

## Chapter 13 (Lachlan): Making My Plans

I stood in front of Butcher's desk while those penetrating silver eyes examined me like I was a new species he'd discovered.

"Why?"

That was a damn good question he was asking me in response to the idea I'd just pitched to him. The honest answer might get me killed or squashed like a bug, but Butcher would know in a second if I was lying, so the truth it was.

"Because of Elowyn," I said slowly. "I don't want to leave the Mayhem, but I need to be near her."

"She le you."

Nodding, I couldn't deny it. "She did. She still doesn't want anything to do with me."

That made him tip his head to the side. "So you want to relocate to be near a woman who no longer wants to be with you."

I pointed to the financials I'd laid out in front of him and subtly corrected my president. "To scout the town as a potential place to begin a chapter of the Mayhem. I've done some preliminary research and the area has potential to be lucrative for us. Definite room for growth for us. The town lost two major factories, businesses were closing. Some revitalization has already begun, but we could pretty much take over the town, open some businesses, employ the people who lost jobs and haven't been able to move away."

His eyes flicked to the papers then back to me. "All this for some woman."

"No. All of this for Elowyn, not some woman. It made sense to me as I was thinking about my situation. We've got a lot of brothers now and the MC is huge. I need to be near her and a chapter makes financial sense for the MC."

"Find another woman."

"I don't want to."

"Why the hell not?"

"Because I love her."

"You love a woman who le you."

This was new territory for me, talking about a woman with him. Butcher normally had no patience with or interest in our personal lives -- until they interfered with our MC lives. And then he'd come down on you like a ton of bricks for putting someone ahead of the MC. But lately, since we'd had a certain woman as an overnight guest, he'd been o .

Had it been anyone else, I would have said distracted, but Butcher never wavered as head of the MC. His focus was absolute and intense.

"Yeah. I love Wyn."

"How do you know?"

At his question, I almost choked. "How do I know I love her?"

He just stared at me, unwilling to repeat his question and waiting for an answer. My brain was stumbling around, trying to figure out how to describe love to a man who only became somewhat talkative or animated when he was about to torture or take apart an enemy.

Fuck. He wouldn't get any of this, but when Butcher wanted an answer, you gave him an answer.

"I think about her all the time. She's never far from my thoughts. When I'm with her, I feel good inside, like everything's right. When I'm not with her, I can't wait to be with her again. I like hearing the sound of her voice, I want to take care of her and --"

Still nothing on his face, so I went for it.

"And every time I see her face, it's like that feeling you get when you're on your bike, going full throttle down the road and you feel like you're flying."

"She le because you cheated on her repeatedly."

I wasn't surprised he knew that. Butcher might not like to discuss anything personal, or even admit the brothers had lives outside of the MC, but he sure as fuck knew the last little details of what was happening in our lives.

"She did. I'd been hurting her for years with my cheating."

"So forget about her."

"I can't. I'm working on being a stronger man, and all I want to do is make it up to her. Fix it. Be better. Show her I'm working on myself and I won't hurt her anymore."

"Seems like a lot of trouble for a female."

Like having two brothers watch over a certain female twenty-four/seven?

Instead of allowing that death sentence to come out of my mouth, I agreed. "Maybe it is. But she's worth it."

"You have two months," he said suddenly. "And you know what'll happen if you're dicking around with her and not scouting the area thoroughly. We'll take it to church tomorrow and get the votes, then at the end of the week, you'll head out with Orion for two months. If things look like this will be a lucrative and strategic move, we'll go ahead with a chapter."

"I won't let you down, Butcher."

The idea passed in church, and as soon as it was approved, that night I sent a text to Elowyn, wondering what she'd think.

**I just want you to know that I'll be in the area starting Saturday for the next two months.**

Nothing back from her. Not for three days. Then: **Why?**

**Club business. Two towns over from yours.**

**I still don't want to see you.**

Yet. You still don't want to see me yet, my brain filled in because I couldn't imagine my life without her, so defeat was not an agony I was willing to accept. But now that I wasn't going to be so far away from her, I hoped that I could convince her to see me, to let me try to make it up to her, to talk with me.

I'd watched her slipping away from me but I kept reminding myself that she'd known what she was getting into with me. I'd been up front from the start, just not up front about the details of why or what my stupidity involved. I'd stubbornly continued on my path of destruction, refusing to discuss it with her when she brought it up because I was a coward, clinging to the but you agreed to it defense that turned out to be nothing but an admission of guilt and my sentence was losing Elowyn. She'd had to escape from our relationship because I hadn't done right by her.

Orion and I headed out early on Saturday morning. We were both looking forward to the trip for different reasons. He'd never admit it, but he was running from something, while I was running toward something. Hoped I was running toward something, anyway. Two months wasn't a lot of time with a woman I'd wronged so badly, but I was determined to win her back.

As we rode, my brain was already working on two different missions, MC and personal. Performing due diligence on the town and winning back Elowyn. As a Mayhem brother, I knew what my prime objective should be, but as a man who'd lost the woman I loved because of my refusal to stop hurting her due to my own issues, that was my primary goal.

The ride was easy and we had good weather as we took o , which I hoped was a good omen. Cresting a hill, we saw the road ahead of us and Orion looked over at me, grinning. I grinned back and we both settled in to enjoy the long ride. With every mile forward, Orion was that much farther away from his troubles, and I was that much closer to mine.

We pulled up to the extended stay hotel we'd booked for the next two months and checked in. After hitting a nearby bar for some food and a beer, we headed back and went to our bedrooms. Tomorrow, Orion and I would talk about strategies for scouting the town.

But tonight was for thinking about Elowyn and making my plans.

After a couple of hours of her face in front of me, I sent her my good night text.

**In Northridge. Sleep well. I love you.**

She didn't answer.