he took the bag into the kitchen with Roger and Duncan lugging the rest behind him.

Duncan groaned as he set the bags on the counter. "I don't know, man."

"Thank you, boys." Doc Brown pawed through the bags and removed the bandages and other medical supplies. "This will all do nicely."

"No problem, Doc." Roger made sure to brush bodily by Mickey as he unpacked the groceries. "How you doin'?"

"Fine." Mickey offered a small smile and pulled some stuff out to go into the fridge. He paused when he saw it was ground beef, sweet Italian sausage, and ricotta cheese.

Glancing back at the counter, he saw Roger putting away some herbs and spices, including nutmeg.

It was all the ingredients for his grandfather's lasagna.

“The fuck.”

“What’s wrong?” Roger frowned. “You got the screwiest look on your face.”

“The lasagna pan, the meats.” Mickey looked at the spices to confirm. “This is all the shit for Pops’ lasagna recipe. The one... you know.”

“That you didn’t get to make,” Roger said quietly.

“How the fuck did Cold know?” Duncan frowned. “Did you tell him?”

“No,” Mickey replied.

“Well, you are like constantly lookin’ at your phone.” Duncan cowered when Mickey glared at him. “What? I’m sorry! You do! He probably read it over your shoulder or somethin’.”

“What the fuck am I supposed to do?” Mickey scoffed.

“Well.” Roger clicked his tongue and picked up a bottle of wine from one of the bags. “It looks like we should drink this and make some fuckin’ lasagna.”

“I don’t know how,” Mickey snapped. “Pops was gonna tell me, okay? That was the whole point.”

“I could help,” Roger offered. “If you want.”

“The fuck do you know about cooking?”

“More than you, obviously.”

“Fuck you,” Mickey spat. He couldn’t explain why, but the whole situation was making him angry. He didn’t want to do this.

“Well, fine.” Roger shrugged and planted his hands on his hips. “If you can’t do it, I understand.”

“Excuse me?”

Duncan cringed.

“You heard me,” Roger said. “If you can’t do it, we won’t do it. I mean, cooking is super hard, you know.”

Mickey knew exactly what Roger was doing. It pissed him off even more because it was working. “Fuck it. Let’s do it.”

“Really?” Roger grinned.

“Yes, fuckin’ really.” Mickey reached for the wine. “Come on. Before I change my damn mind.”

“You guys are just adorable,” Duncan teased.

“Shut the fuck up.” Mickey rolled his eyes at Duncan. “Keep that up, I’m gonna shoot you a little higher than your damn foot.”

“Come with me,” Doc Brown urged. “I could use an extra set of hands changing Miss Cox’s bandages.”

“Is there... is there gonna be blood?” Duncan paled.

“You’ll be fine.” Doc Brown grabbed Duncan’s shoulder and steered him out of the kitchen.

As soon as they were alone, Mickey roughly pushed Roger against the counter.

Roger’s eyes widened, and he grinned. “Why, hello there.”

“When we’re done with this bullshit,” Mickey warned, “that fuckin’ ass is mine. I am going to make you fuckin’ crawl and spank you until you can’t even sit down. I’m gonna leave you raw and full of cum, and I might make you sleep on the floor for being such a dick.”

“Well,” Roger purred, “just go ahead and threaten me with a good time, why don’t cha?”

“It’s not a threat. It’s a promise.”

## CHAPTER 19

Duncan left to go back to Alistair's after helping Doc Brown, but he did ask for Mickey to save him some lasagna if it turned out to be edible.

Mickey told him to fuck off.

Doc Brown did not ask for any lasagna and he left with the promise to return tomorrow to check on Crybaby.

Valdemar and Thirdsies kept to themselves and steered clear of the kitchen after Mickey screamed at the ground beef for not browning the way he wanted it to. When Mickey threw the spatula at the wall, Thirdsies loudly announced he was running out to the gas station for some soda.

So far, Mickey considered this to be a complete disaster. He relished his sense of control and power, and he had none in this situation. He hated how frustrated he was getting, and Roger's smug attitude was not helping at all.

Oh, the things he was gonna do to that man when this was over.

"And you're sure we don't have to boil the noodles?" Mickey was asking, taking a generous sip of wine to help settle his foul mood.

"Very sure." Roger checked the sauce bubbling on the stove. "You let 'em soak in hot water for like thirty minutes, and they'll finish cooking in the oven."

"How did you learn to cook?"

"My mom. Dad's a piece of shit, she had to work, and I had to take care of my little brother. That included cooking. You know, so we wouldn't starve while she was working."

"Mm." Mickey imagined Roger bustling around a tiny kitchen with his mother, and that's when he realized why he was so angry. It was because Pops should be here with them, and he wasn't.

He was dead.

Pops was supposed to be the one teaching Mickey how to do this, not Roger.

His heart ached, and he didn't know how to process this kind of pain. He didn't usually experience such intense emotions, and he quickly drank the rest of his wine.

Ever perceptive, Roger asked, “Hey, are you okay?”

“What?”

“You look sad.” Roger grabbed the bottle to refill Mickey’s glass. “Wanna talk? I know this is probably kinda weird—”

“Take off your clothes.”

“Huh?” Roger took a few seconds to process the order, and he bit his lip. His eyes were getting that soft, glassy look, and his neck was pinking up. “You mean right now? With Valdemar right over there?”

“Yeah, I do.” Mickey raised his glass and drank deeply to drown out the stubborn ache in his chest. “Take off your clothes.”

“But Mickey—”

“*Now.*”

“Yes, sir.” Roger scrambled for the edge of his shirt.

Mickey loved how obedient Roger could be. The immediate response to his commands was mesmerizing and made him feel so powerful. He didn’t want this to end too quickly. “Stop. Not like that. Slowly.”

“Yes, sir.” Roger took his time as requested, slipping his shirt up inch by inch before pulling it over his head.

Mickey stared at his sculpted stomach, the dim light of the kitchen casting shadows along every perfect ab, and he had the craziest urge to reach out and lick each one. He watched Roger’s shirt drop to the ground, and his eyes cut back to admire the broad lines of Roger’s bare chest and shoulders.

Fuck, he really was stunning.

He felt a particularly strong surge of pride when he saw the bruise he’d left on Roger’s neck. He considered leaving a few more somewhere on that perfect body.

*Even if he does stray, whoever he’s with will know he belongs to someone else. He belongs to me.*

As Roger began to unbutton his pants, he said, “Need to turn down the heat on the sauce, sir.”

“Stop.” Mickey moved to adjust the stove dial before turning back to Roger. He didn’t want to miss a second of this. “Go on.”

Roger shimmied his pants down, toeing off his shoes as he kicked them off along with his pants. He was actually wearing underwear for once, tight black briefs that hugged his half-hard cock. He thumbed the waistband hesitantly, his face flushed.

“What?”

“All the way, sir?”

“Yes.” Mickey set his glass down, his blood heating up as he watched Roger pull his briefs down to reveal his cock. The very sight made his mouth water.

Even his dick was fuckin’ pretty, right down to his neatly trimmed hair and the blushing tip.

“Come here.” Mickey beckoned him over with a finger, and he grabbed Roger’s chin when he was close enough. He turned his face this way and that, looking him over like the gorgeous piece of meat he was.

Roger hummed softly, and he was totally compliant.

Mickey slid a finger down Roger’s throat, tracing the lines of his chest and stomach. He stopped when he reached his cock, murmuring, “Mmm, you’re getting so hard for me, aren’t you?”

“Yes, sir.” Roger closed his eyes, and his dick twitched. “You turn me on... so fuckin’ much.”

“Yeah?” Mickey smiled smugly and grabbed Roger’s cock. His own cock was thickening up, and he stroked Roger lightly, loving how he swelled in his hand.

Groaning low, Roger tipped his head back. “God, yes, master. Just like that, please.”

“You like this, don’t you?” Mickey squeezed him. “Being on display, knowing anybody could walk in and see you... you’re such a fuckin’ slut.”

“Yes, master,” Roger breathed. “I like it. I like when people watch me. When they see me, they want me. They wanna fuck me. And I feel beautiful.”

Mickey used his grip on Roger’s cock to pull him in closer and teased his lips with a soft kiss. “You are beautiful,” he whispered. “Especially when you’re mine.”

“Always, sir.” Roger smiled, and Mickey’s heart skipped over itself.

“Mm, we still have lasagna to make,” Mickey said as he let go of Roger’s dick, picking up his wine glass again. “What’s next?”

Roger blinked a few times to reorient himself, and he looked at the counter full of ingredients. “We gotta... shit. We gotta mix the ricotta.”

“Go ahead.” Mickey allowed Roger to approach the counter and immediately planted himself behind him, his hands greedily sliding over his bare back and sides.

Roger leaned into his touch, and he swallowed back what might have been another moan. “Gotta... I gotta mix the ricotta with the nutmeg, and... the egg...”

“Go on. I’m not stopping you.”

“Mmm, okay.” Roger stepped up to the counter, scrambling for the ingredients to start mixing together in a bowl. “When, when I finish this... we... oh, God!”

Mickey had spanked him, unable to resist the curve of that perfect ass. He rubbed Roger’s cheek to soothe the sting, and he leaned in to very purposely grind against him. “We can what?”

“We can start putting it all together.” Roger’s breathing was audibly labored, and he moaned when Mickey slapped his ass again. He thrust back his hips, his stirring erratic, and he begged, “Please, master.”

“Keep going,” Mickey ordered. “Tell me what you’re doing.”

“M-mixing the ricotta, egg, and nutmeg. Then we’re gonna layer everything.” Roger took a deep breath, and he seemed to focus on stirring for a few seconds. “There. Done.”

Swinging his hand back, Mickey rewarded Roger with another hard smack. He watched his handprint bloom across Roger’s cheek and gave him another. Roger’s responding cries made Mickey’s cock pound, and he wanted to fuck him right here.

But not yet.

He had to wait. It was going to make them both crazy, but it would be worth it.

“Go on.” Mickey kissed the bruise on Roger’s neck. “It’s time to layer all that shit, right?”

“Uh huh.” Hands visibly trembling, Roger reached for the aluminum pan and scooped some of the meat sauce into the bottom. “We, we put down sauce. Then noodles. Then, uh, the ricotta mixture. And more cheese. Then repeat, and we top it.”

Mickey watched Roger do as he described, and that’s when he saw the forgotten olive oil on the counter. He grabbed it and poured some over his fingers. He pressed them between Roger’s cheeks, circling slowly. “Keep going... you’re not done yet.”

“Yes, sir.” Roger whimpered, his hips pushing back. “I’m trying. Please. I’m trying so hard.”

“Would you think better with some dick in you? Mm? Just can’t focus unless you’re stuffed, huh?”

“Yes, fuck. I need... I need something. Anything, sir.”

Mickey thrust two fingers right in, biting back the urge to moan at the tight heat clenching around him.

“F-fuck, master. Fuck, yes!” Roger spilled some of the sauce as he tried to brace himself on the counter.

“Stop making a fuckin’ mess,” Mickey scolded, spanking Roger’s hip. “You’re a slut and a fuckin’ slob. Fuckin’ useless.”

Roger moaned, his ass bucking up at the filthy condemnation, but he was smiling. “I’m sorry, master. Mm, I’ll be good. I’ll be better. I promise.”

“That remains to be seen.” Mickey made himself sound bored, but he was excited. He loved how Roger was writhing against him, and the wet sounds of his oil-slicked fingers pumping into Roger’s hole were delicious.

Roger was letting him do this. He was letting Mickey do whatever the fuck he wanted to him, and it was insanely hot. Mickey mouthed along Roger’s shoulder, urging him, “Come on. Keep going.”



“Right. Yes, sir.” Roger moaned at a particularly deep twist of Mickey’s fingers. “Fuck. Yeah. Okay, mmm, gotta do... gotta do the top.” He dumped more sauce, spilling it across the counter as he frantically grabbed a handful of cheese to dump over it.

“Aww, Roger, no,” Mickey scolded, pushing his fingers in to the knuckle and holding. “You think I’m gonna accept that fuckin’ mess? This is my Pops’ recipe.” He whipped his hand across Roger’s ass as hard as he could. “Clumsy slut!”

“Fuck! Sir! Oh, God!” Roger jerked back on Mickey’s fingers, his back bowing as he clawed at the counter. “I’m sorry, I’m so sorry!”

Watching Roger writhe so enthusiastically made Mickey’s head light. He was doing this to Roger, turning him into a whimpering little mess, just by spanking him. Roger was exposed, helpless, and he was completely at Mickey’s mercy.

He enjoyed having Roger bent over the counter like this, his ass so easily accessible and his face down in submission as Mickey petted his reddening cheeks. He could only see three of his fingers in the handprint he’d left there, and he knew he could do better than that. He reared his arm back and spanked Roger again.

“Fuck!” Roger cried out. “I’m sorry!”

“Clean it up and fix it, right now,” Mickey demanded. “Lick it all up. Every fuckin’ drop.”

“Yes, sir.” Roger lowered his head with a pitiful whine, his tongue darting out to lick up the spilled sauce and cheese. He sucked it all into his mouth like it was a fine meal, and he gasped as he kept on licking when the mess was long gone.

“Good boy.” Mickey reached for Roger’s hair and pulled him back, lapping along the bruise at his neck. “Look at what a good job you did... are you ready to finish it now? The right way?”

“Yes, sir,” Roger wheezed. “Please. Let me try again. I’ll be good.”

God, Mickey felt powerful. Roger was a complete slave to his every command, and the rush was heady and thick. He would do anything Mickey told him to, and Mickey wanted to fuck him within an inch of his life right there on the counter.

But not yet.

Mickey wanted to make this last.

Pulling out his fingers, he popped Roger’s ass again and grabbed a firm handful, enjoying how hot his skin was. Roger had to be tender by now, and Mickey grinned when he squeezed down and he moaned.

“Go on,” Mickey said. “Finish.”

“Yes, master.” Roger fixed the sauce over the top of the lasagna and carefully spread a fresh layer of cheese. He sprinkled a few herbs, then he grabbed a roll of aluminum foil. “Is this good?”

“It looks much better, thank you.”

“Thank you, master.” Roger smiled. After covering the pan with foil, he carried it to the oven and slid it carefully inside. “Twenty-five minutes with the foil on, then thirty minutes with it off.”

“Good. We’ve got some time to kill.” Mickey unbuttoned his pants. “Come here. Kneel down and suck me.”

Roger came obediently as ever, greedily reaching to get Mickey’s cock out. He licked around the piercing with a coy grin before taking Mickey all the way down his throat.

“Good boy.” Mickey smirked, admiring how Roger’s pretty pink lips stretched around his cock. He wished he could take a picture. Roger probably wouldn’t even mind. He grabbed a firm handful of Roger’s hair and thrust.

Roger’s eyes closed, and his expression softened, totally blissed out as Mickey fucked his face. Mickey was slow, patient, and he stroked Roger’s hair reverently. They had time, twenty-five minutes to be exact, and he was going to use every second.

Fuck, he’d missed this so much.

Mickey pushed deep, testing how long he could hold himself there down Roger’s throat before he started to whimper. He pulled out so Roger could gasp, and he rubbed his cock over Roger’s bottom lip.

“Mm, master.” Roger lapped at the slick head, twirling the tip of his tongue around the piercing and kissing it.

It was like Mickey’s cock was the most delicious treat, and Roger couldn’t get enough. Every twist of his tongue was excited, eager, and his gaze was positively ravenous when he looked up at Mickey.

“Good boy.” Mickey urged his cock back into Roger’s mouth, inhaling sharply at the new suction enveloping him. Fuck, Roger was sucking him so hard it almost hurt, and when he started bobbing his head, Mickey groaned.

God, that was so good.

Petting Roger’s hair, Mickey praised, “Fuck, you’re so good at that. So fuckin’ hot. I love your mouth. Almost as much as I love your tight little ass...”

Roger moaned appreciatively, and he grabbed a hold of Mickey’s hips to brace himself.

Mickey pivoted his hips forward, fucking Roger’s mouth with renewed intent. It would be so easy to come right then, pull out and splash his load all over that pretty face. Roger was taking every rough slam with happy little grunts, and Mickey could see spit running down his chin.

No, not yet.

He didn’t want this to be over yet.

Pulling out again, he gave Roger’s hair a little ruffle. “You did such a good job, I think I’m gonna fuck you.”

“Right here, master?” Roger wiped off his mouth, trying to catch his breath.

“Yeah.” Mickey glanced at the clock on the oven. “Almost time to take off the foil, huh?”

“Yes, master.” Roger didn’t move. “Do you want me to do that now?”

“Yes. Good boy. Thank you for asking.” Mickey watched Roger get some ragged oven mitts on, admiring the curve of his ass when he bent over to retrieve the foil. Once the door was shut and the lasagna was safely resting back in the oven, Mickey crowded behind him and pushed him against the counter. “Bend over.”

“Yes, master.” Roger arched his back, pushing his ass back and stretching out his upper body.

Mickey stroked his flanks, dragging his fingers down to the top of Roger’s hips. He let his cock catch between his cheeks, sliding teasingly as he taunted, “I’m gonna fuck you bare again. Leave you fuckin’ stuffed so you’re good and wet when we sit down to eat.”

“Mmm, master. Fuck. Yes.” Roger tilted his hips, trying to catch Mickey’s cock where he wanted him. “Please. Come on. Give it to me. Please.”

“So impatient.” Mickey grabbed the olive oil again and raised the bottle high, drizzling it down on Roger’s ass crack. He rubbed it down over his hole, stroking his cock with what was left on his hand to get himself slick.

“I can’t help it,” Roger whined. “I love your cock. I love what you fuckin’ do to me. I love how you fuck me, just stick it in—!”

“Shut the fuck up,” Mickey griped shortly, snatching the oven mitt and shoving it into Roger’s mouth. “Fuck, I can’t think when you’re runnin’ your damn yap like that.”

Roger fussed, but at least now it was muffled.

Mickey lined himself up, and he sighed loudly as the thick head of his dick slipped inside Roger’s hole. It was so soft, wet, and seemed to pull him right in. The urge to climax was right there, heat buzzing over his lips and down in his loins, and he glanced at the time on the oven.

Oh, he could do a lot in thirty minutes.

Resolving not to come yet, he fucked Roger hard and fast. With nothing between them, the hot grip of Roger’s hole was exquisite. He pressed Roger’s head into the counter, forcing him to arch his hips more, and he fucked him without mercy.

The oven mitt did little to stifle Roger’s happy cries, and he spread his legs to take Mickey’s cock even deeper than before. He was so willing and responsive, and Mickey didn’t know how he’d denied himself this for so long.

Whenever Mickey felt himself getting too close, he’d slow down to stave off the inevitable and catch his breath. Roger would whine, and Mickey would spank his ass a few good times to silence him. The way Roger would tighten down on his dick when he smacked him was incredible, and it made Mickey groan out loud.

Fuck, how could a person feel this perfect?

As the timer wound down, Mickey went for broke. He ruthlessly slammed his cock into Roger's ass over and over until he was screaming through the oven mitt, and the pressure was dizzying. It was twisting up in his balls as heat flashed over his neck and face, and he let himself go.

His cock throbbed, and he grunted as he came, pushing in as deeply as he could. He held himself there, groaning appreciatively as Roger clenched around him. Fuck, it felt like Roger's body was trying to suck him right in, and Mickey gave Roger one last slam just as the timer went off.

"Better get that." Mickey pulled out, and he spread Roger's cheeks to watch a dribble of cum leak out. He pushed his thumb back inside, enjoying how silky and soft Roger's hole was now. He stuck his other thumb in and pulled, enjoying how easily he could stretch Roger open. "Mmm, fuck."

"Master, I need... mmm, come on." Roger had taken the oven mitt out of his mouth. "I gotta get the lasagna. Please."

Mickey didn't want to burn the food, so he let go and took a step back. He tucked his cock away, watching Roger move on shaking legs to retrieve the pan from the oven. "Smells good."

"I hope it's good." Roger set it down on the stove and took off the mitts, turning off the timer and the oven. He turned to face Mickey and stroked himself. He'd gone soft but was quickly getting hard again. "Fuck, I can still feel you..."

"Not yet," Mickey warned, reaching down to stop Roger's hand. "I didn't say you could fuckin' come."

Roger looked frantic, and he whimpered. "Oh, come on. I was good, wasn't I? I was so fuckin' good, I was perfect!"

"Maybe you shouldn't have been such a smug jackass over how I cook hamburger."

"Mmm, master... that's not fair. I was trying to help you! Please! I wanna come!"

"Later," Mickey said briskly. "Get dressed. Get the plates ready. Make sure everyone gets something to eat." He smiled wickedly. "Then you can have your dessert."

If looks could kill, Mickey was sure he would have dropped dead.

Roger kissed Mickey hard, and it felt absolutely electric. It was somehow more intimate than the rough pounding from a few minutes ago, and Mickey let himself sink into the sweet connection. He wanted to take Roger again right there on the counter, lift him up and slide back in...

Dinner first.

He made himself pull away, bowing his head to kiss the bruise on Roger's neck. "Go on."

Roger's face was red, and he was obviously frustrated judging by the equally bright flush of the head of his cock. Even so, he obediently grabbed his clothes and pulled them on. "Yes, master. I got it."

"Good boy."

Roger served using a mix-matched collection of plates from inside the cabinets, and he found Valdemar still hanging out at the dining room table. If Valdemar had heard anything that went down

during the cooking—surely he did—he made no comment. Thirdsies showed up a few minutes later, his mission for soda having turned into an adventure chasing down a stray cat or something.

Mickey stayed in the kitchen and refilled their wine glasses so he didn't hear the whole rousing tale. He'd fucked off his buzz, and he wanted to get back on track, chugging back his glass before pouring another to sip on.

The lasagna really did smell incredible, but he found himself hesitating to eat it.

“Hey, what's wrong?” Roger was back and frowning at Mickey.

“Nothing.”

“Aren't you gonna eat?”

“I was waiting for you.”

“Liar.” Roger smirked and grabbed his plate. He gobbled down a big bite and moaned excitedly.

“Wow, that is good.”

“Again? Already?” Valdemar complained loudly.

“Huh?” Thirdsies sounded very confused.

Roger snorted and laughed. “Mmm, maybe we'll take our dessert upstairs?”

“Not a bad suggestion.” Mickey poked at the edge of the lasagna with his fork, frustrated his appetite had left him so abruptly. All he could think about now was Pops, and he wondered if this was even close to what they would have cooked together.

His frustration turned into anger, and he imagined all the horrible ways he was going to murder Salvatore Luchesi. He set his fork down, stomach sloshing, and reached for the wine again.

Roger was eerily quiet once he'd finished eating, and he moved around the kitchen, cleaning up. Once it was obvious Mickey wasn't going to eat, he took his piece and wrapped it up with the rest of the pan in foil to stick in the fridge. “Pasta's usually better the next day, you know?”

“Yeah, sure.” Mickey kept drinking.

“Wanna go to bed?” Roger reached for Mickey's hand, gently prying it off the glass. “You can call me a slut some more. We can fuck again...”

Mickey tried to smile.

“You know, if you think you can even get it up,” Roger taunted. “You're not getting any younger.”

Oh, that did it.

“Get your ass upstairs right now,” Mickey commanded, seizing control of his emotions and focusing on making Roger answer for that smart mouth. “I'm definitely fucking you again, and I'm not stopping until I'm good and fuckin' ready.”

“Oh, yes, master.” Roger grinned.

Mickey took Roger to bed, and he fucked him as roughly as before. He kept Roger's legs up on his shoulders to really drill into him, and he didn't give a fuck how loudly the bed squeaked. He was mean, cruel, smacking Roger's tender thighs and hips, trying to make the empty place inside of him go away at any cost.

No matter how sweetly Roger moaned and screamed for him, it didn't help. Mickey was still angry, hollow, and he couldn't even focus enough to come. It only added to his building fury, and he started to pull away, trying to catch his breath.

"Hey?" Roger frowned. "Master, where'd you go?"

"I'm just... Just, fuck, just give me a second." Mickey squeezed his eyes closed, and he gritted his teeth. His head hurt, his arm was throbbing where he'd been shot, and he couldn't concentrate. He could feel himself going soft, and he wanted to scream.

Right when he was about to give up and kick Roger out of bed, something happened.

Roger kissed him, deep and slow, and the entire energy shifted.

The cloud of anger that had been fogging Mickey's mind faded away, and there was a fluttery, warm sensation working away at the ache in his chest until it was forgotten. Roger's lips were so soft, gentle, and Mickey's cock was getting hard again.

