

Residency II

Book 10 of *Good Medicine*

by Michael Loucks

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For Jennifer

I. And That's When All Hell Broke Loose

February 20, 1990, McKinley, Ohio

"...and that's when all hell broke loose."

"You didn't see the shooter?" Deputy Kenseth asked.

"Not until later As I said, I was in Trauma 1, treating the seventeen-year-old victim."

"Walk me through what happened next."

"Shelly, that is, Doctor Lindsay, had just left the room when I heard the first shot."

"You knew that immediately?"

"I've been around guns long enough to know a pistol report," I said. "And there is nothing in the ED that would make any similar sound. Deputy Sommers reacted instantly to the sound and ordered all of us to get down."

"Did you do that?"

"Not immediately, because we were treating the patient. When we heard a second gunshot, she ordered us to move behind the trauma table."

"What did you observe?"

"Deputy Sommers crouched, drew her service pistol, and carefully opened the door. Almost immediately, another shot rang out, striking her in the temple. Before I could move, I heard at least five rapid gunshots from at least two guns."

"How do you know it was multiple guns?"

"Different reports," I replied. "I suppose it could be location or echo or whatever, but there were at least two distinct reports."

"What did you do then?"

"I moved to Deputy Sommers while Doctor Nielson attended to the patient on the table."

"Did you see anything that happened in the corridor?"

"No. The door had closed when Deputy Sommers was shot."

"Is there anything else you can tell me about the incident?"

"Not really. I was in Trauma 1 the entire time during which shots were exchanged."

"OK. I think that's all I have for you at the moment. I'll be in touch if I have further questions."

"Thanks."

I got up, left the consultation room, and walked into the corridor. It was 2:12am, and the ED was still closed to trauma, as it was a crime scene. That meant VERY long transport times to Columbus for almost anyone in the area around McKinley.

"Mike, go home," Doctor Cutter said when he saw me. "Your next shift is canceled."

"I can get a few hours of sleep and come back," I said. "Normally, I'd just crash in the on-call room, but my wife is waiting up."

"No. Take the day. I'll call you and let you know when you can see Psych."

"Given my relationship with them, I'd prefer an outside counselor, if you don't mind."

"Did you have someone in mind?"

"Doctor Fran Mercer, in Milford. I've seen her off and on for the past nine years. She's a clinical psychologist."

"OK. Call her first thing in the morning."

"Do I need an assessment to come back to work?"

"You work at the Free Clinic on Wednesdays, right?"

"Yes."

"Do that. I'll speak with Gale Turner, but that's mostly routine physical exams, right? No procedures?"

"Correct. I'm morally opposed to elective abortion, so I don't participate in those procedures."

"OK. You're on the surgical service, so Owen can clear you to perform procedures. Make sure you speak to him tomorrow."

"I will. Thanks, Doctor Cutter."

"Go see your family."

I nodded and went upstairs to the surgical locker room, where I stripped off my scrubs, showered, and dressed in street clothes. Before I left, I touched Shelly's locker, said a silent prayer, and then headed home.



February 20, 1990, Circleville, Ohio

"Hi," I said wearily when I walked into the house at 2:47am on Tuesday morning.

"How are you, Mike?"

"The adrenaline started wearing off in the car on the way home."

"Do you want to go right to bed?"

"As tired as I am, I don't think I could sleep right now. I'm going to make some chamomile tea."

"There's hot water in the kettle," Kris said. "I thought you might want some. Is there more news?"

I sighed, "Yes, but none of it good."

I put loose tea in a tea ball and set it in a mug, then poured in the hot water.

"Shelly is in critical condition in the ICU; Loretta was still in surgery at 2:10am; Deputy Sommers died from a gunshot wound to the head."

"Lord have mercy," Kris said quietly. "And the attacker?"

"Shot dead by Deputy Turner and Detective Kleist."

"Was anyone else hurt?"

"No."

"Do they know why it happened?"

