

Keep Your Head Up

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/18053720) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/18053720>.

Rating:	Mature
Archive Warning:	Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings
Category:	Gen
Fandoms:	Disney Cartoons (Classic) , Epic Mickey , Disney - All Media Types
Relationship:	Mickey Mouse & Oswald the Lucky Rabbit
Characters:	Oswald the Lucky Rabbit , Mickey Mouse
Additional Tags:	Angst , Alternate Universe , Disney Bros , Protective Siblings , Paint and Thinner Magic , Murder , in self defense but ya know
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2019-03-09 Completed: 2023-05-04 Words: 1,383 Chapters: 2/2

Keep Your Head Up

by [Liz_isa_fangirl](#)

Summary

Chapter 1:

“I want to hate you.”

“You don’t mean that. You’re my brother, you don’t mean that.”

**

Chapter 2:

You can only get so far in life with so little. The brothers only have each other. A flashback to Oswald and Mickey’s childhood in one universe.

Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

Fight

“ *Why can't you ever be second for once in your life?* ”

Those are clearly tears streaming down his older brother's face and it's such a harrowing site that Mickey wants to throw up. He wants to reach out and hug him, but he knows that Oswald wouldn't let him; it's a miracle that he's even letting Mickey stand so close now.

“Why do you have to be the one in the spotlight, the one everyone *loves* .”

The word ‘love’ is spit out hideously, it's pronunciation jarring, like cutting open a wound and rubbing salt in it. Oswald's voice had caught on the word ‘everyone’. It was an almost minuscule stutter but he knows his brother and so he did catch it. He knows what it means.

It means Walt and Ub more than anything, because Oswald had always tried to be someone they wanted him to be. But apparently, no matter how hard he tried, Oswald had apparently failed and so of course, *of course, they had looked to him.*

The day his father had brushed past his brother, in favor of him, was the day Mickey knew he could do *it* again. He didn't. Instead he refused to look his father in the eye when he was declared the successor.

The favorite.

(An imposter.)

Oswald looks at him the same way he did in those few moments, except there's no father to rebuke or yell at for being so dense; there's no room to run to — to run out of — where he can just go and disappear for a few hours. Mickey knows there's no reassurance between brothers after this, not if he messes this up.

Mickey doesn't know what to do with his hands, so he lets them flop down to his side.

"I— I don't mean to be. I *never* meant to be."

Oswald scoffs and his magic, blue as the ocean on destiny islands, wraps around him. Electricity arcs the air, a warning — *stay away* — and Oswald's fists are clenched so hard that Mickey's sure he's going to break the skin.

"I want to hate you." It's a punch to the gut. Oswald's eyes are glowing.

"You don't mean that. You're my brother, you *don't* mean that."

Mickey's green magic flares up defensively, slithering out and into the ground. Wherever it touches down, the color is drained and the surrounding plant life begins to die.

He doesn't strike first. He can't.

"Oswald, we don't have to fight. Please."

"Says you." Oswald snaps his fingers and all hell breaks loose.

Childhood

Chapter Summary

Rewrote this a bit. Childhood, at least in one universe.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Please sir, we’re sorry sir, he- I- we needed the-”

“I need to hear it from him.”

The guard looming over them clearly has his head up where the sun doesn't shine, but desperate times call for desperate measures. Oswald almost can't say the words.

He has to.

“Mickey. Apologize.”

His younger brother looks at him incredulously and Oswald is filled with disgust at having to admit to the knucklehead standing before them — *who is clearly lacking several brain cells, if he's harassing two street kids with no money* — that he and his brother are in the wrong.

It's not their fault they don't have any food. It's not his fault they had to sneak into the restaurant and had to take some already stale food. Mickey had gotten caught, and he could blame his little brother for his clumsiness but he doesn't have the heart or the energy to do so. Oswald had told him to do it; Mickey had lost rock, paper, ax handle fair and square and so it was Mickey who snuck into the kitchen.

Mickey who got caught.