Mickey let himself be drawn in, repositioning Roger's legs around his waist as he returned the kiss with equal passion. This was hot, intense, and suddenly every roll of their bodies was sending sparks across his vision and down his spine.

"How the fuck do you do that?" Mickey murmured.

"What, master?" Roger stroked Mickey's cheek.

"Everything."

Mickey slid his arms beneath Roger's shoulders, holding him close as he thrust. He pushed as deeply as he could and held, circling his hips wide. The stretch was good, providing a new wave of pressure and heat. Whatever earlier urgency usually possessed him was reduced to a lovely simmer, and Mickey let himself enjoy every individual thrust.

He loved fucking Roger without a condom because he could feel how silky and slick he was inside. He hadn't taken the time to fully appreciate just how hot it was to be inside of him bare like this, and he swore he could feel Roger's pulse lightly throbbing around his cock.

Roger ran his hands down Mickey's back, but he didn't scratch him. No nails at all, he was petting him, caressing his muscles and the strong curves of his shoulders. There was such a tenderness in his touch, and Mickey marveled at how much he liked being touched like that.

Sex was quick, dirty, but this...

This meant something, though Mickey couldn't explain what. He knew only he didn't want it to stop.

He kissed Roger again, sliding his tongue against his. He couldn't get close enough, and he wanted to touch Roger the same way he was touching him. He dragged one of his arms out from beneath Roger to stroke his chest. He thumbed over his nipple, toying with it until it was a perky little nub and Roger was whimpering.

"Do you like that?" Mickey asked, his lips ghosting over Roger's.

"Yes, master." Roger smiled. "Mmm, feels nice."

Mickey shook his head. "Not master... not right now. Just Mickey."

Roger's smile softened, and his hands cradled Mickey's face. "Okay, Mickey." He kissed him, his legs curling tighter around his waist.

Mickey started fucking him again, but with more purpose, a thundering rhythm that made him ache, and there, yes, the void in his chest was overflowing with passion. He didn't know sex could be like this, and he groped down Roger's side to his thigh, lifting him up so he could plunge deeper.

With a low moan Roger lifted hips off the bed, using his legs to keep him in that position with his ass suspended from the mattress. "Ah, *Mickey!*"

In that heated moment, Mickey liked hearing his own name even more than Roger calling him master. He squeezed Roger's thigh, and he gasped when he felt Roger's hand wiggling down in between them.

Roger was stroking around Mickey's cock, petting him there where they were joined together. "God, you feel so perfect... fuck, I love how you fuck me... I always feel you the next day."

"Yeah?" Mickey nuzzled Roger's throat and laid a kiss on the bruise there. "Good. I want you to feel me, all the time... I don't want you to forget... that you're mine. You're all fucking mine." He swallowed. "And I'm yours."

"My monster," Roger sighed contentedly, his finger still rubbing over Mickey's cock, sliding through the lube as he pushed in and out of his body. "Fuck, I can feel your fuckin' dick ring. Feels good, rubbin' in me. Like when you go real deep."

"Oh, yeah?" Mickey thrust, pushing as far as he could and catching Roger's hand. "Like that?"

"Ah, fuck, like that!" Roger nodded eagerly, his hand retreating to brace himself against Mickey's chest. "Fuck, just like that."

Holding Roger's leg firmly, Mickey slammed hard, making sure to thrust as deeply as he could and enjoying Roger's responding cries of pleasure. Roger pushed down to meet Mickey, trying to take him even deeper into his body, and his hands were soon all over him. He was pulling at him, urging him on, and Mickey gasped at the first sharp bite of his nails.

"Come on," Roger groaned. "Mickey, fuck... yes, come on... more, please. Come on, baby. Give it to me. Mmmm, I want it."

The syrupy flow couldn't last forever, and Mickey couldn't resist Roger's pleas. He fucked him harder, zeroing in on the angle Roger seemed to like so much. Even in the dim light, he could see

Roger was smiling blissfully, and he wanted to capture this moment in time forever.

Roger was moaning, gasping, grinding his ass down to take it all, and Mickey was getting so close. The rush of everything they'd shared tonight was doing something to him that he couldn't explain, and he couldn't deny his orgasm. He needed it, needed to come, needed some sort of break from all of this intensity.

He fucked Roger hard, slamming into him over and over until his climax finally claimed him. The first pulse made him moan, the sound so loud it startled him, and he kissed Roger hard to smother the next cry. It kept going on and on in heady waves, and Mickey kept moving and thrusting as he unloaded his cum inside of Roger. Everything was wet and hot and *dripping*, and fuck, his head was spinning from coming so hard.

"Let me come, please, I want, I want to—!" Roger was begging, but Mickey's hand was already on his cock and jerking him off in quick, short bursts. "Fuck, *yes!* Mickey!"

Mickey was still buried inside of Roger when he climaxed, and he rolled his hips to fuck him through each shudder even as his own cock throbbed from too much stimulation. Only when he was sure Roger was spent did he stop, and he bowed his head for another kiss. He slid his arms back beneath Roger's shoulders to hold him close, their bodies pressed flush as they kissed.

"Oh, Mickey," Roger whispered adoringly. "Consider my mind fuckin' blown."

Mickey snorted, affectionately griping, "Shut up." He pulled out then, flopping onto his back with a groan.

Roger stretched out his legs and reached for Mickey's hand. They lay there in silence for several minutes, the only sounds their panting breaths, but then Roger suddenly laughed.

"What?" Mickey asked.

"If you fuck me like that after I make lasagna, I'm trying manicotti next."

Mickey laughed. "You fuckin' freak."

"Damn right." Roger beamed and cuddled up to Mickey's side, burying his head in the crook of his shoulder. "Mm, what about brownies?"

"Pops woulda liked that," Mickey said quietly. "He liked chocolate."

"Yeah? Well, how 'bout I make you some?"

"Thanks."

Speaking about his grandfather in the past tense brought the emptiness back, and Mickey could sense it eating it away at him. But with Roger here in his arms, it was slower.

For now, at least, it didn't hurt so much.

Mickey kissed Roger's cheek, but he had to sit up when his phone rang. He fished it out of his pants on the floor and answered it immediately when he saw it was Cold. "Yes, Boss?"



“I hope you’re ready, Mr. Tamerlane,” Cold purred through the line. “Tomorrow night at eight o’clock, we’re burning it all down.”

“You got it, Boss.”

## CHAPTER 20

*I*t was time.

At precisely eight o'clock, Thirdsies' devices were going to ignite and start fires in the houses flanking either side of the home the Luchesis were holed up in. He had estimated that the fire would spread in approximately fifteen minutes, and the Luchesi men would begin fleeing the house shortly after.

The day had been busy, what with Pym hacking the repair shop's computers to get the schedule and Jules commandeering a work van and some uniforms. Valdemar was more than happy to call the affected homeowners and tell them both that someone else had canceled and they'd be able to come right over.

Everything fell into place, and now all Mickey had to do was wait a few more minutes before taking aim at his very own personal Luchesi shooting gallery.

Mickey had parked the Nova down a side street, and he had positioned himself at the corner of an alley that had a direct line of sight with the front door of the house. Roger was behind him, peering out with a pair of binoculars.

Cold, Jerry, and Jules were close by, doubtlessly tucked away as Mickey and Roger were.

They were here in case anyone tried to get away through the back or if there were any stragglers that Mickey missed, but Mickey was confident he wouldn't need them. Nothing coming out from the front of the house was leaving alive.

Duncan, Valdemar, and Thirdsies were back at the safe house with Crybaby. Pym and Alistair were at Alistair's house. Rufus was wherever snakes went when they weren't being useful. How much he actually knew about the plan was unknown, but Cold had made it clear that he wasn't involved.

"Smoke," Roger said quietly. "Smoke coming out of the house on the right."

Mickey took a deep breath.

Soon.

He kept his eyes aimed at the doorway, his skin tingling. He knew it was going to go down any minute, and adrenaline was buzzing through his entire system. He kept his finger alongside the trigger,

maintaining discipline, and he waited.

He heard a *thwoom*, and he caught a glimpse of flames peeking through the roof.

“We got fire,” Roger said in an excited whisper. “Holy shit, that was fast.”

There were panicked shouts, and two people came racing out into the yard. One was on their cell phone, frantically screaming that their house was on fire.

Mickey ignored them, keeping his eyes trained on the door of the Luchesi house.

Any second...

“Shit, there it goes.” Roger gasped. “It’s spreading. It did the thing! Like Valdemar said! It’s spreading to the other house.”

Mickey took another deep breath.

He saw a shadow at the doorway, and it finally opened.

He exhaled and pulled the trigger.

Three shots took down the first three men who tried to escape. The homeowners who were out in their yards screamed in terror. The front door hung open, blocked by bodies, and Mickey fired again when he saw someone else trying to flee.

“Fuck,” Roger hissed. He sounded breathless, eager.

Mickey didn’t know why that was such a turn-on. He filed it away to deal with later and scanned the front of the house.

The house on the right was now in flames, the entire top floor consumed with fire. The house on the left was smoking wildly from the top windows, and the Luchesi house was burning on the side and the roof. There weren’t any sirens yet, and Mickey could see someone trying to break through one of the front windows. He aimed and fired, shattering the glass, and the person dropped. Three more men tried coming through the windows on the other side of the front door, and he took them out as well.

“I see Cold,” Roger said suddenly. “He and Jules are going around the back. Those bastards are trying to get away.”

Mickey heard gunshots, but kept his aim focused on the front door. More would probably come. When they did, Mickey fired.

Sirens wailed in the distance.

“Shit.” Mickey sprang up, scowling when he saw two men sneaking out through the broken window.

“Hey, come on!” Roger urged. “You remember what Cold said. We hear the fuzz, we fuckin’ blow!”

“I only killed eleven.” Mickey scowled. “Damn.”

“Oh, I’m so very sorry. Come on, Sally Psycho. We gotta go!” Roger smacked the top of the car. “Now!”

All three houses were burning now, thick black smoke filling the air, and the sirens were getting closer.

“Coming.” Mickey dismantled his rifle, quickly tucking it back into the case and putting it in the trunk. He heard more gunshots and the slap of footsteps close by.

Two suited men had run across the street from the side of the house, quickly smashing the window of a car and getting inside. One of the homeowners who had fled their burning home yelled at them and was immediately shot.

The man who had fired was Salvatore Luchesi.

“Salvatore?” Mickey could hardly believe it. He didn’t know what Cristian’s man was doing here with Matteo, and he didn’t care.

He was going to kill him.

“What’s wrong?” Roger demanded.

“It’s Salvatore.” Mickey jumped in the front seat and cranked the car up. “He’s fucking dead! I’m not letting him get away this time—!”

Like clockwork, the radio came on blaring at full volume, and it was Toni Basil’s “Mickey”.

“Oh, for the love of almighty *fuck*! No!” Mickey frantically smacked at the radio, trying to turn it off. He heard tires squealing and saw Salvatore and the other man fleeing in the stolen car. “No! Fuck! Hang on!”

Roger yelped as Mickey tore out of the alley, switching gears and launching the car forward with a roar of the engine, all while Toni sang that catchy foot-stomping refrain.

“Why won’t it fucking turn off?” Roger tried messing with the dials and only managed to turn it up louder.

“It’s a fucking loose goddamn wire!” Mickey groaned. “Quit! Leave it alone!”

“I’m just trying to help!”

“Stop helping! Stop touching!”

“Fuckin’ asshole!”

“Just fuckin’ forget it!” Mickey caught up to the stolen car in seconds, and he drew his gun. All he could think about now was putting a bullet in Salvatore’s head. Nothing else mattered. He took a deep breath to center himself. “Roger, take the wheel.”

“What?” Roger shouted over the blaring music.

“You wanted to help!”

“But, ah, you said no touching!”

“Take the fuckin’ goddamn wheel!”

“Jesus Christ!” Roger grabbed it. “Go, go!”

Mickey rolled the window down and pushed himself out far enough to extend his arm to fire at the car.

It immediately swerved and took a sharp right turn, trying to evade Mickey’s attacks.

“Let’s go!” Mickey dropped back in to take the turn to stay with them, spinning the wheel hard. He hit the gas and wove through the crowded streets as his ears were assaulted by whining electric organs while Toni continued to lament her affections.

It was madness.

And Roger was singing along now.

Great.

Judging by the streets Salvatore was taking, he was trying to get out of town. That was fine by Mickey. There was no way they could outrun him, not in this beast of a car. He stayed right on Salvatore’s ass, waiting for his chance. As soon as they hit an open stretch of road that led to the highway, Salvatore accelerated and Mickey hit the gas to stay with him.

There was nothing around them except a small gas station, and Mickey knew this was his chance. There would be too much traffic on the highway, and the chances of getting into a wreck were increased vastly. This was it.

“Roger!” he shouted. “Wheel!”

“Got it!” Roger held on tight. “Go! Blow those motherfuckers away!”

Mickey popped back through the window, the pounding of that cheerleader-esque hook singing his name as he took aim. The clapping was thundering in his ears, and there, in between those infectious poppy beats, he fired.

The driver collapsed, and the car jerked violently, swinging around and going up onto the sidewalk. It promptly smashed into the front of the gas station, glass shattering and the horn blowing as the driver’s body fell forward over the wheel.

Mickey slid back in his seat and took over, quickly turning the car around and speeding back over to the scene of the crash. Traffic was thin, but it had now stopped in both directions. A few onlookers were frozen in place, watching from the gas pumps and inside the store.

With one final slap, Mickey silenced the damn radio and parked in the middle of the street. He got out, leaving the engine running as he stalked toward the car. The driver was certainly dead, but Salvatore was fighting to get out.

All Mickey could see was Pops’ face, and he was overwhelmed with the memory of how cold his touch was. He could still remember how his hand had felt like paper, so thin and frail. He would never speak to him again or hear his laugh or even know if he’d made that damn lasagna the right way.

That was all gone now.

And it was because of this man right in front of him, this sneering coward.

Salvatore's face was bloody, and his door had somehow been jammed shut in the wreck. He looked up with wide eyes when he saw Mickey coming at him, and he laughed. "Oh! Hey! It's you! Look, I talked to Matteo. We're gonna work something out with Boss Cold, I swear. Everything is fine, and I \_\_\_"

Mickey shot him.

The customers at the pumps screamed and began to flee.

Mickey shot him again.

"Someone call the police!" someone shouted.

Mickey kept shooting until he was out, and he drew his other gun to empty that magazine as well. He didn't even realize Roger was standing beside him until he felt his hand on his shoulder.

"Let's go," Roger urged. "I think he's dead."

Mickey couldn't look away from the mess, and he wondered why he didn't feel any better. The gnawing hollow spot in his chest hadn't left him. He'd thought killing Salvatore would bring him some sense of peace or closure, but he still felt empty.

Maybe because Pops was still dead.

"Mickey! Now!" Roger pulled on his arm.

Snapping out of the daze, Mickey hurried back to the car. Once Roger had joined him, he quickly drove off and tried to put as much distance between them and the wreck as possible.

It had been a foolish risk, but Salvatore was dead. Pops' murder had been avenged.

"Call Cold. Tell him what happened." Mickey took a few extra turns to take the long way around back into the city. He'd committed a tiny bit of murder in front of a lot of witnesses and very much wanted to avoid the cops.

Cold was probably not going to be happy with him either way, but getting arrested would probably upset him more.

"On it." Roger frowned, gesturing to his phone. "He's not answering. Tried both numbers."

"Jules?" Mickey's stomach turned.

"Nothing."

"Jerry?"

"Hang on! I'm trying him too." Roger scowled. "Shit, shit, shit."

"Nothing?"

"No, I just enjoy randomly cussing."

Mickey glared.

“Fuck no, there’s nothing. None of them are answering. Jerry’s goes straight to voicemail. What the fuck do we do?”

“We stick to the plan,” Mickey said firmly. “We’ve cleaned house, now we head back to the safe house until the heat dies down.”

“Yeah, okay.” Roger fidgeted. “I’m glad you killed him. Salvatore, I mean. Wish I’d had time to spit on him.”

“I’m sure he’ll be buried eventually.”

“Aw, you always know just what to say.” Roger tentatively reached over to rest his hand on Mickey’s knee. “But seriously. Thank you.”

“I didn’t do it for you,” Mickey snapped without meaning to. He took a deep breath, and he dropped his hand on top of Roger’s. “But you’re welcome.”

Roger was quiet for a minute after that, but then he started humming.

It was that goddamn Toni Basil song.

“I will pull this car over and beat you,” Mickey warned.

“Sorry! It’s so catchy!” Roger cackled. “Is that what you’re named after? That song?”

“No. I was born before the song came out.”

“Well, where did Mickey come from?”

“Are we really talking about this now? Right now?”

“Fuck, you’re such a dick,” Roger complained. “A big, giant, dangling... shit. Look!”

“What?” Then Mickey saw. “Oh, *shit*.”

There was a line of police cars and news vans clustered around the corner of the street he needed to turn on to get to the safe house.

“What the fuck, what the fuck, what the *fuck*,” Roger chanted, trying to sink down into his seat.

“Calm down,” Mickey soothed as he cruised on by. “We’re going to very slowly and very carefully drive—”

“Fuck that! Speed up! Come on!”

“No, if I do that, they’re going to see and come after us!”

“Did it occur to you that there aren’t that many slick ass Novas in Strassen Springs and they’re gonna come after you anyway when they see this fuckin’ ride?”

Mickey waited until the flashing lights were in his rear-view mirror before arguing. “Look, those guys have obviously been set up there for a while. Long before we shot up the Luchesis, okay? It’s only

been a few minutes since I killed Salvatore. This is something else.”

“We need to go back,” Roger urged. “Come on. What if they got Crybaby? Huh? They had to be there for the fuckin’ safe house!”

“There’s nothing we can do about it now. Try calling Cold again.”

“Fuck! Fuck, fuck, fuckity *fuck*.” Roger was panting as he dialed again, and he growled in frustration. “Nothing! Fucking nothing! This is bullshit!”

“Calm down,” Mickey ordered. “Look, Alistair’s is the fallback location. We’ll go there and wait for them. Okay?”

“But Mickey—”

“I said, *calm down*,” Mickey said sternly. “Nobody is following us. We’re safe. They weren’t there for us. We’re gonna make it back just fine. Okay?”

“Okay,” Roger mumbled. He didn’t argue, but it was clear he wasn’t happy.

The rest of the drive was tense, and Mickey almost wished there was music to break the silence. The route he was taking was going to tack on an additional half hour, but better safe than sorry. He didn’t dare mess with the radio, and as he drove, he tried to sort out all the possible scenarios for the fucked up mess they were in.

Cold and the others might still be working. They could be cleaning up more stragglers from the house. Then again, they could be the reason for all the fuss back at the safe house. The timing wasn’t right, though.

Mickey felt certain that whatever was going on at the safe house had to have happened while they were waiting for the fires to start. The cops could mobilize pretty quickly, but the press took time to set up. From the looks of things, they had been there for a good while.

He parked around the back of Alistair’s house, and he took inventory of the cars. Valdemar and Thirdsies, the one he’d given Duncan, and Jules’ El Camino were all here.

Oh, and that snake Rufus Corman was here too.

What the fuck.

As Mickey hurried up to the back door, he could hear shouting inside. He drew his guns, looking to Roger.

Roger heard it too. He nodded in understanding and stepped forward, opening the door so Mickey could dive through.

Valdemar had Rufus pinned down on the kitchen table, strangling him. Jules was half-heartedly trying to pull him off while a very frantic Duncan was pleading, “Come on, guys! No! Stop! This isn’t helping!”

“What in the actual fuck?” Mickey barked, putting his guns away once he saw there wasn’t any immediate danger.



“Hey!” Jules waved. “We thought you guys got pinched.”

“What the fuck happened?”

“Where’s Crybaby?” Roger demanded. “We saw all these fuckin’ cops down at the safe house!”

“I would love to tell you,” Rufus gurgled, “if you’d get this bastard off me!”

“Tell me where my grandson is!” Valdemar hollered, banging Rufus’ head on the table.

“Crybaby is here! Safe!” Jules promised. “She’s upstairs in the guest room!”

“And now I just need to know where my darling grandson is!” barked Valdemar as he continued to throttle Rufus.

“Let him up,” Roger snapped. “Come on!”

“Little help, Jules?” Mickey drawled. He wasn’t about to get in the middle of that. Valdemar was old but apparently quite spry.

Jules wrapped his arms around Valdemar’s middle and plucked him off Rufus like a misbehaving puppy. “Enough of that, okay? Let the man speak.”

“Christ, you’re all insane,” Rufus wheezed as he slid off the table and rubbed his neck. “All of you!”

“I’d be careful who you call insane when you’re really, really outnumbered, buddy,” Roger cautioned. “Now spill or else we’ll let Valdemar cuddle your neck some more.”

“I got a call from a dear friend who said we should get ready for some unexpected company at the safe house,” Rufus said curtly. “He was right.”

“Say what the fuck you mean,” Roger groaned.

“My friend is a judge and was stalling on signing a search warrant for the safe house. You were all, ahem, occupied, so I took it upon myself to relocate Crybaby while I could. Duncan and Valdemar moved her, and I stayed behind at the safe house with little Thirdsies to wait for the rest of you so we could warn you.”

“Where’s Cold?”

“Well, it seems like he did himself a little bit of hunting while he was out.” Rufus straightened his collar. “After Duncan and Valdemar left with Crybaby, he shows up with a very unwilling Marco Luchesi—”

“Marco?” Mickey scowled.

“Yes. He shows up with Marco and wants to take a little trip. We go. We had ourselves a lovely time.”

Judging by Rufus’ nasty smile, Mickey assumed Marco Luchesi was now dead.

“After our little adventure,” Rufus continued, “we came back to fetch Thirdsies, but the police were already there. No Thirdsies.”

“Thought your judge friend was stalling?” Mickey asked.

“He did. The police went to someone else who was willing to sign. There’s more than one judge in Strassen Springs, you know.”

“Where’s my boy then?” Valdemar demanded. “Where is he?”

“I don’t know,” Rufus replied sharply. “We didn’t exactly go over and knock on the door and ask the officers, ‘Hi, have any of you seen a small arsonist? Likes to wear a hoodie and blow things up?’”

“That all check out with you?” Mickey addressed Jules.

“Yeah. After we finished up at the fire, me and Cold saw Marco.” Jules frowned. “Cold went after him. Alone. Said it was... personal. Told me and Jerry to come back to Alistair’s. So we did.”

“Me and Valdemar were already here ’cause we brought Crybaby,” Duncan chimed in. “We were finishing up loading everything when Jules and Jerry came back.”

“Why didn’t Thirdsies ride back with you and Valdemar?” Mickey asked.

“There wasn’t enough room,” Duncan replied. “Between Crybaby and all that damn medical shit we had to load up, Thirdsies didn’t have anywhere to fuckin’ sit. Him and Rufus were supposed to fuckin’ wait and see if any of you guys showed up before they left!”

“Ah!” Rufus held up his hand. “As I’ve already tried to tell you, Cold brought Marco by the safe house so he could have some personal time with his dear old friend. He didn’t want Thirdsies to see any of it, so he and I left. When we returned, the police had already taken the house. He told me to meet him back here—”

“Where the fuck is Cold now?” Mickey pressed, still trying to put the pieces together.

“He showed up a little bit after me and Jerry got here,” Jules explained. “He was hoping maybe Thirdsies had managed to get out before the cops came and that he ran back here.”

“But he didn’t!” Valdemar shrieked. “My boy isn’t here! He’s not here! And he’s not answering his phone! Something is wrong!”

“So, then Boss takes Jerry to go back out and look for him.” Jules gestured at Mickey and Roger. “Plus you two.”

“Us?” Roger blinked.

“We ain’t seen you,” Jules explained. “Didn’t know what the fuck you were doing. Everything went to shit after the fire. And why the fuck is no one answering their goddamn phones?”

“We tried calling you assholes too!”

“The fire,” Pym piped up, appearing like a little ghost from the basement. “It damaged a utility pole that had fiber lines. The same fiber lines that run signals to cell towers. Took out coverage for the whole city according to the news.”

“Well, fuck.”

“So, where the fuck have you two been all this time, huh?” Jules demanded.

“Salvatore was at the house with Matteo,” Mickey replied. “He’s dead now.”

“Huh. Thought he was on Cristian’s team.” Jules grunted. “Well, good. Fuck him.” He suddenly grimaced. “Was it clean?”