"I can piece together some things from the original patients, and what was said, so this is by no means certain. The young woman with the three gunshot wounds was impregnated by an older next-door neighbor. The young woman's father took exception and confronted the neighbor. In the process, there was an exchange of gunfire between multiple people. The girl was shot, along with her brother; the neighbor who impregnated her was shot, and his wife was killed. The attacker at the hospital was the son of the woman who was killed."

"You Americans and your fetish for guns!" Kris said in exasperation.

"First of all, you're an American," I said with a wan smile. "Second, blaming the gun is like blaming a pencil for *Mein Kampf*. I'm not opposed to reasonable restrictions on gun ownership, such as prohibiting felons or the mentally ill from owning them. I also think permits are a good idea, but I would never support a ban on guns."

"Even after your two friends were shot?"

"I didn't think cars should be banned when Jocelyn was nearly killed in an accident or when Lee was murdered with one. But can we please set this aside for another time?"

"I'm sorry," Kris said. "I shouldn't have brought politics into it. Will Shelly and Loretta live?"

"I don't know," I sighed. "Shelly is in what the newspapers would call 'extremely critical' or 'grave' condition. She lost a lot of blood, and there was damage to her liver. If she survives the next twenty-four hours, she has a good chance of recovery. As for Loretta, the last I heard was she has a possible spinal cord injury. I wanted to scrub in but wasn't allowed."

"What happened to the patients?"

"Two of the three weren't in any real danger and were sent by ambulance to Columbus. The young woman coded before we could get her to surgery."

"You were in a treatment room the whole time?"

"Yes. I didn't go into the corridor for almost ten minutes after the shooting stopped because Becky and I were trying to save Deputy Sommers while Doctor Nielson was trying to keep the young woman alive. I didn't see either Loretta or Shelly because they were taken to surgery before I threw in the towel in trying to revive Deputy Sommers."

I removed the tea ball, put it in the sink, then sat down to sip my tea, with Kris sitting across from me at the dinette table in the kitchen.

"What happens now? The news said the hospital was closed."

"To trauma," I replied. "The ED is closed until they finish the investigation. When I left, the shooter was still on the floor, covered with a sheet, and evidence technicians were swarming the place. Doctor Cutter instructed me to take today off and to speak to a counselor. I'll speak to Doctor Mercer because the last thing I want to do is talk to anyone from Psych at the hospital."

"When will you go back to work?"

"Wednesday, at the Free Clinic. I'll speak to Owen Roth after I speak to Doctor Mercer. He has to clear me to perform procedures. That's normal for any psychological or physical trauma. I don't think it'll be a problem."

"How do you feel? I mean, besides tired?"

"OK, I think. But I'm probably not the best judge of that right now. My initial reaction was as a physician. I suspect the more time I have to think about it, the more it might affect me. Strangely, I was never afraid, just concerned for my patient and then Deputy Sommers."

"How long do you plan to sleep?" Kris asked.

"Until I wake up from the nightmare," I replied with a heavy sigh.

"My class today is at 1:00pm, so I have no reason to get up early, though Rachel will certainly be up at her usual time."

"Does she know?"

"No. I didn't turn on the news until after I put her to bed. She was unhappy that you weren't here, but I explained you were helping sick people and would be late. Thank you for calling right away."

"It was after I tried to revive Deputy Sommers," I said.

"I can't reasonably object to that," Kris replied. "You called as soon as it was practical. And you're safe. I think it's best to not watch the news in the morning, which I do sometimes after you leave for the hospital."

"Probably. We can't hide all the evil in the world from our children, but I think it's better she hears it from one of us than sees the news. At her age, who knows what's going through her little head. Back to sleeping, I think I'll sleep until around 7:00am and nap later. Is Rachel on her usual Tuesday schedule?"

"Yes. I'll take her to Abi's house on my way to the university and pick her up on the way home."

"Then I'll nap while you two are out."

"Are you sure you'll be OK?"

"I think so," I replied. "I'll call Doctor Mercer first thing."

I finished my tea, and Kris and I said evening prayers, then went upstairs. I completed my bedtime routine, then got into bed with my wife, set the alarm, and snuggled close to fall asleep spooned together.