On Oswald's orders.

Oswald grits his teeth. Looks down at the guard's feet.

“You're gonna hear it from me and *only* me. He's got nothing to do with this.”

Mickey stares at him. Oswald ignores the gratitude on his face and instead focuses on making eye contact with the guard.

The guard growls, steps closer, and eyes Oswald for a brief moment but then looks at Mickey again. He's got a hand on his sword. Oswald panics.

“Don’t.”

Mickey is standing his ground, next to Oswald, but the rabbit can feel the nervous energy coming off of him. His little brother’s pupils are flashing back and forth from green to black.

The guard sees this too.

In one fell swoop, the man suddenly steps forward. He moves so fast Oswald doesn’t have enough time to react. The man picks his brother up, and Oswald sees red. The human is running his stupid mouth; the look of hatred he shoots at Mickey is enough to curdle milk.

“We need to keep *vermin* like you away from the people. In fact—”

There’s a sword in his little brother’s face. *His little brother is in danger* .

The lightning strike levels the soldier in one blow. Oswald sees blue so bright it seems to flash white; in fact it’s all he can see for several moments.

It’s suffocating.

It’s intoxicating.

He can hear the man screaming but Mickey doesn't say anything so it must be alright.

**

Oswald may have killed the man but it was Mickey who got rid of the body.

It'd been easy; all he had to was press his hand to the man's forehead and his magic took care of the rest; of course it did. As the acid green substance pours from his hands (and a little out of his nose) he can feel the familiar burn settle in. He doesn't whimper or cry, not even when the tips of his fingers begin to melt off. The man's body is gone within seconds, the only sign he had ever been there being the dark mottled spot where he had fallen.

Oswald takes Mickey's hands and runs as fast as he can. Several times, it almost slips away from him and Oswald has to readjust his grip. Mickey lets himself be dragged along, not saying anything.

At least no one would bother them now.

**

Mickey allows himself to cry into Oswald's arms that night for only an hour, his entire body shaking and breaths stuttering every few seconds. It's all Oswald can do is hug him and hold him close.

When it's over, the mouse takes the shirt off his back and draws a bit of green into his hand. Slowly, shakily, he sloughs a bit of black ink from his back, hissing. Oswald jerks a hand towards him, horrified.

"No, stop, what the heck are you doing!"

Mickey dodges his hands, continues to gather more ink.

"You neh-neh-need it more than I do."

Oswald flinches, shaking his head frantically. Sure, his arms had gone numb and he thought he'd done a better job at hiding the pain, but it wasn't so bad as it was a few hours ago. He hardly noticed it — or felt anything with them — now but that didn't justify his brother doing this.

"I don't. Quit it."

Mickey's glare would have been intimidatingly adorable if it weren't for the way he was sweating.

"No. I messed up! You work with your hands. You need them better."

Mickey finally lets Oswald grab him, only to slap his non-dominant hand down on his older brother's arm. The heavy scarring running up and down Oswald's arms recedes, looking almost good as new.

Mickey smiles.

"There, now ya don't look so busted up."

"I didn't want you to do that."

"Well, I had ta do somethin', Oz."

Oswald says nothing.

He instead bundles his brother deeper into the burrow they've dug as their hiding place, taking the canvas they're using a blanket and wraps it around the mouse. Then he curls around him, with his back to the entrance. Mickey falls asleep soon after.

In the dead of night, when Oswald's sure Mickey can't hear him, he lets himself break down a bit.

There's a jagged streak carved down Mickey's left shoulder to his lower back. Oswald can see the blue sketch lines running beneath his final layer. He turns away, facing the moonlight

coming in through the hole in the ground.

“You never have ta prove anything to me.”

**

They don't sleep much that night or the next.

They didn't really sleep at all until King Ub found them.

But that's a story for another day.

Chapter End Notes

Maybe I need to write them more. I miss them.

End Notes

this is based on starswirlblitz's rise and fall au on tumblr.

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!