“No. It was messy. Lots of witnesses.”

“Shit.”

“There’s something on the news about some car crashing into a gas station,” Pym said. “Two men inside gunned down in cold blood?”

“*Shit.*”

“Is that all you do, Pym?” Roger wondered out loud. “Sit around and watch the fuckin’ news?”

“You assholes took out the internet and phones!” Pym threw up his hands. “What else the fuck am I supposed to do to find out what’s going? Fuck!” He turned around and marched back down into the basement in a huff.

“I’m sorry!” Roger called out after him. “I’m sure you’re doing a really good job!”

“Fuckin’ blow me!” Pym shouted back.

“Uh, hello?” Valdemar batted his eyes. “I’m so very sorry for the interruption, but we still haven’t discussed where this charlatan” —he pointed at Rufus— “has been hiding! He didn’t bother making his grand entrance until *after* His Coldness departed with *Monsieur* Jerry!”

“Yeah.” Jules narrowed his eyes. “If you were with Cold havin’ that little adventure with Marco, why’d you get back so fuckin’ late? What were you doing?”

“He knows something!” Valdemar insisted. “Please allow me the pleasure of wringing it from his neck!”

“I was doing as I was told,” Rufus challenged. “Cleaning up Cold’s mess! Now, all of you need to calm down. Everything is fine. We’re alive, and Marco is dead. Salvatore is even dead. This is great news!”

“Except my boy is still not here.” Valdemar looked like he was about to pounce. “And I don’t trust a foul word from your wretchedly beautiful lips!”

“So, we’re all here, and Cold and Jerry are out looking for Thirdsies?” Mickey asked. “Just the two of them? Why don’t we go help them?”

“Because the last thing Cold told me was for all of us to stay put and hold tight,” Jules said firmly. “Said the same for you two if you ever showed up. We do what we’re fuckin’ told.”

Roger made a face.

Duncan flopped down into a chair and put his head on the table. “Well, this is just ducky.”

Pym reappeared from the basement. “They’re still fighting the fire, and the cops are fuckin’ everywhere. You guys left a hell of a damn body count.”

“More good news!” Duncan groaned sarcastically.

“They’re still reporting about those guys who got shot at the gas station,” Pym went on, casting a sideways glance to Mickey. “No description of the suspect yet.”

“That’s something at least,” Mickey muttered.

“And hey!” Roger grinned cheerfully. “We’re all breathing!”

“Except my boy!” Valdemar snapped. “We don’t know where he is! He could be dead! Run over! Someone could have kidnapped him and sold him for his organs!”

“Cold will find him,” Jules promised. “We just gotta hang tight. Trust the Boss.” He put a thick hand on Valdemar’s shoulder and urged him into the living room. “Come on. Let’s get a drink.”

“I’m going back downstairs,” Pym announced. “I’ll let you guys know if I hear anything else.”

“Later, Pym.” Roger waved. “Have fun!”

Pym flipped him off.

Duncan still had his head down on the table, and he mumbled, “I’m gonna stay right here.”

“You do that, Duncan.” Mickey patted his back.

“I’m glad you got to kill Salvatore. I mean it. I hope...” Duncan looked up to offer a sad smile. “I hope it helped.”

“Thanks.”

“I’m gonna go check on Crybaby,” Roger said. “Make sure she’s okay.”

“Go ahead.” Mickey flinched when Roger kissed his cheek, but he allowed it.

Now it was just him, Duncan, and Rufus left in the kitchen. He’d seen no sign of Alistair or little Rowena, and he assumed they were upstairs.

“Well, this has been fun.” Rufus clapped. “I think it’s time for me to take my leave.”

“No.” Mickey narrowed his eyes. “Cold said for all of us to stay here. That includes you.” He stalked slowly toward Rufus. “Especially you, as a matter of fact. Think it’s kinda funny you just happen to have some judge call you about our safe house being raided... and then you vanish?”

“I told you, I was finishing up that Marco shit for Cold,” Rufus argued. “Do you have any idea how long it takes to pour cement?”

“Cold’s been worried about a rat in the house,” Mickey mused, looking over Rufus with a sneer. “I wonder if it’s you. You still loyal to those Luchesi fucks? Trying to play us?”

Rufus' eyes widened in alarm. "What? No! I was shocked that I even got the call! I don't know how they knew about it!"

"Well, someone fuckin' knew because they had to get a warrant."

"Yes, but I don't know how!" Rufus snapped. "Kindly get the fuck out of my face."

"No."

"Mickey, come on," Duncan urged, sitting up at the table. "You gotta let this rat business go."

"No," Mickey repeated. He searched Rufus' face, and he didn't like what he saw. "I think he's lying..."

The back door suddenly burst open and in walked Cold and Jerry. They were both dirty and exhausted, and Cold did not look very happy. His disgruntled gaze fell on Mickey, and the depth of rage in those icy eyes made Mickey retreat a few steps away.

"Boss!" Mickey exclaimed. "You're—"

"Mr. Tamerlane," Cold said, "would you like to explain why you took it upon yourself to violently murder Salvatore Luchesi in the middle of a crowded street without orders?"

"Oh. Right. That."

## CHAPTER 21

“Explain yourself,” Cold demanded.

Jerry said something in French.

Cold gestured for him to go ahead, but his eyes did not leave Mickey.

“I was packing up from the fire, and I saw Salvatore.” Mickey didn’t see any point in lying. He heard footsteps behind him and saw Alistair was joining them now. “I didn’t want him to get away again, so I went after him.”

“Even though you had orders to return to the safe house?” Cold scowled.

“Yes, Boss. I didn’t know when I’d get another chance to—”

“I promised you revenge when the time was right. The authorities are still looking for you and Roger from the shootout at the church. Duncan as well.”

“Me?” Duncan squeaked.

“It was your car, stupid,” Mickey mumbled.

“Focus!” Cold snapped angrily. “We are in the middle of a war, in case you’ve forgotten. Tonight was not the right time.”

“That’s rich, seeing as how you also took it upon yourself to kill Marco,” Alistair pointed out. Jerry was walking by with a drink for Cold, and Alistair took it. “If you hadn’t run off to catch Marco, Rufus would have been able to warn you in advance about the raid, and everyone would have made it here safely.”

“Are you questioning my decisions?”

“Yes,” Alistair replied fearlessly.

Cold was furious, and he was visibly struggling to control his temper.

“Tell me,” Alistair went on, pausing to sip the drink, “why did you need Rufus to help you clean up?” He nodded at the blood on the front of Cold’s shirt. “I’m assuming that’s not yours, which means you probably left a lovely trail for the police to follow.”

“Oh, they’ll never find poor Marco,” Rufus promised. “And please, it was my pleasure to help. I just love—”

“Shut up,” Alistair warned. “You’ll speak only when spoken to.”

Rufus cleared his throat and cowered.

Jerry came back with another drink, and he walked very purposefully around Alistair to deliver this one to Cold.

“It’s over,” Cold said shortly. He chugged the liquor back with a hiss. “If they do happen to discover Marco’s body, it won’t be for some time. I have time to plan—”

“A plan you wouldn’t have needed if you had stopped to think!” Alistair suddenly roared, hurling his glass at the ground. “All of your precious planning in the trash because you couldn’t fuckin’ wait!”

Everyone froze, and it was so quiet Mickey could hear one of the broken pieces of the glass still tittering where it had landed beneath the table.

“You’re an idiot!” Alistair raged on. “You have risked that boy’s life for your own selfish revenge!”

“Judge Hutchinson was stalling,” Cold replied in a deathly calm tone. “I thought I had time.”

“The location was already compromised, and you were arrogant enough to think they wouldn’t find another way?”

“I made a mistake,” Cold growled. “There. Is that what you want to hear?”

“Everything I’ve taught you and for what? You’re still an angry little boy trying to make the whole world pay for what it’s done to you!”

“And they will!” Cold suddenly shouted. “All of them! I don’t care what it costs me! It was worth it!”

“Easy enough to say when you’re not the one paying the price.” Alistair scoffed. He looked sad, and all of the fight had left him. He approached Cold, gently resting his hand on his throat.

Mickey tensed, expecting Cold to fight and getting ready to help him.

But it didn’t happen.

Cold’s eyes closed, and he held Alistair’s wrist. He was calm, relaxed, and he leaned into Alistair’s touch. They were close enough to kiss, but neither advanced.

“I don’t have anything else left to teach you,” Alistair said quietly. “This is it.”

“You’re leaving?” Cold didn’t seem surprised.

“Yes.” Alistair stepped away. “The house is yours. Take it. The clubs, the hotels, the drugs... you’re going to have the city soon. What more could you want?”

“You’re not going to say goodbye to Rowena?”

“I already did when I tucked her in.”

“You knew you were going to leave me,” Cold accused.

“As soon as I heard you were going after Marco, yes.” Alistair’s smile was bitter. “I know you, Roderick... and I know once your mind is set on something, you’ll stop at nothing to get it. It doesn’t matter who it hurts.”

Cold said nothing.

Alistair looked around the room to the others. “Take care of him, won’t you? God knows he won’t.”

Jules had joined them at some point during the argument, and he gave Alistair a hug. “I got him.”

“Good luck.” Alistair patted Jules’ back. Without another word, he left through the front door.

Mickey didn’t even see that he had packed a bag or anything. No suitcase, no boxes, nothing. He was leaving with only the clothes on his back.

The door shut, and that was it.

Alistair Star was gone.

“We’ll deal with the consequences of Marco and Salvatore’s deaths as needed,” Cold said briskly. “Right now, our priority is locating Thirdsies.”

Mickey was surprised he was escaping Cold’s wrath so easily, but he had a feeling he would pay for this reprieve later.

No one seemed to be commenting on Alistair’s abrupt exit. Mickey could see that Duncan was dying to say something, and he gave him a stern glare to ensure his silence.

Whatever Alistair was, he’d been important to Cold, and he’d just abandoned him.

Probably best not to make any cute remarks.

Roger came downstairs at that moment because of course he did, and the first thing out of his mouth was, “Huh, was that Alistair? Where’s he going?”

Mickey begged him to shut up with a pleading look.

Oblivious, Roger kept going. “Seriously, why did he leave? And what was all that yelling?”

Mickey grabbed Roger’s arm and pulled him close, hissing in his ear, “Shut your big stupid mouth.”

Roger grinned, immediately leaning into Mickey’s rough grip and grabbing his ass. “Oh, tough guy. Mm, you gonna make me?”

Mickey hadn’t intended to get Roger riled up quite like this, but at least it had distracted him.

“Later,” he murmured. “Behave.”

“Mm, yes, sir.”

“We checked all over the neighborhood, four blocks out and as close to the house as we dared,” Jerry said quickly. “No sign of Thirdsies anywhere.”



“Did the cops nab him?” Jules grunted.

“As of right now, no,” Cold replied. “At least, he has not been arrested. Otherwise there’d be a record of him being booked.”

“He couldn’t have simply vanished!” Valdemar groaned. He was a little unsteady now as he walked into the kitchen, and there was no telling how many drinks Jules had given him. “He has to be out there! Somewhere! Anywhere!”

“We will find him,” Cold swore. “We know he couldn’t have left the city...”

“What happened?” Roger whispered in Mickey’s ear, biting down on his lobe to hide what he was doing while Cold was talking with the others.

Mickey held back a growl, and he grabbed Roger’s hair to twist his head aside. Subtly as he could, he whispered in reply, “I’ll tell you later. Now shut up.”

“Come on.”

“Shhhh... hush.”

Jerry left briefly to get more drinks, passing out cups and filling them efficiently. Valdemar took the bottle right from his hand and chugged until Roger wrestled it away.

“Hey, hey! Look, we’ll find him,” Roger soothed. “He’s a kid, right? He’s gotta be scared out of his mind. He’s probably hiding somewhere. He might even be in the damn house still, hunkered down in a closet or something.”

“What if the cops got him and are just holding him?” Duncan asked quietly. “I mean, they don’t have to arrest him to pick him up, technically. He’s a minor. They could try to call CPS or some shit.”

“Detective Carville is aware we’re looking for him,” Cold said. “He was not privy to the search, so he doesn’t know if any suspects were apprehended. He is, however, trying to find out.”

“Why can’t he call someone?” Mickey was hesitant to speak up since he was probably on Cold’s shit list, but it was worth asking.

“Because it would look suspicious if he’s inquiring about a case that isn’t his own,” Cold replied shortly. “Especially one that involves the Gentlemen. He wisely does not wish to be so forward with our friendship.”

“Right.”

“Jerry,” Cold said, “you and Valdemar go back out. Jerry, you drive. Jules, go with them. Look for Thirdsies.”

“I wanna go, Boss,” Roger said.

“No.” Cold narrowed his eyes. “You were with Mickey when he killed Salvatore. I’m sure the authorities are working with the witnesses to get a description of you both. It’s only a matter of time before your faces could be plastered all over the news.”

“We’ll just go ask Pym,” Roger grumbled.

“Whatever you want, Boss,” Mickey said quickly, trying to speak over Roger.

“Rufus, go with Duncan and set something up at the Wynne Hotel.” Cold pinched the bridge of his nose. “Get rooms for everyone under Mr. Thomas Frost’s name. They have my information.” He scowled at Mickey and Roger. “Except you two.”

“Yes, Boss.” Mickey cringed.

“Go. Now.” Cold walked back to his chair at the fireplace and sat down heavily.

Duncan and Rufus left with Valdemar and Jerry right after them. Roger mumbled something about checking on Crybaby again and headed back upstairs. Mickey remained in the kitchen, finishing off his drink. Jules lumbered over to Cold, and he leaned down to speak to him.

When Mickey was done with his drink, he began working on someone else’s neglected glass. From here, he could hear Jules and Cold talking. He wasn’t intentionally eavesdropping, but he did have several other drinks to get through.

“This Marco thing gonna be a problem?” Jules asked warily.

“Not now,” Cold replied. “It may be later if they find his body, but not now.”

“You got a plan for that?”

“Not yet, but I will.”

Jules grunted. It was a sort of happy grunt, as if he was gladly accepting that response. The next sound was not happy. He grunted low as he asked, “And the rest?”

“What?”

Jules waved around them.

“It’s fine. Although quite unexpected, the deaths of Marco and Salvatore are actually going to help us. Salvatore’s in particular. It was so brazen that I’m sure the rest of that pitiful family is ready to flee if they haven’t already.”

“Brazen?”

“Bold. But also very stupid.”

“Ah.”

Mickey couldn’t argue with that assessment.

“You sure you’re good?” Jules asked now, his voice dropping lower as if he didn’t want Mickey to hear them. “You know, about you know who goin’.”

“He’ll be back.”

“You sure about that?”

“He’ll come back to me.” Cold sipped at his drink. “And if he doesn’t, well…” He sighed and was quiet for a long moment. “Fuck him.”

Jules patted Cold’s shoulder. “Sorry, Boss.”

“Me too.” Cold sounded sad.

Whatever heartbreak he was holding back was probably painful, but his voice was strong once more when he spoke again.

“Mr. Tamerlane,” Cold called out. “As long as you’re skulking about in there, how about you clean up that broken glass?”

Shit.

“You got it, Boss.” Mickey found a broom and dustpan in the closet, and he moved the table around to sweep up the mess beneath it.

Jules grinned at him on his way out. “Don’t worry. He ain’t really mad.” He nodded over at Cold. “I mean, let’s fuckin’ face it. You both fucked up for the same reasons. People hurt you, and it feels good to hurt ‘em back.”

“Thanks, Jules.”

“Great minds think alike and all that.”

“I can hear you,” Cold drawled impatiently.

“I’m going, Boss!” Jules waved and through the door he went.

Mickey threw the glass into the trash and put the broom and dustpan away. He was a little buzzed from all the alcohol he’d had and figured now was as good a time as any to settle up with Cold.

He cautiously approached, his head bowed respectfully. “It’s done, Boss.”

“Thank you, Mr. Tamerlane.” Cold rose up from his chair to refill his glass. “Jules is wrong, by the way. I am angry.”

“Boss, I’m real sorry—” Mickey began.

“Stop.” Cold held up his hand. “I’m angry at you… And at myself. I know you’re not sorry you did it. You’re only sorry that you might get caught and that could cause trouble for the rest of us. I know this because that’s how I feel about killing Marco Luchesi.”

Mickey couldn’t deny that.

“I could have waited for a more opportune time. We both could have. But this was personal.” Cold sat back down, pausing to take a drink. “It was also personal for you.”

“Yes, Boss.”

“From here on out, how about we both keep our behavior professional?” Cold smirked.

“Yes, of course, Boss.”

“Kneel.”

Mickey dropped to his knees immediately.

Cold suddenly grabbed his throat and pulled him in close. “Because I am still the Boss. I’m in charge. And I will not hesitate to end you if you disobey me again.” His grip tightened. “Do I make myself clear, Mr. Tamerlane?”

Mickey was having trouble defining the emotion coming over him when Cold squeezed. It was somewhere between enraged and adoring with a splash of humiliation because yes, he knew he’d do anything to make this up to Cold.

Anything.

This man had lifted him up from nothing; clothed him, housed him, fed him. Cold had given him everything when everyone else treated him like absolute scum, and Mickey would gladly do the same in return.

“Yes, Boss.” Mickey closed his eyes. He coughed, trying not to choke. “I understand.”

“Good.” Cold let him go. “We will have a city to rule, after all. I will need you. And I will not be as forgiving in the future as I am now.”

“Of course.” Mickey took Cold’s hand and kissed it reverently. “I’m yours to command.”

“Go.” Cold waved him away.

Mickey got to his feet and turned to head up the stairs, and he paused. There was a lot on his mind, but there was something of immediate concern he wanted to address. “Hey, Boss. Is Alistair... is he a problem now?”

“No.” Cold shook his head.

“Are you sure, Boss?”

“Yes.” Cold was getting impatient.

“Cause he could mess our shit up if he wanted to.”

“I’m very well aware of what Alistair is capable of.” Cold’s voice was stern now, and any trace of mirth had vanished. “But allow me to make one thing very clear. He left me, not the Gentlemen. He remains a trusted member of our gang, and he will be treated with the utmost respect until I say otherwise. Do you understand me, Mr. Tamerlane?”

“Yes, Boss.”

Cold looked over to the fireplace. “Go. *Now.*”

Mickey decided he’d done enough damage for one night and his luck was likely fleeting. He headed upstairs to find Roger and Crybaby in the guest room.

Crybaby was in bed with Roger perched on the edge of the mattress beside her. They both smiled when Mickey came in, and Crybaby waved.

“Hey, Crybaby.” Mickey waved back.

“Hey, yourself.” She grimaced. “Alistair left, huh?”

“Yeah.” Mickey really didn’t want to have a repeat of this conversation.

“Like, left the Gentlemen? Left the gang?” Roger asked eagerly. “Left Cold and smashed his heart into a million pieces?”

“He left.” Mickey wasn’t sure how to answer. “He’s still with us, just not... here.”

“He’ll probably go over to Moultrie.” Crybaby grunted, sitting up with effort. “He’s got some property over there. Another club, shit like that.”

“I thought they were like, I dunno, gonna get gay married and shit.” Roger pouted. “Damn.”

“The fuck is gay married?” Mickey snorted.

“You know, that legal agreement thing ’cause two guys can’t get married. Except like up in fuckin’ Massachusetts or something.”

“Oh.”

“Shit happens.” Crybaby patted Roger’s hand. “Nothing lasts forever.”

“You watch!” Roger held his head high. “Me and Mickey will.”

“We will?” Mickey actually smiled.

“In like twenty years, you’re still gonna be chasin’ my fine ass,” Roger declared. “You won’t be able to get enough of me, like ever.”

“Is this before or after you run around behind my back?”

“Hey, fuck you! Fucker! You fuckin’ told me we were done, asshole.”

“We’ll never be done,” Mickey promised, reaching out to affectionately tug Roger’s hair. “Bastard.”

“Mmm, keep that sweet talking coming, *mrrrow*.”

“You’re both making me sick.” Crybaby grinned. “All this love and romance is too much for me.”

“Miss your old lady, huh?” Roger beamed. “Don’t worry. Shit is gonna settle soon. I can feel it in my bones.”

“Oh, so you’re psychic now?”

“I just got a real good feeling. You and Scout are gonna be slapping lady bits again in no time.”

From across the hallway, Mickey heard someone start crying hysterically. It was Rowena. Without thinking, he slammed the door back and dove into her room. “Rowena? Hey, are you okay?”

“Roddy!” she cried, rocking back and forth on the edge of her bed with Princess Snaggleteeth in her arms. There was a unicorn lamp switched on by her bedside, and she had a small knife in her hand. “Where’s R-Roddy?”

“He’s downstairs, I’ll go get him—”

“No!” she screamed. “Stay here! Don’t leave me alone! Please don’t leave me alone!”

Mickey floundered for what to do, totally lost with how to comfort a very upset little girl, especially one that was armed. He kneeled in front of her. “Okay, okay... I’ll stay, okay?”

Rowena cried even harder, and she smothered her face in her stuffed shark.

Mickey turned when he heard footsteps coming up the hall, and he was relieved when it was Cold.

“I’m here,” Cold said, reaching down and picking Rowena up. He cradled her in his arms, rubbing her back soothingly. “I’m right here.”

“I don’t wanna... I don’t... don’t make me,” she was sobbing, hugging Cold’s neck. “Roddy, no. He’s gonna come g-get me! Please!”

“I’ve got you, you’re safe now,” Cold whispered. “He can’t hurt you ever again.” He carefully pried the knife away from her and gave it to Mickey.

As Mickey stood up to take it, he glanced at Rowena’s back and found himself staring.

Cold had just happened to brush her hair out the way, and Mickey saw a zig-zagging pattern of thick scars peeking out from the top of her little pajama top.

Christ.

Cold caught Mickey’s eye. “You and Roger may sleep in here tonight if you wish. She’s staying with me.”

“Thanks, Boss.” Mickey stood up a little straighter. “For everything.”

“Good night.” Cold headed down the hallway.

“I’m s-sorry, Roddy,” Rowena whimpered. “I’m so sorry.”

“Shhh, it’s okay,” Cold promised. “I’m here. I’m not going anywhere. I’ll always be here...” His voice trailed off as he vanished into the master bedroom and shut the door.

Roger was hovering outside the guest room door, and he asked, “Uh, everything okay?”

“Sort of?” Mickey held up the knife. He honestly didn’t know what to do with it and handed it to Roger.

“Cute.” Roger turned to pass it over to Crybaby. “Need a knife?”

“Uh, sure?” Crybaby snorted. “I’ll use it to cut all these damn tubes I’m hooked up to and escape.”

“The fuck you will.”

Mickey was still thinking about the scars he'd seen on Rowena's back. He'd heard Cold's father was a real bastard, but to abuse a child? Fuck, and people thought Mickey was a monster.

"No, you're not." Roger leaned in to give Crybaby a hug. "No escaping for you. Now I hate to tear myself away and all, but I did just hear that me and Mickey got a bed. And I'm, mmm, *yawn*, so very tired now."

Rolling her eyes, Crybaby gave Roger a playful smack. "Go on. Get some 'rest' or whatever it is you're going to do. Tomorrow is gonna be a wreck."

"Oh?" Mickey frowned at her.

"You guys murdered how many fuckin' people?" She scoffed. "Someone is gonna be looking for a way to make this all go away. Whether it's the damn cops or some of Rufus' fancy ol' political friends, there's gotta be a way out. A light at the end of the tunnel. For all of us. That's how Cold is gonna win. He's gonna give them a way to end this."

Mickey nodded.

It was honestly hard to imagine victory. He'd been working for it for so long, he was a little unsure as to how he would feel if they actually got it.

No, not if; *when*.

He selfishly hoped it wasn't like killing Salvatore. Revenge hadn't done much for him, but maybe winning this war would.

He let Roger drag him into Rowena's room, and he saw nothing had changed since the last time he'd been in here for tea. Everything was pink, fluffy, and soft, and there were a lot of unicorns. Between plushies, figurines, and the rest of the decor, there were probably fifty of them all staring at Mickey with their big, dopey eyes.

The bed was small but comfortable, and Mickey sank down into the poofy blankets with a groan after he'd stripped down to his underwear. He was exhausted, and his body was crashing from too many surges of adrenaline. He could clearly picture Salvatore's dead face, and it made him smile.