I woke with the alarm at 7:00am and felt as if I'd been run over by a truck. I knew it was the aftereffects of the adrenaline rush, and there wasn't much to do about it except begin my day and wait for my body to recover. Kris and I got out of bed, took a shower together, and after we had dressed, I dialed Doctor Mercer's private number while Kris went to get Rachel.

"Fran Mercer," she said when she answered.

"It's Mike Loucks," I said.

"I heard what happened! Are you OK?"

"Physically, yes; Doctor Cutter instructed me to speak to a counselor."

"That's normal in these situations. Are you off work until you're cleared by someone?"

"Yes and no. Tomorrow is my day at the Free Clinic, and because I don't do any procedures there, I can do that. I have to speak to Owen Roth, the Chief Surgeon, to be cleared for procedures."

"I take it from this call you want to speak to me rather than someone in Psych at Moore?"

"You take it correctly and for what I think are obvious reasons."

"This kind of thing has to be done face-to-face because it's the only way to judge the answers. I know it's a long way to come here, but I could meet you in Rutherford at 4:30pm if that works for you. That way, I don't have to reschedule anyone."

"I could do that," I said. "My normal work schedule would have me on until 9:00pm, so it's not taking me away from any plans."

"Then I'll see you at 4:30pm in the same office in the medical building as we met before. How are the two doctors who were shot?"

"One is in the ICU in critical condition; the other was still in surgery when I left the hospital around 2:30am. I'm going to call and check as soon as we hang up, then I need to call my parents."

"They know you're safe, right?"

"Yes. Kris called them both last night after I called her."

"Good. See you later today."

We said 'goodbye', I hung up, then went downstairs and let Kris know the plans.

"Will you get enough sleep?" she asked.

"Yes. I'll take a two-hour nap, and I can sleep later tomorrow due to my usual Wednesday schedule. I need to call and check on Loretta."

"Of course."

I picked up the kitchen extension and dialed the number for Surgery.

"Surgical Nurses' Station," Kim Carter said.

"Hi, Kim," I said. "This is Doctor Mike. I'm calling for a status on Loretta Gibbs and Shelly Lindsay."

"Doctor Gibbs is in the CCU and is stable; Doctor Lindsay is in the ICU and is still listed as critical."

"Any word on Doctor Gibbs' injuries?"

"Neuro has to wait for the swelling to go down to make an assessment."

"Right. Thank you, Kim."

"Are you OK, Doctor Mike?"

"Better than they are," I replied. "If there are any significant changes, would you call me at home, please?"

"Of course, Doctor."

I thanked her, said 'goodbye', then hung up.

"No change on Shelly," I said to Kris. "Loretta is in the Critical Care Unit with stable vitals, but they can't assess her neurologically until the swelling goes down."

"What's the difference between that and intensive care?"

"For the most part, it's simply a matter of staff-to-patient ratio. It's much higher in the ICU, where a nurse usually only has two patients, or sometimes three; whereas in the CCU, it's four to six. In Loretta's case, it's because she could have further neurological effects, so putting her in a ward where the ratio is about eight or ten to one is too risky."

"But she's breathing on her own?"

"Yes. If she was on a vent, she'd be in the ICU for the first forty-eight hours. But that's not etched in stone. The other thing about the CCU is that they turn the lights down at night, whereas the ICU is always lit. Given that ICU patients are nearly always heavily sedated, that doesn't affect their sleep."

"You should probably call your parents," Kris said. "I'll make breakfast."

"Thanks."

I dialed my mom's house first, and Elaine answered. She asked how I was, then handed the phone to my mom.

"Hi, Mike. Thank God you're OK!"

"Hi, Mom," I said. "Sorry, I couldn't call last night. I didn't get home until nearly 3:00am."

"Kris called, which I'm sure she told you. How is everyone?"

"The two doctors are out of surgery and are what I would call 'guarded' if I had any mind to speak to the Press for any reason. We'll know more later."

"The news said it was a domestic dispute."

"Yes, though I know very little about what actually happened before the person walked into the ED with the gun. I didn't see anything that happened except Deputy Sommers being shot, but all I saw was her collapse."

"The news said the gunman was a former Army Ranger."