*That one's for you, Pops.*

Roger got naked, of course, slinking into bed next to him and cuddling up close. "I've been worried about you. Did, uh, everything go okay with Cold? Did you guys talk while you were down there?"

"He made it very clear that he will not tolerate my disobedience again." Mickey sighed. "It's fine. He's right to be angry with me. I wasn't thinking."

"Yeah, you were thinking about how good it was gonna feel to blow that asshole away."

"Except..." Mickey hesitated to describe his feelings. He wasn't very good at it, and he didn't know if it was going to make any sense. "It didn't."

"What do you mean?"

“It didn’t make me feel better. Okay, maybe for a second. But I’m still... *empty*. Pops is dead. Me killing Salvatore didn’t change that. It didn’t fuckin’ bring him back to life. It didn’t change shit. It didn’t make me any less angry or fill up this stupid empty spot in me.”

“Well, I’ve got some empty things you can fill up.” Roger wagged his brows enticingly.

“You’re disgusting.”

“Okay, that’s true, but listen.” Roger wiggled around until he was up on Mickey’s chest. “You did what you had to fuckin’ do. He killed your grandpa, you killed him. Salvatore used to fuck me up all the time, and yeah, knowing he’s dead definitely makes me feel better. But...”

“But?”

“It doesn’t take away what he did to me. That’s still there. It’s like a scar. Maybe I don’t have an empty spot like you do, but I know what it’s like not to have any fuckin’ closure ’cause you can’t actually fix what got broken.”

“Well, what the fuck do you do?”

“You keep going. Scars and shit don’t get any lighter or hurt any less, but time makes it easier to carry them around. Maybe your empty thing will be like that too. Just needs more time.”

Mickey was quiet as he thought that over. The memories of Rowena’s scars were fresh in his mind, and he felt a pang of sympathy for how she had obviously suffered. He hoped more time would heal her too. Or at least, following Roger’s logic, give her the strength to carry them more easily.

He was honestly surprised by how spot on the analogy was, and he looked over Roger’s handsome face with a new appreciation.

“Look at you. Being all wise and shit.”

“Right? I was surprised too.” Roger grinned. “Crazy, huh?”

“Yeah.” Mickey smiled crookedly. He actually did feel better.

“You know, I didn’t have a chance to tell you how fuckin’ hot you were tonight.” Roger’s grin turned lustful. “I love watching you do your thing. You’re so powerful, so fuckin’ sexy...”

Mickey licked his lips as Roger’s hand slid down his stomach, dipping into his underwear. This was also making him feel better, but a glance at the bedside table put him off a bit.

There was something perverse about listening to Roger talk about how watching Mickey kill got him off while the only light in the room was being provided by the glow of a frilly pink unicorn lamp.

Normally, Mickey wouldn’t mind.

He’d fuck Roger pretty much anywhere, but this wasn’t just anywhere. This was Cold’s kid sister’s room. It was a little weird.

“We are absolutely, no way in hell, one hundred percent not fucking in a little girl’s bed.”



“Oh.” Roger’s hand retreated. “Really?”

“Go to sleep.” Mickey sighed. “Crybaby is right. Tomorrow is gonna be crazy, and we need to get some rest. I’ll fuck you tomorrow when we take a shower or something.”

“Okay, but wait.” Roger crept in close again. “Hear me out.”

“What?”

“How about on the floor?”

## C H A P T E R 22

Mickey couldn't say no.  
It was especially difficult when Roger's hand curled around his cock.

And then his mouth.

And his tongue—damn, his tongue was very persuasive.

“Floor. Now.” Mickey sat up with a grunt, watching Roger practically throw himself down with an impish grin.

“Yes, sir.” Roger was already spreading his legs and rubbing his hole with spit. He groaned quietly as he pressed his fingers inside of himself.

“Didn't think to get prepped this time, hmm?” Mickey snorted as he got down on the floor, crawling between Roger's parted thighs. The vision of Roger's fingers roughly pushing in his ass made Mickey's mouth water.

“What? We were very busy today.” Roger grinned. “What with all the fires and the big shootouts. I didn't even have time to do my hair.”

“You dumb slut.”

“Shut up, you ugly prick.” Roger kissed him and greedily pulled him on top, wrapping his legs around his waist.

Mickey went willingly, kissing him deeply and letting their bodies rut together. They fit so well, like they really were made for each other.

*Like water on a grease fire...*

Roger slid his hands over Mickey's ass, pulling his underwear down. Mickey pushed them down around his knees and kicked them off. With nothing between them, Mickey pressed as close as he could. He loved how Roger's bare skin felt against his own, and the slide of their cocks made him want to fuck hard and fast.

Mickey shifted his hips, trying to roll them over, but Roger wouldn't budge. Mickey was determined to have him be on top this time and tried again, but still Roger didn't move. “Mmph, come on.”

“What?” Roger nipped at Mickey’s jaw.

“Get on top.”

“Get fucked.”

“Get on top and you’ll get fucked, you lazy bastard.” Mickey reached down to pop Roger’s thigh. “Right now.”

Roger huffed, but he finally allowed Mickey to switch their positions. Straddling his hips now, he smirked down at him. “Happy now?”

“I’ll be happier when my dick is in you and you stop talking.” Mickey stroked his thighs.

“Hang on.” Roger leaned back, reaching for his pants. From inside his wallet he grabbed a small packet of lube and chewed it open. “Mm, always be prepared.”

“Slut motto?” Mickey stroked himself with a smug smirk.

“It’s the ‘I want dick when I fuckin’ want it and spit sucks as lube’ motto.” Roger squirted the lube directly on Mickey’s cock.

“Hey!” he hissed. “It’s cold!”

“Aww, poor baby,” Roger cooed sweetly. “You want me to warm it up next time, huh?”

“I hate you so much right now.”

“I’ll make it all better, promise.” Roger took over stroking Mickey’s cock, slicking him up from root to tip. He thumbed around the barbell running through Mickey’s frenum, sliding around it until Mickey was thrusting into his palm.

“Fuck.” Mickey loved when Roger played with his piercing. It made him want to seek out more friction, and he rocked upwards with a small groan.

“Mm, hang on.” Roger stopped to lube himself up with what was left on his hand, and his eyes closed as he got carried away fingering his hole. “Mmm... fuck, that feels good.”

“Do you know what else feels good?” Mickey asked impatiently. “My dick.”

“Shut the fuck up.” Roger kept going, his sculpted stomach flexing as he hit what must have been a particularly pleasurable angle. “Mmm, yeah. Fuck.”

Although Mickey sort of liked watching Roger play with himself, he wanted to take back control of the situation. He couldn’t have Roger not listening to him. “Last warning.”

“Fuck, it’s so good.” Roger ignored him. “God, I bet I can make myself come like this.”

*This little shit is baiting you.*

Mickey knew it was a trap to bring on his wrath, and he couldn’t deny how well it was working. It always did. Roger knew exactly how to get to him. He grabbed Roger’s cock and pulled, jerking him forward. It was pretty effective, and Roger immediately scooted up with a pained whine.

“Now,” Mickey said firmly, “you’re gonna sit on my dick, you’re gonna ride it until I fuckin’ come, and maybe if you do a decent job, I’ll let you come too. Right now? With what a fuckin’ brat you’re being? Not lookin’ so good for you.”

Roger’s eyes widened, but he looked delighted. He lifted his hips, obediently rubbing Mickey’s cock against his wet hole and sinking down. “Yes, fuck. I’ll be so good for you.”

Slapping his hand against Roger’s thigh, Mickey snapped, “I’ll be so good for you, what?”

“Master,” Roger sighed as he started moving. “I’ll be so good for you, master.”

“Keep going.” Mickey dragged his nails up Roger’s thighs and grabbed his hips, directing him to rock harder, faster. Roger was hot, tight, and Mickey swore his dick was deeper inside of him than ever before.

Every breath had the potential to birth a deep moan, and Mickey was fighting to keep quiet. Cold probably wouldn’t appreciate them defiling his little sister’s room, and there was something exciting about trying to be sneaky. It reminded him of when Roger sucked him off in the club’s bathroom, and a flood of adrenaline was setting all of his nerves on fire.

Everything was so much more intense, from the drag of Roger’s nails down his chest to the way Mickey’s skin was prickling up with goosebumps from the sheer rush of their coupling. He had to bite down on his lip to stop from coming too soon, but it was hard when Roger was riding him like this.

Roger was bouncing up and down with enough force to make the tacky unicorn lamp on the bedside table rattle, and he thrust two of his own fingers into his mouth to muffle his moans. Sucking on them only seemed to get him more worked up, and he rode Mickey harder.

“There you go,” Mickey urged, struggling to keep his voice down. “Get it, baby. Get it. Take what you fuckin’ need. Come on.”

Roger’s head fell back, and he let his body drop, groaning as he sat fully on Mickey’s cock and grinded down. The new pressure was maddening, and Mickey had to pant through the amazing friction.

The air was getting heavy and thick, and that emptiness inside of him was flooding with an explosion of sensation. Roger was riding his dick like it was the most fantastic thing in the world, like he couldn’t get enough of it, and it was a huge ego boost to see him so desperate for him.

*No one else can do this to him. Fuckin’ no one can fuck him like I can, not fuckin’ ever.*

Mickey could see Roger’s cock flex as it started getting hard again, and the ooze of pre-cum was glistening in the low light. Mickey arched his hips up, pushing as far as he could up into Roger’s hole, and he smacked his ass just to feel him flex around his dick.

“Master, please, please!” Roger whined, slowing to a seductive rhythm. “I wanna come, please... I’ll be good. I’ll be so fuckin’ good for you.”

“Not yet.” Mickey growled as he grabbed Roger’s sides to hold him in place as he fucked up into him. He had to show him who was in charge.

Roger moaned, too loud, and Mickey dragged him down to clamp his hand over his mouth. He kept pounding into him, drawing his legs up for more leverage as he fucked him.

“Shhhh, come on. Be quiet.” Mickey grunted, slamming into Roger hard enough to make him jerk in his lap. “Just be a good boy and take this dick, huh?”

Roger’s eyes rolled back, and he groaned into Mickey’s palm, struggling to reduce his volume to needy little whimpers. Even if no one heard him wailing, they could definitely hear the sound of their bodies jackhammering together.

Mickey was in awe of how Roger could take every ruthless thrust and still want more. Mickey’s muscles were tensing, and that familiar pressure was winding up as he felt his climax building.

He loved coming inside of Roger, loved the wet slide, filling him up, marking his territory—

That pushed Mickey over the edge, and he came with a stunted cry. He slammed up into Roger’s ass, using his grip on his hips to force him to grind down as his cock pulsed. He could feel the heat of his own load, increasing the sweet sensation of Roger’s already hot hole hugging his cock.

He moved his hand to snatch Roger’s hair, drowning a growl out against his lips in a fierce kiss. He kept his hips moving until he had nothing left to give, and he pulled away with a sharp gasp. “Ah, fuck.”

“There you go, master,” Roger breathed, greedily writhing on his dick as if he could milk out another load. “Mmm, yes, give it to me. Every fuckin’ drop. Fuck, yes.”

Mickey went limp against the floor and basked in the buzz of an awesome afterglow. He gave Roger’s ass a half-hearted smack. “Mmm, good boy. Now stop.”

Roger rocked his hips slower, but he didn’t stop. “Can I come now, master? Please? I took your load so fuckin’ good.”

Tingles of overstimulation made Mickey grit his teeth, and he exhaled carefully, trying not to moan. “I’ll tell you when you can come. And I didn’t say you could. Now fuckin’ quit it.”

“Come on, master,” Roger pleaded. “I want it so bad.” He kept moving, his cock dripping a thin line of pre-cum. “Let me come for you, please.”

Mickey sat up fast enough that he startled Roger. He used his thumb to pin Roger’s hard cock against his stomach, and he ordered firmly, “Lay back. Right now.”

Roger did so, propping himself up on his elbows so he could watch what Mickey was doing. His legs curled loosely around Mickey’s hips, and he panted loudly. “What are you doing, master?”

“Teaching you a lesson.” Mickey kept Roger’s cock trapped, only holding the head and lightly smacking the shaft with his other hand. “You never fuckin’ listen.” He smacked him again a little harder, enjoying how Roger twitched. “You like this, don’t you? Gettin’ your cock fuckin’ spanked?”

“Yes, master.” Roger’s chest was rising and falling fast, and he pushed himself down on Mickey’s cock. “Fuck, please... I’ll be so good. I’ll take it. I’ll take anything you want.”

“You fuckin’ brat.” Mickey’s cock was trying to get hard again, and he gave Roger a small thrust before he popped him. “I know you will. You always do.”

Roger squirmed, and his cock flexed beneath Mickey’s tight grip. Every tap was making him writhe, and Mickey could see more pre-cum bubbling up at the tip of his dick. Another spank, harder than before, made Roger jerk and slam his hips down.

“Mmm, there you go.” Mickey rocked forward lazily, rubbing Roger’s cock to ease the sting. “Look at you. You’re so fuckin’ hard. Bet it hurts. And you’re still trying to get another load in you.”

“Yes,” Roger hissed, trying to push down with more purpose. “I want, I want more. I want to make you come again... while you get me off.”

Mickey’s cock was swelling in response to Roger’s fervent grinding, and he cracked his hand across Roger’s dick even harder to hear him moan. “It doesn’t matter what you want. It’s only what I want. Do you understand?”

Roger had dropped flat on his back, covering his mouth and whimpering pitifully. “Yes, master... Mmph. Ah, fuck... I’m just, I’m just so close.” He dragged his hands up into his hair and pulled. “Please.”

“Not yet.” Mickey shifted back with a groan. He pulled out, wet with cum and lube, and he smacked the underside of Roger’s thigh. “Roll over. Now.”

Roger went with a low whine, stretching out on his stomach and spreading his legs. “Are you gonna let me come, master?”

“Maybe.” Mickey mounted him, and he slid his cock between his cheeks, playing in the wetness leaking out from his hole. “I shouldn’t. I should make you wait. I should punish you for being such a fuckin’ brat.”

“But I’m being good now,” Roger protested.

“Yeah, but then you got me hard again and now I’ve gotta fuck you.” Mickey kept pushing, his cock grinding and slipping until it finally caught. He inhaled, watching his cock smoothly vanish inside the tight heat of Roger’s hole.

“Mmm, master... I’m sorry, you just feel so good.” Roger melted against the floor, and he sighed contentedly as Mickey sank down to the hilt.

Mickey braced himself on his elbows and reared his hips back, dropping down with a very satisfying smack. “Ohhh, fuck yes.”

“God, yes, give it to me, master!” Roger gasped.

“Shhh, shut up.” Mickey pounded into him, grunting as he let himself go.

He used his knees to force Roger’s legs to spread wider, fucking him ruthlessly. He pressed himself against Roger’s back, drilling into him like a dog in heat and biting down on Roger’s shoulder.

“Oh, *God!*” Roger wailed. “Master!”

“Shut up, shut up, shut up!” Mickey hissed. He looked around for something—anything—to muffle Roger’s cries. He saw his underwear over on the floor from where he’d kicked them off earlier and shoved them in Roger’s mouth without ever losing rhythm.

“Mmm!” Roger moaned, and he dropped his head. “Mmm, mmph, hrmph.”

“Much better.” Mickey snarled as he picked up the pace. He slid his arms beneath Roger, holding him close as he fucked him. It was filthy, rutting like two animals down on the floor, and Mickey loved it.

Roger would let him do whatever he wanted, and that rush of power was intoxicating.

And whatever Mickey did, Roger would always want him.

That revelation squeezed Mickey’s heart.

It didn’t matter how many people Mickey killed or how many people he hurt as a result of what he did...

Even his own grandfather.

Mickey pushed out the intruding rush of emotions, biting down on Roger’s shoulder until he screamed into the fabric in his mouth. He let go with a growl, and he tried to refocus the surge of anger and guilt overwhelming him. He tilted his hips, giving himself access to spank the side of Roger’s ass.

He smacked him again and again, pouring all he had into the ruthless pounding of his cock and the swing of his hand. When he finally came, he thought he was going to pass out from the swell of sensation. His eyes were stinging, and his legs shook as he collapsed on top of Roger.

Roger was whimpering, and yet he was still weakly grinding back on Mickey’s cock.

“Good boy,” Mickey managed to whisper. He pulled out, his head still spinning as he rolled Roger over onto his back. Without hesitation, he bowed his head and sucked Roger’s cock into his mouth.

Yelping in surprise, Roger’s cries were soft, but Mickey could still hear how desperate he was.

Mickey was admittedly a little rusty, and he gagged the first time Roger’s cock hit the back of his throat. He swallowed and tried again, tightly wrapping his lips around Roger and sucking hard. He could taste his precum, and his cock was so hot against his tongue.

He wanted to give him this, to thank him for everything. He knew he didn’t have the words to describe what Roger meant to him, but he could take care of him, get him off, and make sure no one else ever touched him again.

It took only seconds for Roger to come, sobbing into the underwear in his mouth as he thrustured into Mickey’s mouth. Mickey took it all, hanging on to get every last drop. He pulled off, gasping, pressing open-mouth kisses to Roger’s hip and thigh.

Roger was limp, mewling pitifully, and he tossed the makeshift gag aside. “Holy... *fuck*.”

“Thought I told you to shut up?” Mickey crawled up Roger to kiss him, cradling the side of his face. His heart was still pounding, and he couldn’t define why this felt so different now.

Maybe because that empty spot inside of him suddenly didn't feel so damn empty.

"Mmm, I don't listen very well," Roger mumbled.

"Obviously."

"But I'm very cute."

Mickey couldn't argue that fact, but he refused to confirm it. He got them cleaned up and back into bed. He rubbed Roger's raw ass and hip where he'd spanked him so cruelly and kissed the bite mark on his shoulder.

Roger drank in all the affection with a sleepy smile, cuddling his way up on Mickey's chest and draping his arm across him. "So, yeah. Holy fuck, Mickey."

"That good, huh?" Mickey smiled smugly.

"I don't know what got into you, but I *definitely* want it to get into me again."

"I'll see what I can do. Are you sure you're... okay?" Mickey hesitated to ask, but he had been pretty rough.

"Oh, pffft, I'm fine." Roger laughed. "I've had my ass beaten worse than that and didn't even get to come." He snuggled in closer. "I told you. I want a monster... just not an asshole, you know?"

"I get it. I think."

"Keep doing what you're fuckin' doing, Mickey. And you'll be... *fine*."

Mickey groaned. "Oh, my God. Don't even start."

Roger snickered and traced Mickey's collarbone. He was quiet for a few moments before he asked, "You think they're gonna find the kid?"

"I hope so." Mickey shifted his arm over to click off the unicorn lamp. "He's one of us. We need him."

"Yeah."

"Get some sleep." Mickey let the darkness wash over him, his muscles still singing their exertion and his core glowing with warmth. He held Roger a little closer, and he kissed his hair.

"Hey, Mickey?"

"What?" Mickey grunted.

"I think I love you," Roger whispered.

Mickey shivered. He didn't know what to say. He had never really felt love before. He knew he'd loved his mother and his grandfather, but what he felt for Roger...

It was different, *powerful*, and he couldn't imagine ever being without him. The very idea of him leaving filled Mickey with rage, and the urge to claim him again took his breath away. His heart was



pounding, and there was a new rush of warmth in that empty hole occupying his chest.

Maybe this was love.

Or he was insane.

Which would also make Roger insane for loving him, but wasn't that just so fitting?

A monster and his demented beauty.

"I think..." Mickey swallowed awkwardly. "I think if I could ever love someone... then I would love you too."

"Oh, Mickey." Roger sighed happily. "Really?"

"You're mine." Mickey grabbed Roger's ass, and he could feel the lingering heat from where he'd spanked him. "Always."

"Always," Roger agreed.

They drifted off to sleep, and Mickey slept quite soundly until there was a firm knock at the door.

He jerked awake, instinctively grabbing for a weapon. The first thing he got a hold of was the unicorn lamp on the bedside table, and he squinted against the light of the open door as he strained to make out who it was.

"They found Thirdsies." It was Cold. He was wearing a dark blue silk robe, and he looked tired.

"Yeah?" Roger sat up, wide awake now and grinning. "That's fuckin' great! He's okay?"

"More or less."

Mickey set down the lamp and clicked it on, surprised he hadn't ripped the cord out of the wall. He scrubbed at his face. "Where was he?"

"The cops picked him up," Cold replied. "Held him for questioning. When they were done, they dumped him off on the streets. Jerry and Valdemar found him hiding in a dumpster near Slick Rick's."

"Shit." Mickey grimaced. "He give up anything?"

"He told them he saw me and Rufus leaving the warehouse with Marco in less than stellar condition."

"*Shit.*"

"A problem for another day," Cold said shortly. "They shouldn't find Marco's body for some time, and for now he will be a missing person. We have much more pressing concerns."

"My face on the news?" Mickey ventured.

"Funny you mention that." Cold smirked. "Not a single witness was able to give a description of you or Roger. Not even your flashy little car. Your reputation as the Shadow precedes you."

"Really?" Mickey blinked.

“What?” Roger laughed. “They all find out he’s a mob hitman and nobody wants to narc?”

“Considering the carnage we left in our wake, it’s not too surprising.” Cold smirked. “But no, that’s not it. I need you both to get up and get dressed now.”

“What is it, Boss?”

“Cristian called. He wants to meet. It’s time to end this, once and for all.”

## C H A P T E R 23

The Wynne Hotel was a grand old building and run by very loyal staff. Cold knew most of them, as usual, and the hotel was owned by none other than Alistair Star. That certainly explained how Cold was able to get rooms for everyone on such short notice last night.

It also explained why he was able to gain access to one of their exclusive penthouse suites with just a phone call so the Gentlemen could meet.

Cold insisted on a limo to drive them over there, although he decided against a police escort for this trip.

Too much heat, he'd said.

In fresh suits and ready for action, they left Alistair's house with Jerry at the wheel of the limo. Even Crybaby came along, weak as she was, because she absolutely refused to be left behind this time. Cold allowed it, but he insisted on her using a wheelchair so as not to strain herself.

As soon as they stepped into the hotel lobby, the air tensed.

Everyone here, employees and guests alike, knew who they were.

It was... a rush.

Most of them turned their heads and scrambled to get out of the way. They immediately parted to make a path as the Gentlemen came through. Anyone who did meet Mickey's gaze looked in the other direction.

The hotel concierge met them personally in the lobby, shook Cold's hand, and made sure it was known that the resources of the hotel were totally at their disposal.

Cold thanked him and headed to the elevator, Mickey and Jerry at his side. Roger was behind them, pushing Crybaby with Pym bringing up the rear. Rufus and Jules were waiting for them at the elevator doors, both of them dressed in slick suits.

Mickey still thought it was weird to see Jules in a suit and not some novelty t-shirt.

"Hello, Boss Cold," Rufus greeted cordially. "The others are waiting for you upstairs."

“Excellent,” Cold said. “Let’s go.”

Jules punched the button for the elevator.

Mickey noticed a woman edging toward Cold, and she was wearing a hotel uniform. Maybe a maid or a waitress of some kind. She was looking right at Cold, and she seemed nervous.

“Back up,” Mickey snapped as he stepped in between them.

“I need to speak to him,” the woman said. “Please!”

“Yeah, no, he doesn’t have time for you today.”

“But I need to talk to him!” She was shaking like a leaf but determined. “Mr. Frost! Please. Just a moment of your time, sir.”

Mickey frowned, and he looked back to Cold for instruction.

“Yes?” Cold eyed her warily, but he relaxed when he read her name tag. “Miss Lola. Ah. Yes, hello. How are you?”

“I wanted to thank you. Personally. For this job.” Lola stayed where she was, but she was beaming at Cold now. “You didn’t have to help me, but you did. I just, I just wanted to thank you. You changed my life, sir.”

The elevator doors opened, and Jules threw up his arm to hold it.

“It was my pleasure.” Cold bowed his head politely. “Now, if you’ll excuse me, Miss Lola.”

“Right, sir! Of course!” She smiled, wringing her hands. “I’ll be here for anything you need. Ever. I’ll make sure it’s perfect for you, sir. I swear! Anything at all!”

“I value punctuality, Miss Lola,” Cold said firmly. “I have an important meeting to attend, and I prefer to be on time. So, please, if you’ll excuse me.”

“Yes, sir!” Lola began backing away. “Thank you! Bless you and all your Gentlemen!”

Cold stepped into the elevator, and the others followed.

“Look at you, Boss.” Jules chuckled. “Makin’ new friends.”

“One can never have too many friends,” Cold said. “You never know when you might need one.”

Up they went to the top floor and to the penthouse suite. Rufus opened the door and held it for everyone to filter inside.

The room was bigger than Mickey’s apartment, and it was exceptionally lush. There was an office area, a lounge with a bar, and a kingly bedroom. The lounge had a large round sectional couch and two chairs, and Valdemar was perched in the middle on the floor beside a small coffee table. Thirdsies was nowhere to be seen.

“Hello, comrades!” Valdemar waved. “Lovely to see you all!”

“Everyone make yourselves comfortable.” Cold took one of the chairs, and Rufus sat in the other.

Pym hovered close to Cold but didn’t sit down right away. Mickey sat on the end of the couch closest to Cold, and Roger sat next to him. Duncan flitted about before finally sitting down in the middle. The rest of them got settled where they could, and Crybaby wheeled herself up to the end of the couch opposite Mickey.

“Come on, boy!” Valdemar called. “It’s time.”

Thirdsies had apparently been hiding under the bed, and he reluctantly crawled out to join them. He sat on the floor with Valdemar, and Pym casually wandered over to sit on the coffee table behind them.

Mickey looked over their little crew, and he found himself smiling. They’d come a very long way from that tiny office at Slick Rick’s, and this was only the beginning.

“Cristian Luchesi has asked for a meeting,” Cold announced, “to discuss our terms for the city.”

“Ha!” Roger cheered. “We did it! He’s ready to fuckin’ run!”

“Fuck yes!” Crybaby pumped her fist.

“Of course he’s trying to put on a good show for us.” Cold couldn’t contain his sly smile. “It’s all smoke. He’s weak, and both of his brothers have retreated and taken what’s left of their men with them. Now it’s time to finally rid the city of him and his family once and for all.”

“We’re not gonna listen to what he has to say?” Duncan asked quietly. “I mean, maybe we can work something out?”

Mickey glared at Duncan. He couldn’t believe he’d said that. “Work something out? After they killed my grandfather? After they almost killed Crybaby?”

“I’m sorry, I just thought—”

“Clearly you didn’t think real hard before opening your fuckin’ mouth!”

“We didn’t come this far to share with nobody,” Jules growled. “Fuck no, we’re not workin’ out shit.”

Duncan cowered.

“Jules is right.” Cold nodded. “No half-measures. All or nothing, and what we’ve earned is all of Strassen Springs.” He leaned back in his chair. “I do want this to be a peaceful discussion, however. Family only. Just us Gentlemen and Cristian’s immediate subordinates.”

“And your darling plan?” Rufus asked smugly.

Mickey scowled.

That bastard knew. So did Jules probably. But who else?

Mickey trusted Cold with his life, but the secrecy was bothering him. More specifically, being excluded was making him uneasy. He couldn’t help Cold if he didn’t know what was going on.

“Everything is ready,” Cold said. “Our new prosecutor is on board, the evidence is set, and Detective Carville is only a phone call away.”

“Perfect.”

“Still not going to tell us what’s going on?” Roger asked. “Not even a tiny bit?”

“I need you all to trust me,” Cold replied. “We’ve come this far, yes? We’re almost at the end, and the Luchesi family will be out of our city for good.”

“Our city,” Jules repeated. “Damn, I like the sound of that.”

“When does he wanna meet?” Crybaby asked. “And where?”

“At noon today.” Cold folded his fingers neatly in his lap. “There is a derelict parking garage near the pork processing plant. It’s quiet, limited access. A perfect location for us all to have a little chat.”

“We coming in hot?” Mickey tilted his head. “Maybe arrange for some muscle? Some kind of backup?”

“No.” Cold shook his head. “Keeping this meeting peaceful is key to our success. I don’t want to send the wrong message. I want Cristian to be... comfortable.”

Valdemar raised his hand. “Do Molotov cocktails send the wrong message?”

“Yes.”

“Ah.”

“We’ll leave here together,” Cold went on. “Two cars. Jerry will drive us in the limo, and Jules will take his car.”

Valdemar raised his hand again.

“Yes, Mr. Valdemar?”

“Can I ride in the limo? Oh, I’ve never had such a pleasure.”

“Fine.”

Thirdsies raised his hand.

Cold looked annoyed. “Yes?”

“Can I ride in the limo too?” Thirdsies asked with wide eyes.

“Fine. Yes. I don’t care who rides in what—”

Pym raised his hand.

Cold sighed and rubbed his forehead. “For fuck’s sake.”

“Anybody who wants to can ride in the fuckin’ limo,” Jules grunted. “There. Fuckin’ settled.”

“Thank you, Jules.” Cold dropped his hand. “Now, when we arrive, Cristian will no doubt have a proposition of his own to present us. It’s going to be bullshit. Whenever he’s done spewing, I will counter.”

“And give him an offer he can’t refuse?” Roger said gleefully.

“Exactly so.” Cold smirked. “He will have no choice but to leave Strassen Springs forever. Mr. Tamerlane?”

“Yes, Boss?” Mickey perked up.

“Go check out the parking garage. Take Duncan with you. Make sure Cristian isn’t setting up any surprises for us.”

Jules glanced to Cold.

Cold nodded.

Mickey caught the exchange, but he didn’t know what it meant.

“Here.” Jules tossed Mickey a set of keys. “You guys take my ride.”

“Your El Camino?” Mickey was surprised. He knew how Jules felt about his car. It was right up there with his tacky t-shirts, but this was more than Jules letting him drive his car. There was something off about this.

This felt... wrong.

“I wanna ride in the fuckin’ limo.” Jules shrugged.

“Go.” Cold waved his hand. “We’ll see you at noon. I’ll call if anything changes.”

“Yes, Boss.” Mickey stood and obediently headed to the door.

“Have fun!” Roger waved. He was smiling, but it appeared strained.

Mickey’s stomach churned. Even Roger seemed worried. He didn’t know what Cold was up to, but he decided to have faith.

The plan, whatever it was, would work.

Duncan was fidgeting as they rode down the elevator. Upon closer inspection, Mickey noticed he was sweating.

“What’s wrong with you?”

“Me? Nothing. Why would anything be wrong?” Duncan scoffed. “Cold is just sending us off alone to check out the super special place where we’re supposedly having this big meeting.”

“So?”

“He’s sending you, his most deadly assassin, with me.” Duncan pointed at himself. “The guy who apparently can’t do anything right because he sends me off on bullshit errands or leaves me on

babysitting duty or just leaves me totally behind!”

“Duncan, look, you fucked up at the plant. You fucked up bad. That’s all.”

“You’re going to kill me, aren’t you?” Duncan was heartbroken, and his voice was barely a whisper.

Mickey felt like he’d been punched in the gut. “What the fuck are you talking about?”

“That’s what this is!” Duncan suddenly shouted. The elevator doors opened, and he continued to rant as he stormed into the lobby. “He doesn’t trust me, and he wants you to kill me! You’re gonna kill me and bury me in cement like they did with Marco!”

“Shut the fuck up!” Mickey snarled. He looked around, hoping no one was listening. Most of the staff seemed to be looking the other way, and he hoped they weren’t just pretending. He grabbed Duncan’s arm and twisted it. “Listen to me, you dumb fuck. I would never hurt you.”

“Yeah?” Duncan scoffed. “I never actually thought you’d blow somebody away in the middle of the damn street with a ton of people watching you and wow! That sure didn’t stop you!”

“Where the fuck is this coming from?” Mickey kept his grip on Duncan’s arm firm, pushing him out the front doors of the hotel before he could blurt out anything else stupid.

“Cold has been keeping me out of fuckin’ plans and lying to me about what you guys are doin’! Come on!” Duncan struggled, but he couldn’t get away from Mickey. “Everybody is talking about some damn rat, and he thinks it’s me! He is gonna fuckin’ kill me!”

“No, he’s not.” Mickey found Jules’ El Camino parked right out on the street in front of the hotel and shoved Duncan into the passenger seat.

“Oh! You’re totally right!” Duncan shouted as Mickey walked around to get behind the wheel. “He wouldn’t wanna get his pretty hands dirty! That’s why he’s gonna have you do it!”

“Duncan.” Mickey sighed and cranked the car. “Shut up.”

“Tell me you’re not gonna kill me.”

“I’m not gonna kill you.”

“You’re *lying*.”

Mickey turned and stared at him. “I told you before that you gotta chill the fuck out. This is a definite ‘chill the fuck out’ moment.”

“Tell me that you’re not gonna kill me, Mickey.” Duncan grabbed Mickey’s shoulder. “Please.”

“I’m not going to kill you, stupid ass, but I’m about to fuckin’ smack you.” Mickey pushed him away. “Jesus fuckin’ Christ. I really care about you, but you are fuckin’ pushin’ it right now.”

“You don’t care about me,” Duncan accused. “You’re so far up Cold’s ass you know what he had for lunch yesterday! And Roger? Wow! You and that psychopath are just two little fucked up peas in a pod!”



Mickey was so shocked that he didn't know what to say at first. He pulled out into traffic, trying to get his thoughts together. "You're mad... that I'm doing better than you?"

"What? No!" Duncan barked.

"You're fuckin' mad that Cold actually trusts me and I'm gettin' laid?"

"I don't care about the sex, you weirdo! I do fuckin' fine!"

Mickey knew damn well he didn't.

"And does Cold actually trust you?" Duncan pushed. "He hasn't told you what this big stupid plan is that he's been working on for weeks."

Mickey flinched. "He'll tell me when I need to know."

"Bullshit. He's told that Rufus fucker more than us! And that guy used to work for the fuckin' Luchesis, like top level shit!"

"It doesn't matter." Mickey squeezed the steering wheel. "Cold's always done right by us."

"You mean by lying to us? Keepin' shit from us? Can't you see what he's doing?"

"What?"

"It's like Alistair said!" Duncan snapped. "Cold will do anything to get what he wants and fuck the rest of us! He's just using us!"

"That's not true."

"Mickey. Please! You can't possibly be this fuckin' naive."

"It's bullshit. You're bullshit."

"You're not listening to me!" Duncan groaned, wringing his hands. "You never fuckin' listen to me anymore! You used to trust me!"

"I still trust you!" Mickey argued. "You're just not making any damn sense. Cold has given me zero reason not to trust him. He's delivered on every promise he's ever made me."

"I want to help you," Duncan said urgently, "but if you're not willing to listen to fuckin' reason, I can't!"

"Help me what?" Mickey felt an odd lurch of suspicion rise up in his gut.

Duncan had always been nervous, *always*. But there was something not right about the way he was acting. More troubling was the fact this wasn't the first time Mickey had found himself questioning his behavior...

*Cold said there was a rat.*

No way.

Duncan was many things—a pain in the ass, a bit of a coward—but there was no fuckin' way he was a

traitor. He couldn't be the rat that had been eating away at their operations all of this time.

Mickey knew Duncan had beef with Cold, but turning on Cold meant turning on Mickey too. He refused to believe his friend would do that to him, and he squashed down the weird feeling in his stomach.

"I don't want you, uh, you know, to get hurt," Duncan stammered. "I know, uh, you, you just look up to the guy a lot. I'm just, you know, I'm worried about you."

"About me?"

"I mean, you're fucking Roger, for one." Duncan smiled weakly. "You've clearly lost your fuckin' mind."

Mickey snorted, but he smiled. "I think I'm in love with him."

"Holy shit, you really have gone fuckin' nuts."

Mickey glared.

Duncan grinned.

They both started laughing, and the distrust that had been brewing evaporated.

"Fuck you." Mickey punched Duncan in his shoulder.

"Ow!" Duncan was still laughing. "Come on! You fell for the crazy guy from the gas station. Fuck it. You're both nuts. It's fuckin' perfect."

Mickey smirked.

The rest of the drive was easier after that, and Mickey relaxed. The only thing he had to worry about today was whether or not the Luchesi mob was going to set up an ambush.

The parking garage had been neglected for some time, but there was still power. Yellow lamps hung overhead, creating a strange amber glow over the concrete. A quick perimeter check revealed nothing amiss, and Mickey searched behind pillars and around the broken vending machines to make sure it was truly clear.

Duncan checked behind him, asking casually, "So, this is really it, huh?"

"Yes." Mickey turned to him. "Whatever Cold has planned, the Luchesi family is done."

"But we don't even know what it is."

"Does it really matter?" Mickey frowned.

"Still kinda wish I knew."

"Don't start that shit again. We'll know when we need to know."

"Yeah, yeah."

Mickey called Cold to inform him that all was well and then there was nothing to do but wait. He had

parked the El Camino near the entrance of the garage, and there they stayed until Mickey saw the limo pulling in. Directly behind it were four black SUV's: the Luchesi family.

Jerry parked the limo longways next to the El Camino, and the Luchesi men parked across from them. Jerry came around to open the door, and Cold stepped out first with his head held high.

"Let's go," Mickey said to Duncan, getting out of the car to join Cold.

"Can't wait," Duncan mumbled.

Mickey was happy to take his place at Cold's side as the others got out of the limo and gathered around them. Duncan shuffled off into the back, and he looked nauseated as the Luchesi men exited their vehicles.

It felt good to have the whole gang here: Cold, Jules, Rufus, Duncan, Jerry, Valdemar, Thirdsies, Crybaby, and even little Pym. Roger was here too, of course.

Mickey happened to catch his eye—impossible not to with the way that weirdo was staring at him—and he couldn't help but think he seemed concerned.

But for what? This meeting? The final act of Cold's mysterious plan?

Mickey couldn't say.

Cristian's entourage consisted of eight men, including his captain, Stefano. Mickey was pleased the Gentlemen outnumbered them. Even if it was only by a few, any advantage was good in case this went south.

"Hello, Cristian," Cold began in an even tone. "Thank you for adhering to the terms of our meeting."

"All good relationships must be built on trust," Cristian replied politely. "You asked to meet under a flag of peace, and I will respect that. There's no more need for bloodshed between our two families."

"I agree."

"You've been doing quite well for yourself," Cristian continued. "You've managed to run off my brothers and take a very respectable section of the city. Bravo."

"Thank you."

Mickey knew this was bullshit, the two of them pretending to be nice to each other. He could see it in the way Cristian looked at Cold, all smiles but there was sheer disgust in his eyes. Cold was harder to read, but there was the undeniable sense that he wanted to reach over and tear out Cristian's throat with his teeth.

"Now," Cristian said, "I'm prepared to let you retain control over the southeast corner. You can even keep the club. That was a gift, after all. But the properties to the west, the police you have taken, the judges and that new prosecutor? I'm going to need those. I'm feeling quite generous, so I won't even ask for any blood payment for all the men of mine that you've killed."

"That's your generous offer for peace?" Cold tilted his head. "To take everything back I've claimed?"

“Yes. You’ve had your fun playing gangster, but this city belongs to the Luchesi family. It always has, and it always will. I want this foolish war to stop immediately and for all of us to get back to business.”

“No.”

Cristian laughed. “Excuse me?”

“*No*. Were you able to understand me that time?”

“Cold, you’d do well to accept my deal,” Cristian warned. “It would be an awful shame to waste such talent. We could do great things together.”

“Why would I ever want to work for you?” Cold snorted. “You’re absolutely pathetic. You won’t even demand retribution for the deaths of your own men? Your own family? Is that because you’re really so kind or is it because you know you’ve already lost and you’re hoping to call me to heel with this blatant fuckery?”

“Fine,” Cristian barked. “If that’s how you want to fuckin’ be, I’ll gladly take the blood owed to me. Starting with *him*.”

He pointed right at Mickey.

Mickey blew him a kiss.

“Behave, Mr. Tamerlane,” Cold warned.

“My apologies, Boss.”

“Now, Cristian, I have a counteroffer for you,” Cold drawled. “I take the city, and you take your men and what’s left of your pitiful family, and you all leave immediately. I’m going to need your contacts on the city council and the banks, and oh, because I’m feeling so generous, I won’t just kill you where you stand.”

“You’re serious?”

“It’s either this or rotting in jail for the rest of your life.”

Cristian laughed again. He clearly did not take Cold’s threat seriously. “Jail? Wow. And on what charges?”

“Oh, haven’t you figured it out yet?” Cold smiled. “If you don’t leave the city, you’re going to be arrested as an accessory to the murder of your father, Don Raffaello Luchesi.”

Cristian suddenly paled. “What?”

“You paid your own brother to kill your father.” Cold smirked. “Last time I checked, that’s illegal.”

## CHAPTER 24

“Excuse me?” Cristian spat. “I did no such thing!”

“Well, of course you didn’t do it personally,” Cold scolded. “Mr. Corman here made the deposit on your direct orders.”

“That’s insane—”

“Is it any more insane than Tony Luchesi stealing money from Luigi’s bar to help fund you?” Cold smirked.

“Tony?” Cristian looked confused. “What are you talking about? What the hell does he have to do with this?”

“Everything. Tony was the first piece, a small steppingstone in a much grander scheme. I imagine you and your brothers had been planning for your father’s demise for quite some time, and you got tired of waiting for him to expire of natural causes. Of the three of you, Matteo was the only one with the balls to take the old man out himself, but he didn’t want to risk getting his hands dirty... at least not without being properly compensated.”

“Bullshit!” Cristian snarled.

“But his price, wow, steep,” Cold went on undeterred. “One million dollars. For one million dollars, he would kill your father, and then you and your brothers would divide up the city amongst yourselves. You’ve been making small deposits to pay him off, but you were nowhere close to that magical million dollar number—”

“I don’t know anything about any fucking deposits!”

“You should pay more attention to your bank accounts,” Cold taunted. “A simple glance at your statement would show a check for a hundred thousand dollars from your account being deposited into Matteo’s account at Strassen Springs First National for the last six months. But that wasn’t enough, was it? And Matteo didn’t want to wait any longer. So, he killed the Don.

“You couldn’t believe he’d actually done it, and now you had to pay up. It’s why you sent your men to Ragazzi’s to rob the place blind. You had to pay your brother what he was owed. But Matteo suddenly wanted more money, didn’t he? And he didn’t want to share the kingdom with you or Luigi. He knew he was the favored heir and would likely have the support of the entire family if he cut you two out

entirely.

“It’s why you told the police about the drugs, to weaken Matteo’s hold and to turn him and Luigi against one another. It’s why you ordered Mickey to kill Delgado Ricci, because he was such an outspoken supporter of Matteo. You let Luigi take the blame for that too. It’s why you called this meeting to kill me, because I figured out your little scheme and could testify against you when you’re arrested, and you can’t have any loose ends.”

“Wow,” Cristian scoffed. He couldn’t help but look impressed. “That is quite some story you’ve put together, Cold.”

“I’m already very sure that Detective Carville will be a huge fan of it,” Cold said. “As will Judge Olden and our new district attorney, Robert York. They will eat up every last syllable like a beautiful banquet.”

“What possible fuckin’ evidence do you have?”

“Your bank statements for one. The murder weapon also seems to have Matteo’s fingerprints all over it. I’m sure he’d agree to testify against you for a reduced sentence since you’re the true mastermind behind all of this.”

“There was no fucking murder weapon ever found, and we both know Matteo didn’t kill my father!”

“Do we?” Cold smiled nastily. “All this ‘evidence’ I have seems to say otherwise.”

“You are right about one thing.” Cristian scowled. “I am definitely going to kill you.”

“Is that so?” Cold’s smile only grew.

“You may have been able to chase off Luigi and Matteo with your bullshit plans, but I’m not them.” Cristian smiled right back at him, totally confident. “You see, you’re not the only one with big fancy fuckin’ plans. I’ve known you were going to turn on me for months.”

Mickey’s heart dropped to his stomach.

*The rat.*

“Oh?” Cold raised his brow.

“Not long after ol’ Cousin Tony died, a little birdie came to me,” Cristian replied smugly. “I knew all about your plans to take over the city and run me and my family out. I thought you killed my father, to be perfectly honest, but no, that’s not really your style, is it? You’re too much of a little cowardly *finocchio*, huh?”

Cold’s lip twitched, but he remained calm.

“I want you to know I’m the one who sent the other assassin to hit Delgado,” Cristian declared. “I knew you were going to try and snatch him up to find out about the family’s holdings. My little birdie told me all about it. Oh, and he also told me about the delivery schedule you found in the ledger. That was me too. The raid on your safe house was my little thank you for all the fucking headaches you’ve caused me. You really have been making my life pretty difficult here lately. My birdie was more than

happy to help me find a way to pay you back. Oh! My favorite part? He told me that you actually wanted tonight to be real peaceful and didn't arrange for any backup."

Jules stepped toward Cristian, but Cold held up his hand to stop him. He wasn't looking at Cristian, but past him, and his scowl deepened.

From the entrance of the parking garage came over a dozen more men, all heavily armed with automatic weapons and moving to surround them.

"Your guns?" Cristian grinned. "Drop them."

Mickey bared his teeth furiously, looking to Cold for instruction. There was no way that he was actually going to surrender. There couldn't be.

Cold sighed, and he nodded after a long pause. "Go on. Do as he says."

Mickey couldn't believe what he was hearing. He watched as Jules and the others abandoned their weapons, and his skin crawled.

"Boss?" he implored. "Please. No. Not like this."

"Do it, Mickey," Cold commanded, scowling at him. "Now."

"Shit." Mickey wanted to scream, sickened with rage as he took his guns from their holsters. He could feel all the Luchesi men's eyes on him, and he had never felt so helpless.

Angrily, he kneeled down and slammed his guns on the floor by his feet.

"I've been one fucking step ahead of you from the very fuckin' start," Cristian said with a triumphant sneer. "I was actually hoping you'd take care of one of my brothers for me, or even both. But that doesn't matter now. The city is mine, and you? Well, it's all over for you. Your little rebellion is done."

Mickey's hands hovered over his empty holsters, and he searched the garage urgently for a way out of this. Even as fast as he could shoot, he wouldn't be able to kill all these men. There were too many of them, and they'd blast him before he could grab his guns.

Jules stayed close to Cold, and his eyes were narrowed into venomous slits at Cristian. No matter what happened, Mickey was sure Jules would take Cristian out before he went down.

Crybaby hooked her thick arm around Pym's shoulders and began to whisper something in his ear to calm his sudden wave of tears.

Jerry said something in French and lit up a cigarette.

Duncan was looking at the ground, and he didn't say a word.

Rufus, that bastard, was trying to wave and get Cristian's attention as if he could talk his way out of this somehow.

Roger was holding his head high, and he looked oddly resigned to their fate. He was calm, quiet, and he turned to smile sadly at Mickey. "It's been real fun. Thanks for blowin' my mind, and... well,

everything else.”

That’s when Mickey knew they were all going to die.

They were outnumbered, outgunned, and...

Cold was clapping.

Why the fuck was he clapping?

“What in the actual fuck is wrong with you?” Cristian demanded, echoing Mickey’s frantic thoughts. “I told you I have a fuckin’ snitch in your little gang and you’re fuckin’ clapping?”

“Yes,” Cold replied, a wicked snarl lighting up his face, “because I already *knew*.”

Duncan’s head snapped up.

“What?” Cristian scoffed. “Bullshit.”

“Gentlemen, if you’d be so kind, go ahead and kill Cristian’s men, but please spare him and his lieutenant,” Cold ordered firmly.

The armed men surrounding them opened fire on the Luchesi crowd, and Mickey stared in shock as they dropped to the ground.

They were killing their own men.

On Cold’s command.

“What is the fucking meaning of this?” Cristian screamed, grabbing onto Stefano and trying to cower behind him. “You’re all dead! Traitors! Fucking bastard traitors, all of you!”

“Funny thing about loyalty,” Cold noted, his voice now a deep and very satisfied purr. “Did you know it can be bought? Especially when you haven’t been paying very well. I was quite shocked to discover how underpaid your men are. Good thing I had *plenty* of spare cash to persuade them.”

The money from the restaurant, Mickey realized. That’s what Cold had been keeping it for all of this time. It was the backup plan for the fuckin’ plan.

“You son of a bitch!” Cristian roared and waved his fists angrily. “You fucking useless pussy ass fa—”

Cold was on him in a second, shoving Stefano out of his way and grabbing Cristian by his throat. He squeezed with enough force to make Cristian crumble to his knees, growling, “That is the last time you insult me.”

Cristian gurgled, weakly clawing at Cold’s tight grip.

“This city is mine,” Cold snarled. “All of it. You and your family are done. I own everything. Your men, your money, your drugs. You have no power left here. I want you to remember this moment, when you thought you had won, and how I took it all away from you... Me, Roderick Legrand. Do you understand?”