Which explained how he managed to shoot Deputy Sommers in the head with the door only open a few inches.

"Well, Deputy Turner and Detective Kleist took him down with five shots," I said. "All of them hit center mass, according to Deputy Kenseth."

"Have you spoken to your father?"

"He's next. I assume you told your parents and Liz?"

"Yes."

"Thanks. I'll call Grandfather in a bit. I'll be in Rutherford, and I'll probably stop in to see him."

"Rutherford? Why?"

"I'm meeting Doctor Mercer for a counseling session. It's required before I'm cleared to do procedures. It's all standard. The ED is closed until at least noon."

"What happens to people who need the ED?"

"EMS would transport them to the nearest hospital, which for McKinley is Columbus, but in the western part of the county, they'd take them to Rutherford. Other areas could go south or east. The rest of the hospital is open and operating normally, though I suspect there is a large law enforcement presence."

"I'm just glad you're OK, Mike."

"Thanks."

I said 'goodbye', then called my dad and had a similar conversation with him. I called my grandfather, and when he heard I was going to be in Rutherford, he asked me to come to dinner, and after checking with Kris, I agreed. My final call was to Internal Medicine.

"How are you doing, Petrovich?" Clarissa asked when she came on the line.

"Like I'm on the back end of an adrenaline rush."

"I tried to come see you before I left, but they wouldn't let anyone into the ED because it's a crime scene. They did tell me you weren't hurt."

"Did they say when they'd open to trauma again?"

"2:00pm. Are you coming in?"

"No. I was told to take the day off and to see a counselor. I'm going to see Doctor Mercer later today. I'm allowed to work at the Free Clinic tomorrow, but Owen Roth has to sign off on me doing procedures. Supposedly, that's standard procedure."

"I can see it," Clarissa said. "Mental, emotional, or physical trauma could easily impact your work. Did you hear the latest on Doctor Gibbs and Doctor Lindsay?"

"Yes. I called the Nurses' station this morning. I take it the place is still swarming with cops?"

"They're checking IDs of everyone who comes in at every entrance; there are at least a dozen squad cars and cruisers at various places. Do you know anything about what caused it?"

"No more than was on the news. Fortunately, I was in Trauma 1 during the whole thing. Shelly was there but left to triage the other two patients, which is when she was shot. Deputy Sommers was shot right in front of me, though."

"Jesus, Petrovich! But how?"

"She drew her service pistol, crouched down, and opened the door to respond. A round was fired, striking her in the right temple. We tried for ten minutes, including intubation, bagging, and CPR, but it was useless. She never had a pulse, and I'm fairly certain her pupils were fixed and dilated before Becky and I got to her a few seconds after she was shot."

"And you're really OK?"

"I am. I'm sure it'll hit me at some point, which is why I was ordered by Cutter to see someone. Fortunately, he let me slide on seeing someone in Psych."

"Smart move. Those headshrinkers would use it to exact revenge."

"Fortunately, all they could do would be make a recommendation. It's up to Owen Roth. But the last thing I want is something like that in my medical records at Moore."

"I hear you. I need to go, Petrovich. Call me if you need anything."

"Thanks, Lissa."

We said 'goodbye', and I replaced the handset on the hook, only to have the phone ring immediately.

"Korolyov-Loucks residence; Mike speaking."

"Oh, thank God!" Maryam Khouri gushed. "I was so worried when I saw in the newspaper two doctors had been shot in the ED in McKinley! Who?"

"Shelly Lindsay and Loretta Gibbs."

"Lord have mercy! How are they?"

"Shelly suffered a gunshot wound to the abdomen and lost a significant amount of blood. One lobe of her liver was removed. She's in critical condition in the ICU. Loretta was shot in the back, and there was involvement of her spine. She's in the CCU after surgery, but until the swelling goes down, they won't know about any impairment."

"I'll pray for them and for you, too."

"And for Deputy Sommers," I said. "She was killed protecting a patient, Perry Nielson, me, our med students, and nurses."

"Lord have mercy! You were shot at?"