“Yes,” Cristian managed to gasp.

“I am going to let go of you now,” Cold went on, slowly loosening his hold and lowering his voice, “and then you’re going—”

“If you kill me, my brothers will fucking come after you!” Cristian wheezed the second he could speak. “All of you! They’ll make sure you all fucking pay for this!”

“I’m not going to kill you,” Cold said dryly. He took a few steps back and pulled a handkerchief from his pocket to wipe off his hand as if Cristian had been slimy. “I meant what I said about this evening’s meeting being peaceful. You’re my peace offering to your brothers. I’m sparing your life in exchange for the war to end.”

“What?” Cristian didn’t seem like he could quite believe it. “You’re... you’re letting me go?”

“Yes. Join your brothers in Perry City.” Cold smirked. “I wouldn’t suggest returning here. I might have to come up with some more ‘fancy plans’ to deal with you.” He carefully tucked his handkerchief back into his pocket and waved for some of the men to take Cristian and Stefano away.

“This isn’t over!” Cristian protested, screaming at Cold even as he was dragged off. “We’ll be back! You stupid slick son of a bitch! We’ll come back!”

“I know,” Cold said quietly, a playful smile curling his lips. “One day.”

Mickey watched them leave in stunned silence. He knew Cold was clever, but this was incredible. All of these months of waiting and planning had finally come to full fruition, and it was beautiful to behold.

The war was over.

The city was theirs.

They’d won.

“Fuck yeah, still alive!” Roger cheered, suddenly grabbing Mickey right there and kissing him fiercely. “Mmph! Damn, I am fucking you so hard when we get out of here!”

Mickey was too happy to even care. “Whatever the fuck you want.”

“The money,” Crybaby realized out loud, echoing Mickey’s earlier thoughts. “You were keeping all the money to pay these guys.”

“Backup plan for fuckin’ plan in case Cristian didn’t wanna play nice.” Jules grinned. “Money well fuckin’ spent.”

“It’s not just the money, although that certainly helped.” Cold gestured to the new recruits. “That man there? His father is Hugo Maness, the man who gives me an apple every day. That one? His brother is a cook at the Wynne Hotel, and I recently helped his mother get a job there.”

“They’re all family,” Mickey said quietly.

“Murderers, crooks, and thieves, but yes, they’re also family,” Cold said with a smirk.

“Where do you want us to take out the trash, Boss?” one of the men asked.

“Take their vehicles out of here and drop Cristian and Stefano off at the city limits. Unharmd, if you’d be so kind.” Cold pursd his lips. “I suppose you could leave them with at least one of the cars. Perry City is quite a walk from here.”

“You got it!” The man grinned and began directing the others to claim all the Luchesi family’s SUV’s. They drove off and soon the only evidence there had been a brutal shootout was the cluster of bodies on the ground.

“Wow.” Crybaby was beaming. “It’s really over, huh? They’re fuckin’ gone forever.”

“But wait!” Mickey snatched his guns from the floor, and he turned back to Cold with a snarl. “The rat! The one who was snitching! Who is it?”

“Oh, hadn’t you guessed?” Cold looked surprised.

“What? No!” Mickey stared. “Who the fuck is it?”

“It’s Duncan.”

“What?” Mickey had started to take aim, but he faltered when he realized he was aiming at the man who was supposed to be his best friend. “No, it can’t be.”

“What? Me? No fuckin’ way!” Duncan backpedaled. “This, this is crazy!”

“He was privy to our plans to spare Mr. Ricci and to take the guns.” Cold strolled toward Duncan. “Both of which failed most spectacularly. He was also the very one who suggested Strassen Springs First Baptist Church, where he insisted all of us hole up because it was so very safe.”

“You knew?” Mickey whirled on Cold. “How long? How long did you know it was Duncan?”

“I’ve had my suspicions for some time.”

“Why didn’t you fucking say anything?” Mickey snapped.

“Because it could have just as easily been you, Mr. Tamerlane,” Cold replied coolly. “You were also a part of those same meetings, after all. You had access to all the same information Duncan did.”

“Oh, right, and I just let the Luchesi fuckers kill my grandfather!”

“I know men who have done worse things for less,” Cold retorted. “I wasn’t sure until today. Detective Carville gave me a sample of the recording for the anonymous tip that led police to the safe house.”

“There’s no fuckin’ way!” Duncan protested. “Mickey, don’t listen to him! Please!”

“I’ve heard it.” Cold continued to advance. “It’s Duncan.”

“Look, okay!” Duncan’s back smacked into one of the concrete pillars, trying to get away from Cold. “I was... I was scared. Okay? I was fuckin’ scared!” He looked at Mickey. “Please, I’m sorry! I didn’t think he could pull this off, okay?”

“Duncan... no...” Mickey dropped his guns by his sides. The hole in his chest had reopened, and he felt sick. It hurt to breathe. It hurt to think. He couldn’t believe what he was hearing.

“I’m really sorry, please!” Duncan held up his hands. “Cristian said he was gonna take care of me! He’d make sure I was safe! I tried to help you! I tried so many fuckin’ times!”

“And that made it okay to run your big fuckin’ mouth and kill Pops?” Mickey said coldly. The pain was turning into rage, and he was fighting to stay in control. The betrayal was a cancer, eating him up inside. “Because at least you tried real hard? How many more of us were you trying to get killed, huh?”

“It wasn’t supposed to be like that!” Duncan pleaded. “Please. Mickey. I’m so fuckin’ sorry. I’m so sorry to everybody. I fucked up, I fucked up real bad.”

“After everything I’ve done for you?” Mickey was so angry that he was shaking.

“I didn’t know they were gonna hurt him! Please! You gotta believe me!”

Mickey could feel the traitorous sting of tears in his eyes, but he raised his guns once more to point them at Duncan. “I really want to. I really do... *fuck!*” His heart was breaking, and every breath felt like his chest was full of glass. “You stupid piece of shit! How can you be so fuckin’ stupid?”

“Fuck you! Fuck you, fuck you, fuck you!” Duncan suddenly exploded. “You were never my fuckin’ friend!”

Mickey flinched.

“You treated me like shit since the fuckin’ beginning!” Duncan roared. “You yelled at me and insulted me! Bossed me around like I’m some kinda idiot! Poor stupid Duncan, he can’t do shit right! He’s just a dumb little coward, huh? That’s what you really think of me, isn’t it? Do you remember that?”

“When I called you a coward? Yeah, I fuckin’ remember.” Mickey bared his teeth. “I take it all back. It takes some serious balls to stab your family in the back and get a helpless old man killed. You’re a real fuckin’ tough guy.”

“Fuck you, Mickey! Fuck all of you!” Duncan reached inside his coat.

“Duncan, don’t!”

Cold was standing between them, and Mickey didn’t have a clear shot at Duncan.

“I fuckin’ hate all of you!” Duncan grabbed Cold, pressing a gun against his temple. “But you, Cold, oh, you piece of shit! You’re gonna die if it’s the last fuckin’ thing I do!”

“Duncan!” Mickey shouted. “Don’t fuckin’ do this!”

“Let me go right now, Mr. Gill,” Cold growled, absolutely seething.

“Shut up!” Duncan roared. He slammed the muzzle of the gun against Cold’s head, his eyes wild as he ducked behind him and backed up against the wall. “All of you treated me like shit! All of you! Like I’m some kinda idiot! And you, Cold, with all your stupid plans! You were the fucking worst of all!”

“You’re not making it out of here alive,” Jules snarled. “You’re fuckin’ dead.”

Mickey circled slowly, his guns at the ready as he got into position. The flow of adrenaline was back, all of his senses buzzing until he could hear his own pulse in his ears. Duncan was trying to use Cold as a human shield, but Mickey only needed him to look up for a second, one quick second.

“Back the fuck up! Back up! Now!” Duncan screamed frantically. “I swear, I’ll kill him! I’ll fuckin’ do it! He fuckin’ dies! It’s all his fuckin’ fault! All of this!”

“Whatever happens,” Cold snarled, “Mr. Gill dies.”

“On it, Boss,” Jules growled.

“Duncan,” Mickey snapped, loud enough to get his attention. Their eyes met, and Mickey knew what he had to do. “I’m sorry.”

Mickey fired.

The gun in Duncan’s hand went flying and his head whipped back from the second shot. He dropped immediately.

Duncan was dead.

Cold grimaced at the spray of blood on his face, and he calmly pulled his handkerchief out again. “Well, now that that’s taken care of, we should leave soon. This area is not the best in the city, but someone may have heard our little party and might still call the authorities.”

Mickey lowered his guns, and he stared down at Duncan’s lifeless body. It looked strangely small compared to the dead Luchesi men nearby.

He should feel something.

Beyond the betrayal, Duncan was his friend once. There should be more. He should be sad, upset, but all he could be bothered with was a deep, cold rage.

The truth had been right in front of him this whole time, and he’d let himself be blind to it. Hell, he had even defended Duncan more than once. Mickey realized then that some of the anger wasn’t only for Duncan, but he was mad at himself too.

“I’m going to hug you now,” Roger whispered loudly. “Don’t shoot me.”

Mickey put his guns away and invited Roger into his arms for a tight hug.

“So, that’s been your big fancy plan all along?” Crybaby asked, wheeling over to Cold. “To frame those Luchesi assholes for the murder of their father?”

“Yes. I needed something in place in case the war did not go favorably for us. I chose Matteo and Cristian because I knew Luigi would bow out at the first sign of trouble. Luckily for us, the war went well, and Cristian fell into my little trap anyway because he decided to be difficult.”

“Why didn’t we snuff them out, good sir?” Valdemar asked. “Now would have been an opportune time.”

“Cristian was right in that business needs to get back to normal. If we’d killed him, his brothers would come back at us with everything they had, and the war would keep going. Naturally, we’d win, but our new political friends want peace.”

“And they’re definitely the sort of friends you like to keep happy,” Rufus noted.

“You know what would make me happy?” Crybaby laughed. “For one of you ugly motherfuckers to roll me over to the nearest fucking bar! We have to fucking celebrate!”

“Hey, you.” Jules waved at Mickey. “Gimme my keys. It’s rude to keep a lady waitin’.”

Mickey tossed them over.

“Let’s go, Gentlemen,” Cold said, leading the charge back to the limo.

“I need a minute, Boss.” Mickey looked to Cold. “Please.”

“Of course. We’ll wait for you.” Cold paused, turning back around to approach Mickey. “Thank you.”

“Just doin’ my job, Boss.”

“You saved my life.” Cold’s icy eyes softened. “I will never forget that.”

“We’re Gentlemen.” Mickey stood a little straighter. “We take care of each other.”

“So we do.” Cold smiled. “Mmm. Don’t dawdle too long. Crybaby may start to injure people if she doesn’t get that drink.”

“He is right to fear me!” Crybaby cackled.

“I won’t be long.”

Whooping and cheering, the Gentlemen left the parking garage. Mickey and Roger stayed, and Mickey knelt beside Duncan’s body. He closed his eyes and gently touched his chest.

Still warm, and he looked peaceful. Mickey didn’t know why that pissed him off, but it did.

“I’m sorry,” Roger said. “He was a backstabbing little shit, but I know... he was your friend.”

“He betrayed us.” Mickey shook his head. “He wasn’t my friend. I wonder if he ever was. If he’d given even the tiniest fuck about me... or my fuckin’ Pops...”

“Yeah, but you didn’t fuckin’ know.”

“Cold did. I think he knew for a while. He says he wasn’t sure until he got that tape, but I bet he knew.” Mickey laughed bitterly as he stood up. “He always knows, doesn’t he?”

Roger took Mickey’s hand. “That’s why he’s the Boss.” He leaned in, pressing a chaste kiss to his cheek. “Wanna skip the bar and have our own little private party? I can be extra annoying so you can fuck me up real good.”

“I’m thinking about skipping the party entirely.”

“No, come on.” Roger tugged at Mickey’s hand.

“I just murdered my best friend for conspiring to betray us all. Not having the strongest urge to celebrate.”

“But we also took Strassen Springs. Like, the city. The whole thing. That deserves at least four drinks, some groping, and I’ll suck your dick in the bathroom.”

Mickey cracked a crooked little smile. Some of the pain ebbed when Roger beamed up at him, and the hole inside of his chest didn’t feel as empty now.

Huh.

“Fine. You’re sucking my dick, and then I’m fucking you.”

“Good. I’ve got more lube in my wallet.”

“Did I ever tell you that you’re my favorite slut?”

“Aww, Mickey.” Roger kissed him sweetly. “You really do care!”

Arm in arm, they joined the gang in the limo. Jules was driving his El Camino and had already left with Crybaby. Everyone else was now crowded in the back of the limo, and Valdemar had just popped open a bottle of champagne.

“A toast! A toast! We need a toast!” Valdemar exclaimed, pouring glasses and passing them around. He was a bit heavy-handed and had to open another bottle to ensure everyone got one.

Thirdsies was already drinking his.

“Not yet, boy!” Valdemar hissed. “Wait for everyone else!”

“Is he even old enough to drink?” Pym asked shyly, adjusting his glasses.

“Are you old enough to fuck off?” Thirdsies countered.

“Old enough to kick your skinny ass!”

“Both of you, play nice.” Cold tried to hide a smile. “Valdemar, perhaps pour a little faster.”

Once everyone had a glass in their hand, they were raised in a toast.

“To the Gentlemen,” Cold announced as their glasses clinked together. “To our victory and our triumph.”

“The city is yours, Boss,” Mickey said proudly.

“No,” Cold purred in delight. “It is *ours*.”

“What’s next?”

“Now, my dear Gentlemen,” Cold said, pursing his lips as he sipped his champagne, “we fight to keep it.”

## CHAPTER 25

The next few days were busy, but everything Cold had promised was delivered. He'd done it. The city was theirs, and the spoils of their victory were rich.

Mickey got a new condo with its own private garage to park the Nova, and he was finally able to lay his grandfather to rest. The funeral service was small, only the Gentlemen in attendance, but Roger stayed with him until the last speck of dirt covered the grave.

He also buried Duncan, and Roger came for that one too.

Mickey didn't mind that no one else did.

Thanks to Detective Carville and Robert York, any and all cases involving the Gentlemen met dead ends and went cold. The murders, the fire, and the rest of the chaos was blamed solely on the Luchesi family, who remained across the state hiding in Perry City.

Cold kept the renovations going for La Belle, restored the drug and gun trade under his strict supervision, and the money flowed. He moved himself and Rowena into a lush uptown estate with a pool for Princess Snaggleteeth. Mickey had heard Alistair had given control of his remaining properties in the city over to Cold, but he couldn't be sure.

Cold refused to even speak Alistair's name.

When Crybaby's recovery stalled and she said she was going to work for Alistair in Moultrie, Cold said nothing about him. He understood the concerns for her health and wished her well, telling her that she would be welcome back in Strassen Springs anytime.

She was and forever would be a Gentleman.

Roger took Crybaby leaving quite hard, and he threatened her multiple times to keep in touch or he would send Mickey after her.

It was a very sweet sentiment in Roger's weird little way.

Everyone was adjusting well to their new homes and the new way of life, but Mickey knew this was only the beginning.

A kingdom like theirs had to be protected, and they had to remain vigilant. The Luchesi family wouldn't forget what Cold had done, and there would be constant challenges to the throne they had fought so hard for.

A possible threat could attack at any moment, when they least expected it...

Mickey woke up from a deep sleep when he heard a strange noise, slowly reaching for the gun he kept at his bedside. He didn't understand why the security alarm wasn't going off, and a rush of adrenaline put all of his senses on high alert.

There was someone here in his bedroom, and he aimed his gun, preparing to fire.

Except...

Mickey sighed in annoyance.

There was a giggle.

"Roger, you really have to stop breaking in here."

"Where's the fun in that?" Roger plopped down on the edge of the bed with a sly grin. "Besides, if I knocked, you might not answer."

"I might have shot you."

"That's part of the fun." Roger leaned in to kiss Mickey sweetly before bouncing back up to his feet. He turned on the light, kicking a nearby cardboard box. "You still haven't unpacked?"

"No." Mickey covered his eyes to shield them. "I've been busy."

"Ooh, what's in here?" Roger opened the box.

"Get out of that." Mickey sat up with a grumble, getting out of bed to stop Roger from snooping.

It was a box of assorted books, papers, and a few picture frames.

Roger held one up of a smiling young woman. "Is this your mom?"

"That's her. Put it down." Mickey snatched the frame away and put it back in the box.

"She was beautiful. Too bad you didn't get any of those good looks, you ugly fuck."

"Why are you here? If you want some dick, you could have woken me up with a blowjob."

"I did that last night!" Roger complained. "Besides, I brought you something, and it's kinda time sensitive."

"Oh, God. What?"

"Come on." Roger grinned and led Mickey into the kitchen.

It was modern, lush, and Mickey hadn't done anything except put some beer in the fridge. He was surprised when he saw a stack of paper plates, plastic forks, and a very familiar looking aluminum tray.



It was Pops' lasagna that he had made with Roger.

"How did you...?" Mickey stared.

"Count yourself lucky Thirdsies went back for seconds and stuck this bad boy in the freezer." Roger smirked and turned the oven on. "Otherwise, it would have been ruined by now."

"How did you get back into the safe house?"

"I broke in. Duh." Roger smiled. "I thought it would be a nice surprise."

"It's downright thoughtful of you." Mickey pinned Roger up against the counter, leaning in to nuzzle the back of his neck.

"Mmm, isn't it?" Roger arched back with a groan.

"Although you did break into my place. Again."

"Pffft. I've only done that like twice."

"You've broken in here every night since I moved in."

"That's not true," Roger protested, grinding back with more purpose.

"That's absolutely true." Mickey kissed Roger's neck, and he slid a hand down his hip. "You're a liar and a whore... and you really need to be punished."

"Mmm... yes..." Roger was panting, desperate, and he reached back to run his hand over the front of Mickey's underwear.

"After dinner," Mickey teased as he suddenly pulled away. He adjusted his cock, turning to check the oven. "Should be preheated soon."

"Oh, you *bastard*." Roger groaned, bowing over the counter and banging his head a few times.

Mickey smacked his ass, and he grinned at how Roger moaned and jerked. "Well, you want to be punished, don't you? I can't just give in every time you want."

"You're so mean."

"Oven should be ready soon." Mickey yawned and went to the fridge for a beer. "Want one?"

"Sure." Roger pouted.

Mickey opened two and handed one to Roger. "Talk to Crybaby any?"

"Yeah, she's doing okay. Still having a lot of pain, can't walk real good. It sucks."

"She's a tough lady. She'll get through it."

"Yeah, but why didn't she stay and get through it here?" Roger frowned.

“Because her old lady threatened to kick her out?” Mickey guessed. “Didn’t want her getting into any more trouble with nasty gangsters like us?”

“Okay, maybe. I’ve met her lady. Scout never liked all this criminal shit.”

“So, there you go. She did it for love. How sweet.”

“Scout is also scary as fuck. Did you know she used to be a butcher?”

“Love and fear then.”

“Maybe.” Roger looked down at his beer. “I’m starting to think Crybaby left ’cause she didn’t think she’d be able to handle herself the way she used to. She didn’t wanna be a liability or whatever.”

“Crybaby on her worst day is still ten times the man that most of these dickless punks around here could ever hope to be.” Mickey raised his beer in a toast. “Even if she is scared of pissing off her old lady. Here’s to her.”

“You’re so sweet. I’ll tell her you said that.” Roger clinked their bottles together and took a sip. “Mm, her and Alistair are reopening one of his old clubs there in Moultrie. It’s gonna be freaky. Said they’re gonna name it Kiss the Rod or something.”

Mickey paused. “Rod? Like a rod for smacking ass? Or rod, as in short for Roderick?”

“Maybe Alistair misses him.”

“Cold sure as hell doesn’t miss him.”

“Oh! Did you know people are saying I was fucking Cold to pay off my debt. Isn’t that funny?”

“Ha!” Mickey barked out a quick laugh. “Right, like anybody can get close enough to him to actually fuck him.”

“Just saying. That’s the rumor now.”

“That’s fuckin’ stupid.” Mickey tipped his beer back. “No one will ever believe it.”

“Stranger things have happened.”

The oven dinged, signaling it was preheated.

Roger made quite the show of bending over to put the tray in, and he was rewarded with another hard smack on his ass. “Mmm, Mickey. You do care!”

“Take off your clothes,” Mickey ordered. “You’re way too overdressed. Next time, break in naked.”

“Sounds like a date,” Roger drawled as he stripped, flinging his clothes across the floor. He was already hard, and his chest was flushed.

Mickey let his eyes wander over Roger’s muscular body, enjoying every firm inch of him.

*Mine.*

“Pick up your clothes.” Mickey chugged his beer. “Go fold them, leave them by the bed. Oh, and

when you come back? Grab me another beer.”

“Yes, master.” Roger gritted his teeth, but he obeyed. He gathered the clothes and stormed off in a huff.

Mickey snickered to himself, loving Roger’s rage as much as he savored the thrill of this power. Roger would do anything asked of him no matter what. That was weirdly comforting.

Roger would go above and beyond for him, as a matter of fact. Like breaking into the old safe house the police were probably still watching just to steal some damn lasagna they’d made together.

Mickey’s heart fluttered, and he was smiling when Roger came back.

He stepped toward the fridge, but Mickey cut him off. “Wait, master, your beer?”

“Later.” Mickey pulled Roger in close, dragging his hands down his back and cupping his round ass. “Mmm, you really are so beautiful.”

“Did you hit your head while I was in the other room?” Roger grinned. “I didn’t think I was gone that long.”

“Shut the fuck up and let me compliment you.”

“Mmm, yes, master.” Roger wrapped his arms around Mickey’s shoulders. “Whatever you want.”

“You’re beautiful, you’re strong, and I’m starting to believe you really love me.” Mickey kissed him. “Thank you for bringing the lasagna.”

“I’d do anything for you.” Roger brushed their noses together, sliding his fingers over Mickey’s scalp and rolling his hips forward. “Anything.”

“I know.” Mickey squeezed Roger’s ass, encouraging him to move as he took his lips once more in a fierce kiss.

Roger moaned, kissing him back passionately and grinding hard. “Mmm, yes. Come on. I need you, master. Please, please, please…”

“Not yet.” Mickey licked his lips. “Bend over the counter for me.”

“But master!”

“Gotta get your punishment out of the way before you can have your reward.”

Roger fussed but got into position, leaning over the counter and arching his ass up. “I’m ready for you, sir.”

God, yes. Mickey loved when Roger presented himself so obediently like this, like a fancy steak dinner about to be devoured. He felt more powerful than even Boss Cold to have another person so bound to carrying out his every little whim, and it was hard not to fuck Roger right there on the spot.

“I bet your ass is already full of fuckin’ lube too.” Mickey stood behind him, and he spread his cheeks wide. He saw a tell-tale glisten around Roger’s hole and chuckled. “Oh, you slut.”

“I told you, I’m ready.”

Mickey popped Roger’s ass, not very hard but enough to make him grunt. “You think you can just keep coming in here, night after night, and I’m gonna keep fucking you?”

“Yes?” Roger snickered.

Rearing back, Mickey smacked his hand across Roger’s ass. He was pleased when Roger moaned, and he could see a faint red handprint appearing where he’d struck him. He traced the outline of his fingers one by one. “And if I say no?”

“You wouldn’t,” Roger scoffed.

Mickey spanked him again, aiming for the same spot to really make him writhe. He watched Roger hump the counter with a low whine, and Mickey felt his cock twitch. “Oh, but I might. And what would you do? Run off and whore yourself out some more?”

“Maybe I will,” Roger challenged. “I’ll head over to the glory hole at Legends and pick myself up a bunch of loads. Would you like that? If I came here full of somebody else’s cum?”

“Oh, you *slut*.” Mickey’s breath caught, and he was absolutely enraged by the very thought. He couldn’t explain why it got him so hard, and he wanted to get his hands on Roger even more. He needed to fuck him within an inch of his life, to make him scream out his name, to remind him who he belonged to.

He spanked Roger with enough force to make his palm sting, basking in the sweet symphony of his pained cries. He knew it was hurting Roger, but it wasn’t about the pain. It was knowing that Roger was going to stay right as he was and take every spank because he belonged to Mickey. He was his, in and out, down to his fuckin’ toes.