"No. We were all in Trauma 1; she was with us checking on the patient, and when the shots rang out, she drew her service pistol and opened the door. A shot rang out, and she went down from a round through her right temple. The shooter was killed seconds later by Deputy Turner and Detective Kleist, but by that time, he'd shot both Shelly and Loretta."

"Is everyone else OK?"

"Yes."

"Good. I'll let you go; say 'hello' to Kris and everyone for me. Call soon, please."

"Thanks, I will."

We said 'goodbye', and I hung up, then helped Kris finish making breakfast. We had just sat down to eat when the phone rang, and I debated if I should answer it and decided I needed to.

"Korolyov-Loucks residence; Mike speaking."

"Is this Doctor Michael Loucks?"

"Yes. Who's calling?"

"Carl Peabody, *McKinley Times*. I'd like to ask you some questions."

"No comment," I said. "Please contact the Hospital Administrator's office for an official statement."

"I want to get another perspective."

"I'm not interested in answering any questions."

"Can I leave a number?"

"You can, but it won't change my answer."

He insisted, so I wrote down the number and then hung up.

"Why not talk to the Press?" Kris asked.

"Because I don't want to," I said. "The last thing I need to do is say something that creates a problem for the hospital or the Sheriff. And I'm absolutely not going to violate Loretta's or Shelly's privacy. Talking to doctors is OK, but not the Press. Not to mention, I'm positive I'll be asked more about Deputy Sommers."

"How could it be a problem for the Sheriff if the attacker is dead?"

"I don't know, and that's a good enough reason not to say anything. I honestly don't know if there was an accomplice or if there is more to the original crime."

"Do you think there was?"

"I doubt it, but who knows? The Sheriff will sort it out with help from the McKinley PD. It's outside the city limits, so the Sheriff is the lead, but there's some kind of joint response agreement between the City and the County."

We finished breakfast, cleaned up the kitchen, and said our morning prayers. Rachel, unsurprisingly, asked me to play my guitar and sing to her, so I did that for about an hour. I was interrupted twice by phone calls -- one from Doctor Blahnik and one from Father Nicholas, both of whom I assured I was OK.

When I finished playing for Rachel, Kris and I agreed it was nice enough that we could go out for a family walk. When we returned, I built a fire in the fireplace. We spent time playing with Rachel, and I fielded calls from Peter Baldwin at Emory, as well as my godparents, Geno, Tasha, and José, who promised to call the rest of the band. The final call of the morning was from Jocelyn, and I reassured her I was OK.

Kris, Rachel, and I had lunch around 11:30am. Once we finished lunch, I cleaned up while Kris got ready for class and prepared Rachel's bag. She and Rachel left, and I went to take my nap.



February 20, 1990, Rutherford, Ohio

"How are you doing, Mike?" Fran Mercer asked when I sat down on the couch in her friend's office.

"I've mostly recovered from the aftereffects of the adrenaline surge. I slept about three hours, then took a two-hour nap before I left to come see you. Tomorrow is my day in the Free Clinic, so I can get enough sleep tonight."

"Who is it I'll need to call after this session?"

"Doctor Owen Roth, the Chief Surgeon. I called him right before I left, so he'll expect your call. Tomorrow would be OK, as I'll be at the Clinic."

"I'll call as soon as we finish. Are you nervous about going back to the hospital?"

"I don't think so," I said. "I suppose the real question is how I'll feel when I walk into the ED on Thursday."

"Does some rule prevent you from stopping in tomorrow?"

"No. I wasn't told to stay away, just to take today off, which isn't surprising given I'd already been at the hospital for nearly twenty-one hours and wouldn't have had the minimum eight hours off between shifts. That can be waived in an emergency, but given the ED was closed to trauma until 2:00pm today, it was easy for them to rearrange staffing."

"I suggest you go in, spend at least a few minutes there, and see how you feel, then call me. Could you do that at lunch tomorrow?"

"Yes."

"How are the doctors?"

"Confidentiality applies," I said.

"Yes, of course."

"No change for Doctor Lindsay, which is a good thing, given she had liver damage. If she makes it through to tomorrow morning without a setback, her prognosis will be good, though she won't be out of the woods. For Doctor Gibbs, the post-surgery swelling is going down, but it'll be Thursday morning before we know if there is any neurological damage."

"Paraplegia?"

"That's the concern. She's breathing without a vent, and her vitals are stable. All we can do is wait to see what happens."

"You didn't see either of them shot, right?"

"Correct. I did see Deputy Sommers shot and killed."

"Tell me about that."

"She heard the gunshots, ordered us to take what cover we could behind the trauma table, and then drew her pistol. She crouched and opened the door and was struck in the temple almost immediately. She collapsed, bleeding profusely, and perhaps two seconds later, a nurse and I moved to her while Doctor Nielson attended to the shooting victim whom we had been treating.

"I immediately called for an intubation kit, which my student brought me. The nurse performed CPR while I intubated, and then my student began bagging. I checked for a pulse and found none, and heard no heart sounds. We continued CPR for another five minutes with no success. I then checked the Deputy's pupils and found them fixed and dilated. Given the obvious brain injury, I determined further resuscitation attempts would be futile and called time of death.

"At that point, the nurse, my student, and I moved to help Doctor Nielsen as the seventeen-year-old gunshot victim had coded due to hypovolemia. We ran in several units of blood and tried multiple doses of epinephrine, but it was to no avail, as she'd bled out. We *might* have been able to save her without the attack, but it would have been dicey, given her wounds."

"A coolly clinical report, just as I would expect from you. What happened next?"

"Just as Doctor Nielson called time of death, Detective Kleist came into Trauma 1 and gave us the 'all clear' but asked us to stay in the room until they could escort

us out without disturbing the crime scene. That happened about twenty minutes later, which is when I found out Loretta and Shelly had been shot and the gunman killed by law enforcement. We were asked to sit in the lounge and wait to be interviewed, and I took that opportunity to call Kris and let her know I was safe."

"What were you thinking when the Deputy was shot?"

"Only about our patient and the Deputy," I said. "My mind was completely clear and focused on trying to save their lives. I felt the adrenaline effects where time dilates and thinking is rapid and clear. I was on autopilot until we pronounced both patients."

"When did the adrenaline begin to wear off?"

"When I was driving home," I said. "Fortunately, it's a relatively short drive because, by the time I arrived home, I was thoroughly exhausted but not tired. I was, in effect, still wired even though I felt the physical effects of the adrenaline wearing off."

"When you slept, did you dream?"

"No."

"Did you take anything to help you sleep?"

"Just chamomile tea before bed early this morning; nothing before my nap. I did skip coffee this morning."

"That was wise. Did you, at any point, think, 'I need a drink'?"

"No. The only thing I said I needed was sleep. Kris was waiting up for me, though Rachel was asleep. We didn't say anything to her this morning."

"Probably wise. At two-and-a-half, she'd have a very difficult time processing what happened. How is Kris?"

"She hadn't heard what had happened before I called, so she didn't have time to worry about me. She was obviously concerned after I told her, but the fact I was safe limited that. She called my parents to let them know, as well as her family."

"Do you feel ready to resume work?"

"Yes," I replied. "I'm sure I'll have somewhat closer supervision for the next few days, but that doesn't bother me. Do you have any concerns?"

"Always when someone is involved in an incident which could lead to post-traumatic stress disorder. And you know the symptoms can take some time to appear. But I think you can safely go back to work, so long as you commit to calling me with *any* symptoms -- sleeplessness, nightmares, inordinate fear, and so on. Who's going to hold you accountable?"

"Rachel!"

Doctor Mercer laughed, "Yes, of course; now, the serious answer?"

"Clarissa, of course. And Ghost -- Doctor Casper. Normally, it would be Shelly Lindsay, but she's in the CCU. And, of course, Kris will hold me to account at home."

"How is she doing?"

"Great! She's four months along, so she's showing, but she's not uncomfortable. Rachel is very interested in a baby sister but not so much a baby brother!"

"Are there any little boys with whom she gets along well?"

"My godson, Michael, but she also met a boy at the park, and Kris said she played nice with him. I really think it's just little Viktor and some other boys being so rambunctious. "

"I can't imagine that was you when you were little."