Roger wouldn’t stop him because he didn’t want to. He wanted to be a good boy for his master, and that thrill was the sweetest rush of all. Everything Roger did was for Mickey’s delight, and that included taking his punishments. It’s what he needed to be good, and Mickey was certain it was the only way he could function now.

“How fuckin’ dare you,” Mickey hissed, smacking Roger’s ass again, working the underside of his cheek. “You think it’s funny, huh? Trying to piss me off because you wanna get fucked raw?”

“Mmm! I just want you to fuck me!” Roger protested. “I don’t care what it fuckin’ takes.”

“And you think fucking a bunch of guys is gonna work?” Mickey slapped the bottom of Roger’s other cheek. “You wanna go slut it up and come back here when you realize they can’t fuck you like I can? Is that it?”

“If it makes you wanna fuck me, yeah.” Roger moaned when Mickey popped him again, his hips canting forward to grind against the counter. “I’ll do anything. Fuckin’ anything for you. Just don’t tell me no. Please.”

Mickey rubbed the pink welts rising up on Roger’s ass, and he swung back to add another, aiming for the side of Roger’s ass. He watched Roger’s hips jerk forward again, and he adored how responsive

he was. Every twitch and moan was a beautiful opera of pleasure, and Mickey never wanted it to end.

“You have to be a good boy,” Mickey warned, smacking Roger’s ass twice in quick succession. He grabbed his cheek where he’d struck, digging his nails into the warm flesh. “I only fuck good boys who know how to fuckin’ listen. Do you understand?”

“Fuck! Yes, yes, I do!” Roger was shaking, his ass so red now that Mickey couldn’t tell where one spanking ended and the others began. “I wanna be so good for you.”

Mickey reached down to grab Roger’s cock, and he groaned low at the swollen heat in his hand. “You’re so fuckin’ hard. Mm, and wet. You’re fuckin’ dripping for me, huh?”

“Yes, master.” Roger’s legs were trembling, and he weakly pushed into Mickey’s hand. “Just for you. Only you.”

“Says the fuckin’ slut who threatened to go take a bunch of loads to piss me the fuck off,” Mickey taunted. He squeezed Roger’s cock, and a dribble of pre-cum dripped over his fingers. “Gets you off, huh? Being used?”

“No,” Roger argued earnestly. “That’s not what I want. I want you, just you. I only want my master, I want my fuckin’ *monster*.”

Mickey gave Roger’s cock another mean squeeze and let go, spreading his cheeks again to get a good look at his sweet little pucker. He pushed his thumbs inward, massaging around his hole but not yet pressing in. “That’s why you piss me off so much? You wanna wake that up?”

“Yes.” Roger pushed back into Mickey’s touch with a happy groan. “That’s what I want. I love it when you lose control. I love it when you fuck me like the little slut I am. I need it. Fuck, please!”

Mickey continued to tease and touch, sliding around in the lube Roger had prepped himself with. He slowly slid his thumbs inside, finding him soft and open. It was easy to pretend that he was wet with cum and not lube, and the urge to ravage him was becoming overwhelming.

He pulled at the sides of Roger’s hole and forced him open. He bowed his head, spitting between his cheeks and using his thumbs to push it inside.

Moaning, Roger pushed back, his hole clenching around Mickey’s fingers. “Ah, fuck. Come on.”

“Look at you,” Mickey teased. “You’re such a fuckin’ whore.”

“Your whore, master,” Roger whispered. “Only yours. Please fuck me. Give me your dick. I can take it so fuckin’ good.”

“Do you think you deserve to get fucked?”

“I was good for you,” Roger pleaded. “I took my punishment, didn’t I? I was so fuckin’ good.”

Mickey leaned close so his lips brushed over Roger’s ear when he said, “Who said I was done with your punishment?”

“Mmm, come on... please!”

Grinning, Mickey bit down on Roger's neck as he raised his hand back to smack his ass again. Roger jerked beneath him, and Mickey used his weight to keep him pinned against the counter. "We're not done yet, slut. No, no, no. Not yet."

Roger's head dropped, and he whined. "Okay, okay. I'll be good. You're right. I was so bad, master. So fuckin' bad."

Shifting his body over to leave the side of Roger's ass exposed, Mickey spanked him hard. The sensation of Roger writhing against him was wonderful, and he spanked him again, even more viciously than before. Roger bucked up in protest, and Mickey was suddenly fighting to restrain him.

Struggling wildly, Roger cried, "No, no, no! Fuck! It's too much!"

"Ah, ah. Come on." Mickey grabbed a handful of Roger's hair and pushed him back down. "You can take it. Be a good boy for me. Just relax."

"I'm trying. Fuck, I'm trying so hard, master!"

"Don't fuckin' try. Just do it." Mickey twisted his hair cruelly. "Now."

Roger exhaled sharply and slowly went limp, closing his eyes. "Okay. I'll be good. I'll be so fuckin' good."

Mickey rubbed Roger's cheek, and he couldn't believe the heat. It was scorching hot like a sunburn, and he swore he could feel Roger's pulse when he grabbed his ass. He spanked him, and Roger's entire body jerked from the force of the blow.

No longer fighting, Roger laid there and took it with a soft moan, his eyes fluttering.

"There we go," Mickey praised. "Such a good boy for me." He smacked his ass again, watching the blush in Roger's cheeks deepen. He smacked him a few more times, one right after another, and he loved the desperate little moans Roger made every time Mickey spanked him so brutally.

"I'm being good, I'm being so fuckin' good," Roger was chanting. "I'm a good boy."

"Yes, you are." Mickey beamed. He was so proud of Roger for taking this last wave of spans so well, and he petted his stinging cheeks reverently. "You did so very well for me. Gold star for you, little boy."

"Mmm, does this mean..." Roger lifted his head, peering hopefully up at Mickey. "Does this mean you're gonna fuck me now, master?"

Mickey grinned wickedly. "Who said I was done with your punishment?"

"Oh, God."

"Uh huh." Mickey leaned back, pulling his hands away. "We've got plenty of time before the food is ready."

"Tell me what to do," Roger hissed. "Just tell me, and I'll do it."

"Bedroom. Now." Mickey held up his hand when Roger tried to follow. He pointed down. "Crawl."

Roger's eyes widened. "You want me to what now?"

"Crawl. On your hands and knees. But do take your time. Wouldn't want you scuffing up those precious knees." Mickey winked and strolled back to his bedroom.

He slipped out of his underwear and sat on the edge of his bed, stroking himself. His head was light from the rush of power he always got with Roger, and his cock flexed when he saw him at the doorway.

On his hands and knees as ordered, Roger came slinking toward him like a cat with his ass arched high. His cock was still hard, bobbing between his legs as he moved. "Like this, master? Is this what you wanted?"

"Very good," Mickey praised. "You look so pretty down there."

Roger pushed up between Mickey's knees, sliding his hands up his thighs. "Thank you."

Mickey petted Roger's hair, and he took a moment to admire him. Roger was incredibly beautiful. He had the kinda mug that belonged on a magazine cover, but kneeling before Mickey was a pretty damn good place for him to be too.

"Do you want my mouth, master?" Roger flicked out his tongue.

"Oh, now I know how good that mouth is, but no. Not yet." Mickey patted the bed. "Come up here with me."

Roger seemed confused, but he got into bed all the same. Mickey directed him to stretch out and put his head on the pillows, and so he did.

Mickey had a different kind of punishment in mind, and he couldn't stop himself from smiling as he nestled himself between Roger's legs. "Now, I was gonna eat your ass, but you're full of fuckin' lube, and I hate how that shit tastes."

"Noted, sir." Roger was watching intently, his arms tucked back behind his head. "So, what are you going to do?"

"Whatever the hell I want." Mickey pressed close, and he ran his tongue up the side of Roger's aching cock. He licked up the pre-cum, swirling the tip of his tongue around his slit.

Roger moaned loudly, and he grinned. "Ah, fuck. You don't suck my dick nearly enough, sir. That feels fuckin' good."

"I suck it just the right amount. Now shut up." Mickey kept on licking, slow and methodical, moving back down to the base. He kissed and sucked, going lower still to lavish Roger's balls with attention.

He held them in his hand, squeezing gently. He liked how heavy they felt, hot and firm, as he sucked each one into his mouth. He ran his tongue back up to Roger's dick, and he sucked on the head briefly before letting go again.

Roger dropped his hands into the sheets, clawing and whining.

Mickey knew he wasn't giving him enough to come, and he loved watching him squirm. He wrapped his mouth back around Roger's cock, taking a little more and swirling his tongue around the head as he sucked.

Roger's hips trembled, and he was clearly struggling not to thrust upwards. "Ah, fuck, mm. Come on. Please, suck me. I'm fuckin' close, I'm so close."

Mickey dared to suck harder, bobbing his head and digging his nails into Roger's thighs. He listened, waiting for Roger's pants to get really erratic and feeling for his muscles tensing up. He waited until that precise moment he was sure Roger was about to bust, and he pulled off.

"Oh, *fuck you!*" Roger gasped. He wheezed, smacking the sheets in his frustration. "I was right *there*. Fuck, fuck, fuck! Mmm, master! Please!"

"No." Mickey grabbed Roger's cock and gave him a feathery light stroke. "Not yet."

"Goddammit... please, my fuckin' balls hurt. My dick is *throbbing*. Please. I wanna come, pretty please!"

"You're so pretty when you beg, but no." Mickey kissed the flushed head of Roger's cock. "You are being punished, and I'm not done yet. You better behave or you won't fuckin' come at all."

"Fuck. Okay." Roger rubbed his face. "I'll be good, sir. Okay? I'll be so fuckin' good."

Mickey smirked, and he greedily sucked Roger's cock all the way into his mouth. He didn't stop until it was stuffing the back of his throat, and he sucked him hard and fast. His drool was running down the shaft, pooling around Roger's balls, and he kept going.

Roger immediately tensed and started to moan, even more desperate than before. His breath came out in little stunted gasps, and his legs began to shake. "I can't, I'm, I'm just, oh, fuck! Please, yes, yes, I'm—"

Mickey pulled off with a cruel chuckle.

Roger sobbed, his cock flexing and dripping with Mickey's spit and pre-cum. He didn't say anything, only humped the air a few times and then went still. His eyes were wide, damp with tears as he gazed down at Mickey.

"There," Mickey soothed as he rubbed Roger's thigh. "Nice and fuckin' quiet. No bitching, no complaints. You took your punishment like a good boy for me."

"Thank you, master." Roger swallowed shakily and took a deep breath.

"Roll over. Ass up."

Roger flopped over on his stomach, keeping his head down in the pillows as he raised his lower half up on his knees. He spread his legs wide and arched up his ass. "Like this, master?"

"Mmm, just like that." Mickey stroked Roger's cheeks, and he was pleased he could see his handiwork. He idly traced over the tender prints left behind from the earlier spanking as he lined himself up.



There was resistance as he pushed inside, and he thrust in short bursts until the lube coated his cock. He groaned, slamming home and holding himself there to savor the slick heat.

Roger always felt so fuckin' perfect.

"Yes, thank you," Roger whimpered. "God, master, I love your fuckin' cock."

"I know you do. And I'm gonna give it to you." Mickey could feel the hot throb of Roger's hole around his piercing, and he needed friction. He began to thrust, letting the drag linger before he'd slam back inside.

Roger groaned every time Mickey bottomed out, and a blissful smile crept over his lips. "Yes, fuck yeah, come on... give it to me. Fuck me up."

Holding Roger's hips firmly, Mickey fucked him harder. He let himself go and pounded into Roger until they were both breathless and moaning from the intense connection. Mickey wanted to fuck Roger forever, just like this, raw and passionate.

"Good boy, takin' this dick like a pro." Mickey gave Roger's ass a good smack, and he grinned when Roger yelped and clamped down on his dick. "Fuck, it feels like your little fuckin' hole is trying to suck me in. Fuck, you feel good."

"I want it, all of it, all the time." Roger whimpered. "Fuck, yes! Fuck me!"

Mickey licked over one of his fingers, continuing to fuck Roger as he circled his hole where it was stretched around his cock. "I bet you could take more, huh? You ever take two dicks before, slut?"

"No! Never!" Roger gasped.

Mickey kept pushing until the tip of his finger slipped inside, and he groaned lustfully. "Roger, fuck. Look at you. Come on, give it up for me."

Roger wailed, his hips trying to pull away from the new intrusion. "Ah, fuck! Mmm, no! I can't, I can't do it! It's too much!"

"Oh, yes, you can." Mickey pushed his finger deeper, gasping sharply at the new pressure it created around his cock as he kept on thrusting.

"Mmm, oh, God!" Roger shoved his face in the pillows and screamed. "I'm gonna come, I'm gonna fuckin' come! Mickey!"

Hearing his name on Roger's lips made Mickey moan, and he couldn't stop himself. Right as Roger's body clenched around him, Mickey was coming with him. He shuddered, feeling the sweeping heat around the head of his dick as he unloaded. He slammed hard, pushing every pulse as deep as he could, his mouth dry from panting so frantically.

Fuck, that was good. Every quiver of Roger's hole made Mickey's orgasm drag on, and it never seemed to end. It finally did, leaving him tingling and gasping, and he didn't think he'd come so hard before in his entire life.

"Ohhh, Mickey..." Roger was melting into the bed now, and he laughed deliriously. "God... damn."

Mickey agreed, but he had to catch his breath first. As Roger collapsed, he rolled off of him with a grunt. He laid flat on his back, and he stretched his aching legs. His muscles were screaming like he'd just run a marathon, and he had never felt better.

"Goddamn," he mumbled, laughing at the weird wave of emotion coming over him. He was elated, happy, and fuck, so very satisfied. Roger was the missing piece he needed to fill the emptiness inside of him, and he couldn't get enough of him.

When they were together like this, the rest of the world vanished away.

"I can't believe you stuck your finger in my ass like that." Roger managed to move onto his side and cuddled up to Mickey.

"I can't believe you've never taken two dicks at the same time," Mickey countered, grinning crookedly.

"Fuck you." Roger rolled his eyes. "Fuckin' never."

"Never?"

"Not in my ass anyway."

Mickey laughed. "Fuckin' slut."

"Ugly prick." Roger beamed. He kissed Mickey, caressing his cheek and lingering on his lips.

Mickey shivered, and he dared to slip Roger a quick slide of his tongue. The kiss reignited his lust, and he was impossibly horny again. He could not explain what this man did to him.

The kiss went on, deep and slow, interrupted only when the timer in the kitchen started going off.

"Mm, I gotta go get the food," Roger mumbled.

"One more minute." Mickey pulled Roger back into a sweet kiss, trying to push his way on top. "Mmm, just lemme slide my dick back in for a second..."

"Surprise, surprise, I know, but I've heard that one before." Roger swiftly slipped away, bouncing off the edge of the bed and hurrying off into the kitchen.

"Fuckin' cock tease!" Mickey hollered after him. He glared down at his dick, stubbornly hard. "To be continued." He got up to follow, and his nose was struck with the savory aroma of delicious lasagna.

He could smell the meaty sauce, the fresh cheese, and the tang of herbs. His mouth instantly watered, and his stomach grumbled in reply.

Damn, he was hungry.

Roger had already turned off the timer and taken the lasagna out by the time Mickey came in. He was cutting portions and carefully serving them on the paper plates. "Hope it's good. Pasta usually reheats pretty damn well."

Mickey smiled. "I'm sure it will be great. It smells amazing." He accepted his plate and a plastic fork, cutting off a small corner of the lasagna.

"Don't burn your mouth," Roger scolded. "It literally just came out of the oven."

"Yeah, yeah." Mickey blew on the little piece to cool it down and ate it. As he chewed, two things happened at once.

The first was he was impressed by Roger's culinary prowess because damn if this wasn't the best lasagna he'd ever tasted.

The second was a wave of grief, a deep longing that forced him to set the plate down and take a deep breath in an effort to calm himself.

Yes, the food was great, but Pops should have been here with them.

In some twisted and sad way, he wished Duncan was too.

"Hey." Roger was beside him in a blink, wrapping his arms around his waist. "Did I fuck up? Should I have just trashed it?"

"No." Mickey hated how weak he sounded. "It's okay. I'm glad you brought it." He forced himself to take another bite. "It's really fuckin' good. Seriously."

"You miss him, huh?"

"Pops? Yeah."

"It's good that it hurts," Roger soothed. "Means you loved him a lot. If you didn't care about him, you wouldn't give a fuck that he was dead, you know?"

"I know you're trying to be nice in your special crazy way, but that's really not helping."

"Look, eventually the pain goes away and then all that's left is the love. It gets better." Roger hugged him. "I swear it does."

"Yeah?" Mickey's heart fluttered.

"Yeah." Roger kissed his cheek. "And on the days that it still hurts a lot, we can totally go find where Salvatore is buried or whatever and piss on his grave. How's that?"

"Now that is helpful."

"See? I'm pretty damn perfect." He held his head high. "Roger Lorre, expert thief, heartbreaker, and all around perfect human being."

"Yeah, you are." Mickey smiled ruefully. "Maybe even too perfect for me. Can't shake the feeling you're gonna get around to breaking my heart someday."

"You'd have to have a heart for me to break," Roger teased.

"Fuck you." Mickey snorted. "Asshole."

“Well, you better quit now while you can and stop falling in love with me. It’s pretty easy, but you can try to resist. I believe in you.”

“Fuck, I hate you.” Mickey swung down his hand and popped Roger’s ass. “But I’m afraid it’s too late.”

“For what?”

“You know what, jackass. Come here.” Mickey held Roger close, and his heart was lighter. “No matter what you do, no matter whatever fuckin’ happens, you’re mine.”

“And you’re mine,” Roger agreed. “My beautiful monster.”

“Yours.”

“Forever?”

“Always.”

## EPILOGUE

Mickey Tamerlane already knew exactly what he was going to do first when he stepped outside of prison as a free man. He'd spent the last two years inside this hell hole for three counts of involuntary manslaughter, and he had every intention of whipping out his dick and taking a piss right on the front gate.

"If you're not careful, the guards might haul you back in for indecent exposure," Doc warned him when he shared his plan.

"It would be worth it, Doc." Mickey grinned. "Fuck this place."

"Can't say I wouldn't be tempted." Doc smiled ruefully. "And I've been here a bit longer than you, you know. Not all of us, ahem, have such good friends on the outside."

David Poe, known as Doc in prison, used to be a doctor before he was arrested for the murder of his wife almost twenty years ago. Mickey was certain he was the only innocent man in Westchester Prison.

Mickey knew killers.

Doc wasn't it.

"I know." Mickey clapped a friendly hand on his shoulder. "Look, I'll tell you what. If I gotta take a shit while I'm out there, I'll drop my drawers and leave a present at the gate in your honor."

"While that's very kind of you, kiddo, I think it would be better if you stuck to the piss," David said dryly.

Mickey laughed.

"Besides, I thought the first thing you'd do is call that boyfriend of yours. Roger, yeah?"

"I'm still mad at him," Mickey muttered.

"For the infidelity?"

"That's a real fancy way of saying he fucked six people behind my back."

“And yet you’re still carrying his picture around,” Doc pointed out. “Whatever you have with him, it’s special. Yeah, he fucked up. But there’s hope.”

“Like fuck there is.” Mickey turned away, scowling. He should take the picture out of his pocket and rip it up, but he couldn’t bring himself to do it.

Today was his release day. It was supposed to be a happy fuckin’ day. Thinking about Roger now was spoiling it.

No matter how much he longed to see him.

“Where there’s hope, there’s a way.” Doc leaned against the bunk bed in Mickey’s tiny cell. “In life, hope is sometimes all you have. I mean, look at me.” He gestured around them. “My son, sweet boy that he is, has been trying to get me out of here since I came in.”

“And this is the same sweet boy you think is lying to you?” Mickey challenged.

“Not with any malicious intention, but yes.” Doc smirked. “Jimmy is lying to protect me, to make me think he’s doing okay. He doesn’t want me to worry. He wants me to keep hope. There’s love in that.”

“I don’t know if there’s any love in my man spreading for somebody else while I’m locked up,” Mickey drawled.

“Yeah, but who tried to sneak in here and see you on your birthday?” Doc was quick to remind him. “Do you remember?”

“It was the night me and you met.” Mickey sat down on the edge of his bed, and he looked up at Doc with a wry smile. “You saved my buddy Usher after he got stabbed. He would have died in that shit ass infirmary if you hadn’t fixed him up.”

“A true enough statement, but hey, I’m not the one who pretended to be a nurse and tried to slip in to see you.” Doc held out his hands. “That was Roger, the man who still loves you. So, yeah, I’d say there’s hope.”

Mickey scoffed, but he wanted it to be true.

Roger had strayed from him before, usually after a big fight, and it would result in some earth-shattering sex. The humiliation and punishments they both so enjoyed were a pivotal part of their passionate relationship. Raw anger that led to a lustful resolution was kind of a staple for them.

But this...

Six times, including Pym.

Theodore fuckin’ Pym.

Roger had slept with a fellow Gentleman plus five other random guys while Mickey had absolutely no chance to reclaim what was rightfully his. He couldn’t punish Roger. He couldn’t fuck him and make him pay for this trespass like all the other times. Mickey was in prison, totally trapped, and he hated that Roger couldn’t have waited a few more months for him to get out of here.

It was infuriating.

It was agonizing.

And *frustratingly* hot.

“This isn’t like what we usually do,” Mickey said carefully. He trusted Doc with his life, but the details of his sexual preferences were a bit much to share. “He doesn’t fuck up like this unless I’m there to handle it.”

“Well, then I would say his infidelity is his way of saying that he’s missing you.”

“You always spin shit like this?” Mickey tilted his head. “Did you tell your patients with cancer that it’s just a little lump and everything is gonna be all rainbows and butterflies?”

“No,” Doc replied firmly. “I’m being honest. I was honest with my patients, and I’m being honest with you now. You’ve gotta keep hope alive, Mickey.”

“Right, like your son who’s gonna magically spring you out of here someday.” Mickey sneered.

“Do you know what my biggest hope is?”

The short question struck Mickey silent for a moment because the answer seemed obvious. Looking at Doc’s face, however, gave Mickey the impression that it was something else.

“That your son gets you outta here?”

“No.” Doc smiled sadly. “In my heart of hearts, my biggest hope is that my son gives up on me.”

Mickey was stunned.

All of these months he’d known Doc, all the guy talked about was his son trying to prove his innocence: law school, filing appeals, poring over the police reports.

“Why... why would you want that?” Mickey managed to ask.

“Because I know my son.” Doc shrugged. “And I know he is wasting his best years trying to save me when I already know I’m never leaving this place. He needs a life of his own without me holding him back. He needs to meet someone. Fall in love.”

“Like me and Roger, huh?” Mickey made a face.

“Maybe. That depends.”

“On?”

“Well, I want my son to have a love that’s gonna survive some bumps. I want him to have a love that will last. Do you love Roger enough to get through this? Or are you ready to give him up?”

Mickey was immediately filled with a flash of rage. He would never give Roger up. That man belonged to him, mind, body, and soul. He meant everything to Mickey, and he couldn’t...

“No,” Mickey replied quietly, doing his best to quell his rising emotions. “I’m not ready.”

“So, there you go.” Doc smiled. “I hope my son moves on from me and finds someone to love him as much as you love Roger.” He grinned. “Maybe without all the cheating. He’s a bit sensitive.”

“I’m sensitive.”

“Mickey, you almost stabbed someone for taking your pudding.” Doc frowned.

“Because it hurt my feelings. I was really looking forward to that pudding.”

Doc laughed and shook his head. “Well, you can have all the pudding you want in just a few minutes. And I highly suggest you take some time and go set your man straight. If you’re not ready to give him up, don’t do it. Remember why you fell in love with him in the first place.”

*Because he went down on me in a bathroom and we fucked like gods in a shitty hotel room...*

“Thanks, Doc.” Mickey stood and shook Doc’s hand. He hesitated, but then he went in for a big hug. “Thanks for fixing me.”

“Fixing you?” David laughed, hugging Mickey back. “You’re the one who sent me people to get fixed!”

“Nah, Doc. I meant...” Mickey tapped his head. “In here.”

“Ah.”

“Thanks for listening.”

“Take care of yourself, Mickey.” Doc smiled. “I don’t wanna see you back in here. If you can’t be good, be good at it, okay?”

Mickey flashed a sly smile. “I’ll do my best.”

Once Mickey was fully processed and released, he flipped off every guard he saw on his way out. It felt good to be back in his old clothes and to be rid of that awful prison uniform, but he hadn’t forgotten his plan. At the main gate, he turned right around and pulled his dick out, pissing all over the fence.