"As my mom once said, Jocelyn did a good job of keeping Dale and me in line, starting with me in kindergarten and Dale in second grade."

"How are things going otherwise?"

"Fine. There have been some positive changes in the trauma surgery program, and I'll have a PGY1 in June rather than two years from now. They accelerated the program so that when the new surgical wing opens, we'll have a full complement of trauma surgeons. Our draft class for the Match looks good, too.

"My schedule is tentatively set for 5:00am to 5:00pm on a general surgical team one week and covering the ED the next. The new PGY1, who should be Mary Anderson, a Fourth Year I've trained, will cover the ED when I'm in surgery and nights when I'm in the ED. It's a lousy schedule for her, but she'll get more training that way."

"Those swapped schedules stink, but at least they're only twelve hours."

"And it's better than ninety-plus hours per week. The only downside for me is I won't have an assignment at the Free Clinic. And neither will the new PGY1. I

felt that was valuable, but it's only for ED and Medicine Residents going forward.

"Let's skip our call in the morning and schedule one for a week from tomorrow. We can cover both topics then."

"OK."

I thanked her, left, and headed to my grandfather's house. I wasn't surprised to find my mom, Stefan, Elaine, and April there, along with Paul, Liz, and Michael.

"How are your doctor friends?" my grandfather asked.

"Alive and with a chance to recover," I said. "Unlike the Deputy. Perry Nielson, one of the Attendings, said it was crazier than anything he had seen at Cook County in Chicago, and that hospital ED is basically the craziest in the country. What do you think of what's happening in the Soviet Union?"

"I believe the phrase is guardedly optimistic," my grandfather replied. "We shall see if the Communists are telling the truth, or if this is mere «маскировка» (*maskirovka*)."
("deception")

"Changing to a subject closer to home," Mom said. "How is Kris feeling?"

"She's fine. No morning sickness or any other discomfort; Liz, how are you doing?"

"About the same. I'm due about three weeks after Kris."

"How's Emmy?" I asked.

"Itching to go back to work! She's back in about three weeks. She loves having Carrie, but she is def not a stay-at-home mom!"

"No kidding!"

"She'd love to see you if you have time to stop in. I could call her."

I thought about it and nodded, "Just fifteen minutes, but yes, I'd like that. I'm going to stop and see Dad, and I'll stop by Emmy's after that."

Liz made the call, and after dinner with my extended family, I stopped in to see my dad and answered the same questions I'd answered for everyone else. I spent about thirty minutes at my dad's house, then headed to Emmy's house.

"And here we are, unable to play doctor!" she teased after a hug.

"That was a long time ago, Deputy!" I said. "Not to mention we're both married to other people!"

"True! I spoke to Scott Turner. He put three in the asshole's X-ring."

"And Detective Kleist from McKinley PD added two for good measure. Sorry, I couldn't do anything for Tracy Sommers."

"Not your fault, Mike."

"Thanks. Can I see Carrie?"

"She's sleeping, so if you're quiet."

"Been there, done that," I chuckled.

Emmy laughed and nodded, and we walked down the hallway of the ranch house she and Al had bought just before Carrie had been born. Carrie was a cute little infant, and after about thirty seconds, we went back to the living room.

"Scott told me you disarmed a perp in the ER waiting room."

"A wrist lock that prevented him from pulling a gun from his jacket pocket. Deputy Turner was first through the door, and I called out to him. I didn't disarm the guy, but I certainly prevented him from being shot by the second-best shot in the state!"

Emmy laughed, "He'll never live down being beaten by a girl! Al won't shoot with me because I kick his ass every time!"

"You seem to be very happy."

"I'm doing something I love, and which I'm very good at, and I have a wonderful new daughter with Al! What else could I ask for?"

"I'm glad."

"And you?"

"Mostly happy at work and looking forward to baby number two; well, the first with Kris."

"Mostly happy?"

"There have been some ups and downs, but things are pretty good. A bit more drama than I would have preferred, but until yesterday, I would have said things were going as well as could be expected with a new program."

"You enjoy it, though, right?"

"Like you, I'm doing what I love and something I'm good at."

Emmy smirked, "True when I was sixteen and you were eighteen, too!"

"Fond memories! I do need to get going because my girls are waiting for me."

"Don't be a stranger, Mike! Let's get the families together."

She walked me to the door, we hugged, and I walked to my car. I waved, got in, and headed back to McKinley.



February 21, 1990, McKinley, Ohio

"How are you doing, Mike?" Gale Turner asked when I arrived at the Free Clinic on Wednesday morning.

"I'm OK. I saw a counselor yesterday, and she called Owen Roth to clear me. I spoke to him this morning, and I'll be back doing procedures tomorrow."

"Good. You'll have only exams and birth control requests today. I'll handle anything else. That's per Doctor Cutter."

"Understood."

"OK. Get to it!"

I left his office and went to the break room, where Trina jumped up and hugged me.

"I'm so glad you weren't injured," she said. "When I heard two doctors were shot, I thought the worst. How are the doctors?"

"Shelly Lindsay is improving and will be moved to CCU from ICU today. Loretta Gibbs will have a neuro exam later today. She's still in the CCU."

"Hi, Doctor Mike!" Nurse Michelle said, coming into the break room. "I'm glad you're OK."

"Me, too!"

"We have our first patient," she said. "Employment physical for the PD."

"Sworn officer or civilian?"

"Sworn officer; a detective coming here from a small town in Eastern Kentucky. She actually started on Monday."

"OK. Bring her to the exam room, and we'll get started."

The exam was routine and was the first of seven appointments before lunch, six of which were either for new or renewed prescriptions for birth control. When it was time for lunch, I let Doctor Turner know I was heading to the hospital to do what Doctor Mercer had suggested, and about ten minutes later, I parked and went in the usual entrance, which was now staffed by a security guard. He didn't ask for ID, so I walked down the long corridor, past the main entrance, and into the ED, where a Sheriff's deputy checked my ID before admitting me.

"Mike?" Ghost said. "Is everything OK?"

"Yes," I replied. "My counselor suggested I come visit today to see how I felt walking into the ED."

"How *do* you feel?"

"Strange because I'm wearing a tie and my medical coat! How is Loretta?"

"Not good. They called for specialists from Cleveland Clinic and OSU to consult."

"Is she awake?"

"Yes, I'm sure she'd want to see you if you have time."

"I'll make time," I said. "Any update on Shelly Lindsay?"

"Bob Aniston said she's out of the woods but will have a long recovery."

"That's a relief. Did they move her to the CCU?"

"Yes."

"OK. I'm going up to see them, but I need to step into Trauma 1 first, if it's open."

"It is."

"Thanks."

I walked into Trauma 1 and still felt OK after standing there for a few minutes, so I left the ED and headed to the CCU to see Shelly and Loretta. I spoke with the charge nurse, and she gave me permission to enter the CCU ward. I saw Shelly Lindsay first and stopped at her bed.

"Hi, Shel," I said. "How are you doing?"

"Feeling no pain," she said, holding up the control that let her dose herself with pain medication.

"Ghost said you're in good shape, all things considered."

"The worst part is being stuck in bed here for several weeks."

"Nobody likes being in the hospital, and we doctors are the worst patients. I only have a few minutes before I have to leave to get back to the Free Clinic, so I'm going to see Loretta."

"They told you, right?"

"Yes. I'll come see you every day."

"Thanks."

I squeezed her hand, then walked over to the opposite end of the ward.

"Hi, Lor,"

"Hi, Mike."

"I'd ask how you were doing..."

"They told you, right?"

"Yes. What did Baker and Cohen say?"

"Not much beyond the damage is at L3."

Which meant basically no function below her navel if the damage was permanent.

"Is there anything I can do for you?"

"Put in a good word with the boss? And I don't mean Cutter."

"You're in my prayers every day, Loretta. Have you seen Bobby and Bobby Junior?"

"Bobby came up to see me after a run this morning. I can't see Bobby Junior until I'm out of the CCU."

"OK. I'll come see you tomorrow. I need to get back to the Free Clinic."

"Thanks for coming, Mike."

"You're welcome."