Satisfied, he zipped his pants up with a smug smile.

Mickey heard the roar of a familiar engine, and he looked up the road to see a 1972 Nova SS hauling ass toward him.

His lady was here, and Jules was behind the wheel.

Jules made the engine growl when he was in sight, grinning slyly as he parked in front of the gate and stepped out to greet Mickey.

“Hey, hey now. Be careful with my lady.” Mickey gave Jules a big hug, clapping him on the back.

“Hey, I brought her, didn’t I?” Jules protested. “Took real good care of her while you were in.”

“Keys,” Mickey demanded, holding out his hand.



“Fine.” Jules slapped them into Mickey’s waiting palm. “Party pooper.”

Mickey grinned and slid into the driver’s seat, stroking the wheel with a happy sigh.

Fuck, it was almost better than sex.

Almost.

“Buckle up.”

Jules strapped in beside him, and he cackled as Mickey took off like a maniac.

Mickey was too happy to put the prison behind him, and he had missed the deep purr of his beloved Nova.

“Just drop me off at my place,” Jules instructed.

“Still over on Breakaway Lane?”

“Yeah. Cold is throwing you a little party tonight at his house. Welcome home and all that shit.”

“Whole gang will be there, huh?”

“Including your boy Roger.”

Mickey drove a little faster and gritted his teeth. Roger’s photo was burning a hole in his pocket. He should have thrown it away. Maybe pissed on it like the damn gate. “Not mine anymore.”

“Like you two aren’t gonna fuck this out like you always do.”

“Fuck off.”

“Fine, fuckin’ touchy.” Jules snorted. “Well, you’ll get to meet Cold’s new boy at any rate.”

“He’s got a boy now?” Mickey raised his brow. “Now ain’t that some shit.”

“He’s in denial, but he’s got himself one. And he’s got it bad.” Jules smiled gleefully. “Wait ‘til you see ‘em. It’s fuckin’ cute.”

“Who is it?”

“Kid named Jimmy Poe.”

Mickey flinched.

Doc’s son was named Jimmy, but it couldn’t be...

“And it’s, uh... serious?” Mickey ventured.

“It’s like Alistair and Cold all over again. Except now Cold is Alistair. You dig?”

“Yeah?”

“You should have seen the look on Cold’s face. I ain’t never seen him like this. This crazy ass kid just offers himself up to get fucked, whatever Cold wants, and Cold fuckin’ agreed.” Jules cackled. “It

was crazy.”

“And this Jimmy is coming to the party tonight?”

“Cold said he ain’t, but I would bet you every nut and bolt in my fuckin’ El Camino that he does.” Jules smirked. “When you see him, you pretend like I didn’t tell you nothin’.”

“Does Cold know his adopted daddy is a cop?”

“Hey.” Jules grunted in surprise. “Yeah, fuck, but how do you know that?”

“Met a guy inside named David Poe. Good man. We called him Doc. He talks a lot about his kid, a sweet little idiot named Jimmy who got adopted by the same pig who arrested Doc for killin’ his wife. Sound familiar?”

“Oh, yeah. That’s him.”

“It’s Detective Duplin.” Mickey slowed down to stop at a traffic light. “The fuckin’ prick who killed Roger’s little brother.”

“Yup.”

“What the *fuck* is Cold doing?”

“Whatever he wants. As usual.”

“Seriously.”

“Cold was working on Jimmy to put pressure on Duplin. Tried to make the kid squeal so he’d go running to Duplin for help, and we could make shit with Dickie go away.”

“And that didn’t happen?”

“Nope. Instead of wailing for his cop daddy, Jimmy offered up his ass.”

“Does Roger know yet?” Mickey hated to ask because he shouldn’t even give a shit, and he took off a little faster than he needed to when the light changed.

“Nope.”

“Guess he’ll find out tonight.”

“Keep your lips zipped,” Jules warned. “Cold is still gonna use Jimmy to get to Duplin, one way or another. He’s gotta be alive for that.”

“And Roger would be very eager to make him not alive.”

“Lips. Zipped.” Jules held up a finger. “I’m fuckin’ serious. I’ll tell Cold you know what’s up seein’ as how you know this Doc guy, but he doesn’t want the other Gentlemen to know what he’s up to yet. Not even Roger.”

“Fancy fuckin’ plan time?”

“You know it.”

“What’s going on?” Mickey frowned. “Is this all because of Dickie?”

“Duplin ain’t lettin’ up, and well...”

“What?”

“Cold thinks we got a rat. Ain’t no way nobody should have found Dickie’s body.”

“Unless somebody told them.” Mickey grimaced. He remembered all too well what happened the last time they had a traitor among them. “Good thing I’m out now, huh? I’m good at killin’ rats.”

“Fuck yeah.” Jules smacked Mickey’s shoulder affectionately. “The best.”

“Yeah.” Mickey pulled up in Jules’ driveway and parked. He leaned back in his seat, sighing. “Damn.”

“What’s wrong?”

“Feels weird. Bein’ out. It’s real good.” Mickey squeezed the steering wheel. “Just... it’s a lot.”

“Go handle your shit.” Jules patted his arm. “I’ll see you tonight.”

“Can’t wait.”

Mickey took off the second Jules was safely out of the car. The keys to his condo were in his personal effects the prison gave back to him, but he wasn’t ready to head home yet.

He wanted to go see Pops.

There was a flower shop on the way to the Strassen Springs Cemetery, and Mickey stopped for a bouquet. He never knew what to get, but he didn’t want to show up with nothing. Cold had that weird thing with calla lilies, but those didn’t seem right for Pops.

Red roses were good, classic, just like his lady.

Someone had been taking care of the grave, and he made a mental note to thank Cold for that. He laid the flowers down, kneeled, and pressed his brow against the headstone.

“Hey, Pops... it’s me.”

The stone felt cool, and the cemetery was quiet. The last time he’d come here to visit was with Roger before he’d been arrested.

Damn it.

He couldn’t even pay his respects without thinking about that stupid slut.

Mickey didn’t stay long, knowing he needed to go home and get ready for the party. His condo was exactly the way he’d left it, clean and sparse, everything in its proper place. The few family photos he owned were hanging in his bedroom, including an empty frame by his bedside.

He took it off the wall, carefully removing the back and pulling Roger’s photo from his pocket. He put the picture back inside and closed it up, but he hesitated to hang it again.

The picture was from Rowena's twenty-first birthday party. It seemed like ages ago now. Rowena had insisted on setting out disposable cameras on all the tables so everyone could take pictures.

Mickey had snapped this photo of Roger, drunk and smiling, right after...

He put the frame face down on the bedside table.

Maybe he'd hang it later.

He took a scalding hot shower and stayed beneath the spray until his skin was red and raw. He wanted to get clean and wash away all the grime from prison. After he dried off, he went to his closet and found a new garment bag hanging inside.

It was a rich black brocade suit with a mandarin style collar.

Definitely from the Boss.

Before Mickey got ready though, there was an intimate matter he needed to address first: his frenum piercing.

He had to take out the barbell when he went to prison, and he wondered if the hole was still open. He still had the jewelry, and he sat down on the edge of his bed and took himself in hand. He pulled his foreskin back and tilted his soft cock up to find the little hole, and he very carefully pushed the barbell through.

Ha, it still fit.

Now for the hard part. He had to screw the tiny little ball on the other end of the barbell.

The second he tried to secure it, the ball popped out from between his fingers and skittered across the floor into oblivion.

"Fuck."

So much for that.

He didn't have any other jewelry, and he couldn't wear this one without both balls. He took it out and got dressed in his new suit, grumbling to himself. If he happened to splash on the cologne he knew was Roger's favorite, it was only a coincidence.

He went out to his car, sliding in the driver's seat and cranking it up. He raised his hand to smack the radio even though he'd fixed the loose wire years ago.

Old habits die hard, he thought, listening to the engine rumble.

Habits like hooking back up with that one person in particular he would die before ever admitting he'd laid awake every night thinking of and missing while he was in prison.

When he arrived at Cold's estate, of course, that one particular asshole happened to be standing outside.

It was Roger.

Mickey glared, and his insides twisted up in a mix of longing and rage.

He parked and stepped out of the car, intent on walking right by and ignoring him completely. He had a party to get to, and he didn't have time for whores.

"Who picked you up?" Roger held his head high and crossed his arms over his chest.

"The fuck do you care." Mickey snorted, leaning his hip against the car door. He felt trapped by Roger's intense gaze, and he tried not to stare back too hard.

Fuck, he looked good.

Time had been kind to Roger, and his thick blond hair hid any trace of grey. It was cut shorter than Mickey remembered, but there was still enough to get a good handful right on top.

The suit he was wearing was tailored to his fit body, gorgeous as ever, and Mickey was glad he had taken some extra time to get ready.

Roger was definitely checking him out too.

"You could have called me," Roger took a few steps closer.

"And listen to you fucking Pym? No fuckin' thanks."

Roger groaned. "It was one fucking time!"

"It was six fucking times, you stupid *whore*!" Mickey shouted. "Six fuckin' times!"

"You were fuckin' gone! I didn't know for how long!" Roger yelled back as he stepped up and put himself right in Mickey's face. "I was fucking lonely! It was a mistake! They were all mistakes, and I already tried to apologize—"

"Fuck you! Like I wasn't fuckin' lonely too?" Mickey grabbed Roger by his shirt and pushed him away. "I was miserable! I couldn't even take a shit without some pig watching me! Do you know how many ways I know how to cook ramen now? Do you?"

"Huh?" Roger was bewildered. "Ramen?"

"It's fucking prison, Roger!" Mickey snapped. "I made lots of fuckin' ramen and ignored the train of guys all begging to be my bitch! And oh, look at that, my dick magically stayed right here in my fucking pants."

"You got ten fucking years!" Roger cried. "Ten years, Mickey! I didn't know if Cold could get you out! What did you expect me to do? Wait for you?"

"It never even crossed your mind, did it?" Mickey hated how much that hurt. "You fuckin' piece of shit. You selfish fucking slut, fuck you."

"Fuck you!"

"No, fuck you!" Mickey seethed. "God, how I fucking hate you."

“I hate you too!” Roger was right back in his face again. “Why the fuck would I wait for you when I already know there’s no fuckin’ future for us? You wouldn’t let me move in with you, you already fuckin’ said you wouldn’t marry me—”

“You stupid bastard! You’re still on that shit?” Mickey put his hand out to push Roger away, but he found himself pulling him closer. “Give it up!”

“No! I deserve more from you!” Roger roared. “I’ve fuckin’ earned it! I’m not just your little fuck toy! I’ve given you everything—”

“Yeah, and then you gave it to six other fuckin’ guys!” Mickey shoved Roger up against the side of the car. “Six!”

“Fuck you!” Roger tried to break free, but Mickey held on. “If you don’t want to be with me, just let me go, you ugly fuckin’ dick sore!”

“Ball gargling whore,” Mickey shot back, pinning Roger in place. “I can’t *not* be with you! Trust me, I’ve tried! No matter what the fuck you do, I can’t stop! I can’t stop loving your demented little ass!”

“Oh, Mickey.” Roger suddenly sighed, relaxing in Mickey’s embrace. All the rage was leaving him, and he reached up to cradle Mickey’s cheeks. “I missed you so much.”

Mickey already knew what was going to happen when their eyes met, both of them cranked up so high on the fierce energy of their fight.

They kissed.

It was messy, wet, and Mickey hated how easy it was for him to give in and forget how Roger had hurt him. He adored him, all of his flaws, every last fucked up bit of him.

No one got his blood pumping like this. Not another soul could ever compare.

And he wasn’t ready to give him up.

Mickey groaned, kissing Roger deeply, his hands all over him. His chest, his hips, his ass; God yes, his ass. He’d thought about that ass for months, and he got a good handful and squeezed.

Roger gasped, and their teeth clicked as their kiss got more frantic. “Mickey, oh, f-fuck!”

“Backseat?” Mickey asked, though it wasn’t much of a question. He already knew where this was going.

“Don’t you have a party to get to?” Roger laughed breathlessly.

“We’ll have our own little party.” Mickey nosed along Roger’s jaw. “Just me and you.”

“Yeah…”

“Yes, *what?*”

“Yes, master.” Roger grinned, already pushing Mickey out of his way and crawling into the backseat. He unbuttoned his pants. “Still keep lube in the glove compartment?”

“Not sure if it’s still any good, but yeah.” Mickey smirked as he grabbed it, joining Roger in the back. “What? You’re telling me you’re not already prepped?”

“No, sir.” Roger snorted, now naked from the waist down, and snatched the bottle away.

“What happened to being an eternal optimist?” Mickey reached down to palm himself, trying to give his hard cock some relief.

“You broke my heart, master,” Roger replied simply. He leaned back against the seat and spread his legs.

“Fucking when?”

“Which time?” Roger rolled his eyes, slicking up his fingers and pushing them inside of himself. He groaned, thrusting quickly. “There’s been a few, sir.”

Mickey was honestly stumped. “I have no fuckin’ idea what you’re talking about.”

“Mmm, right before you went to prison,” Roger panted, his fingers moving even faster. “I wanted to stay at your place while you were gone. All I wanted was to fuckin’ feel close to you!”

“But it’s my goddamn place.” Mickey pulled out his cock and gave himself a few strokes. “I didn’t want you there. There’s nothing wrong with me wanting some fuckin’ space.”

“How about when I asked you to marry me and you said no?”

“That was fuckin’ years ago!” Mickey scoffed. “You’re still mad about that?”

“See, you say I’m fuckin’ crazy, but you can’t even see when you’re being a huge asshole.” Roger turned over onto his stomach, glaring at Mickey over his shoulder.

Mickey was uncertain, and the control he so enjoyed having over Roger felt fragile right now. He had never realized that he might have hurt Roger so deeply, and he didn’t know what to do with the very alien sensation of guilt coming over him.

He got on top of Roger, sliding the head of his dick between his cheeks. He leaned down to kiss behind Roger’s ear. “You knew I was a monster from the first fuckin’ day we met...”

“I know.” Roger closed his eyes and lifted up his hips, grinding back on Mickey’s cock. “But it’s why I love you. Now, shut up and fuck me, master.”

Mickey pushed against Roger’s hole, inhaling sharply as he finally slipped inside. It had been years since they’d been together, and the second they were connected it was like no time had passed at all. It was too familiar, too perfect, and Mickey let himself get swept up in the tight, wet heat of Roger’s body.

He thrust hard through the initial resistance, bucking down to force Roger to open up around him. He knew how much Roger liked this, and the sound of his desperate moans was a lovely symphony that made him ache.

“Oh, m-master! Oh, fuck!” Roger clawed at the seat, trying to spread his legs for some relief.

“What’s wrong?” Mickey taunted as he kept up the brutal pace. “Those six guys not know how to fuck you right? Huh? Is that it? They didn’t know how to fuck you like the little slut you are?”

“No,” Roger whimpered between his teeth. “They never do. No one ever fucks me like you do! No one!”

“Damn right they don’t.” Mickey grunted, rearing his hips back and slamming deep. He knew he wasn’t going to last long, but he was going to make it good. Even without his jewelry in, that spot on his dick was still sensitive, and it felt so good pushing deep inside of Roger’s ass.

He braced himself on the seat and one of the front headrests, pounding into Roger without mercy. The force of his thrusts was making the car shake, and their breath was already fogging up the back windows.

Mickey’s muscles were burning from the effort, and he slowed down. This felt even better now, being able to take his time and enjoy the slick drag of each thrust. “Ah, fuck... Roger...”

“Master, oh, fuck... yeah...” Roger moaned, rolling his hips back. “God, yes... your cock feels so good. So fuckin’ good... I missed you. Fuck, I missed you so much.”

Mickey kissed Roger’s throat, nuzzling against his ear. Slow felt nice, and he wanted to make every second perfect. They’d have plenty of time for punishments and spankings; right now, this was what Mickey wanted more than anything. “Yeah, I missed you too... so fuckin’ much.”

“Please... touch me, master. I need it. I need to feel you.”

“I know. I know what you need.”

Sliding a hand under Roger’s chest, Mickey tugged at his shirt until the buttons gave way. He slipped inside and groped Roger’s chest, searching for his nipple. He smiled when he got to the piercing, a small ring Roger had gotten a few years ago.

They’d had a lot of fun with it, and he knew this was an especially sensitive spot for Roger.

He ran his fingers over it, rubbing and petting until Roger was whimpering and his nipple was hard. Mickey gave the ring a tug and enjoyed Roger’s following squeal of pleasure.

There was a tap on the windshield, and Mickey looked up.

Jules was standing there, grinning like a jackass and waving.

Mickey couldn’t help but smile.

And wave back.

“What was that?” Roger lifted his head.

“Jules.”

“Ah... mmm, guess everyone knows now.” Roger chuckled breathily. “He’s gonna tell ‘em.”



“Pretty sure they knew before we did,” Mickey murmured, pressing himself flush against Roger’s back. He kept stroking the little ring as he held him close, breathing in the mingling scent of their cologne and sweat. “I don’t care... let him tell everybody.”

“Fuck.” Roger reached back to cradle the back of Mickey’s head, and he pressed his nails in. “I don’t give a fuck either. They can all line up and watch if they want to.”

“Mm.” The blunt edge of Roger’s nails felt good, a quick flash of pain that sent lightning down Mickey’s spine and made his hips rock faster. “You’d love that, wouldn’t you?”

“Master!” Roger gasped. “God, yes! Yes, please!”

It was too easy to imagine: plowing Roger in front of a captive audience, letting everyone see what a perfect little slut he was. It wasn’t like they hadn’t messed around in public before, and it was always hot. The first time was when Mickey had spanked Roger’s dick and made him come at Slick Rick’s before it was burned down...

Fuck, what a thrill that had been.

Fueled by the erotic memory and unable to stop himself now, Mickey fucked Roger down into the seat. The urge to come and find relief from all this blazing heat was too much, and he wanted to fill up Roger so badly. He wanted to claim him, to take back what was his, and go to that party knowing Roger would be walking around with Mickey’s load inside of him—

“Fuck!” Mickey roared as he came, throwing his head back as his hips stuttered. He tried to keep going, to force his cum as deeply as he could, and his thighs began to shake.

“Yes, yes, yes, fuck!” Roger grinded his hips back, leaning up to put more weight behind his efforts. “God, yes. Give it to me, fuckin’ give it to me!”

Mickey bit down on Roger’s neck, overcome with a surge of divine pleasure. Roger was clenching around his cock as if he could pull him in deeper, and it made every pulse so much more intense. He was dizzy, and he swore the car was still moving for a moment.

“Can I come?” Roger pleaded. “Please, fuckin’ please let me come on your dick. I’m so close, I’m so goddamn close—!”

“Come on.” Mickey pulled Roger’s hips back and slid his hand beneath him to grab his cock. “You want it, baby? You wanna come for me? Come on. Bust that nut on your master’s dick.”

“Yes, yes, yes, yes, fuck, yes—!” Roger shouted when his cock spilled all over Mickey’s hand. He thrust into his palm, pushing back on Mickey’s dick still inside of him as his orgasm made him tremble. “Ahhh, fuck!”

“Good boy,” Mickey praised, hissing at the wave of quivers squeezing down on his spent dick. “Fuck, mm, such a good boy for me...”

“Fuck. That was good.” Roger laughed and wiggled enticingly. “Wanna go again?”

“Move your ass before your cum dries on the seat,” Mickey scolded. He grunted as he pulled out, shifting over so Roger could sit up.

Roger took off his tie to wipe the seat, and he shoved it in his jacket pocket when he was done. He found his pants and pulled them back on, groaning as he leaned back with a very satisfied smile. “Mmm, wow.”

“Aren’t you forgetting something?”

“Oh, how could I?” Roger laughed and took Mickey’s hand, eagerly licking up his own cum. “Mmm, there. Spotless.” He kissed Mickey’s wrist, working up his arm until their lips softly met. “Oh, Mickey.”

Mickey didn’t even care his dick was still hanging out. He wasn’t ready to stop kissing Roger yet. He hadn’t felt this at peace in years, and his heart was totally full. His body was heavy and sluggish, tired from such thrilling exertion.

Damn, was that good.

“So,” Roger said, finally breaking the kiss and sitting back. His shirt was still undone, and his hair was a ruffled mess. Freshly fucked looked good on him.

“So?” Mickey echoed, trying not to get worked up again.

“What now?”

“I guess...” Mickey paused to tuck himself away and fix his pants. “I guess we’re doin’ this again.” He took Roger’s hand. “Because I can’t... I’m not giving up on you. On this. On *us*.”

“You mean it?” Roger bit his lip. “Really?”

“Yeah, if you can forgive me for bein’ a prick.”

“Can you forgive me?” Roger asked quietly.

“Fuck no.”

“Asshole.” Roger tried to pull his hand away.

Mickey sighed and held on. “Not yet, okay? But I will.”

“That’s fair, I guess.” Roger was quiet for a long moment. “Thank you.”

“For?”

“Giving me another chance.”

“Just... stop fucking up, and I won’t have to keep doing it.”

“And miss out on this prime hate sex? Pfffft.”

Mickey groaned loudly. “God, I really can’t stand you sometimes.”

“I do kinda miss your dick jewelry,” Roger said wistfully. “Need to get a new one.”

“I actually had the damn thing back in and lost the little fuckin’ ball. Can you believe that shit?”

Roger laughed. “Clumsy fuck.”

“Shut up.” Mickey thumped Roger’s nipple ring.

“Ow! Dick!”

“I oughta get us a matching set.”

“Oh, yeah?” Roger’s face lit up. “Like, a set of promise nipple and dick rings?”

Mickey thought back to the photo from Rowena’s party.

He hadn’t known then why Roger was so happy when he took that photograph, but he never wanted to forget the way he’d looked at him that night. He knew now it was because Roger had made up his mind to propose.

At the time, Mickey had said no.

But now...

“Engagement nipple ring?” Mickey suggested, watching Roger’s expression carefully.

“What?” Roger’s eyes widened. “But you... you told me no. I asked you, and you said no. No, wait, you didn’t just say ‘no.’ You told me *never*.” He shook his head. “Don’t fuck with me. Not about that. Please.”

“I’m not.” Mickey kissed Roger’s hand. “I mean it. You were right. About me bein’ an asshole. We got a good thing, and I was never willing to go all in. But whatever fuckin’ future I have, I want you in it.”

“You’re serious?” Roger looked hesitant.

“Yeah. I am.” Mickey took a deep breath. “I must be as crazy as you are, but yeah. I wanna be with you, Roger. Only you. For the rest of my life.”

“Oh! Well.” Roger turned up his nose with a huff. “If you want me to accept, you’d better get down on one knee and ask me right—”

Mickey growled. “The only one gettin’ on their knees anytime soon is you, you slut. I’m still fuckin’ mad at you, and I swear if you fuck around on me again—”

Roger kissed him, hard, stealing away all the words from his lips. “Mm, I don’t even care,” he whispered. “I’ll suck your damn dick for the rest of eternity. Whatever it takes. You said you’d marry me.”

“Yeah.” Mickey hugged him close, and he smiled. His heart skipped a few beats when their eyes met again. “I guess I kinda did.”

“I love you, Mickey.” Roger was smiling so brightly that it seemed to light up the whole car.

“I love you too.”

The empty void in Mickey’s chest was gone, and he knew it was because he had Roger in his arms again. For better or worse, there was no one else in the whole world who made him this happy.

“You’re gonna marry me,” Roger teased gleefully. “We’re getting fuckin’ married.”

“Yeah, one fuckin’ day.”

“How about tomorrow?”

Mickey laughed. “Can we get through my party first?”

“Fine. Party first, then marriage.”

“Okay, yes, I said I’d fuckin’ marry you, but I didn’t say *when*.”

“Oh, I can be very persuasive,” Roger challenged.

“I’m very well aware.”

“You know this means we’re gonna move in together, right?”

“You’d probably just break in anyway if I say no.” Mickey rolled his eyes. “Stupid slut, I love you.”

“I love you too.” Roger smiled. “My beautiful monster.”

The End

## AFTERWORD

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He can tell himself he didn't enjoy it. He can pretend their shared climax wasn't by far the most electrifying thing he has ever experienced. He can even try to drive such impure thoughts from his mind with the pain of the lash. None of it will change the fact that he belongs to Francis now.

Perhaps he has committed a mortal sin... but Francis is going to make sure it wasn't his last one.

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