

Chapter 17 (Lachlan): A Book Store

*** TW for violence***

Used to be, the hardest thing in my life was determining which tool to use on someone we wanted to talk. Cause too much pain, they won't be able to talk; too little pain, and they don't take you seriously and can withhold information. Probably why Butcher had all of us take college-level anatomy courses so we could inflict maximum damage

Now, I had a list of the hardest things in my life.

Living with the knowledge that I hurt Wyn.

This one zipped-tied me to the chair in our MC's guest room on a daily basis and drilled holes directly into my heart. I saw it in her eyes. And her eyes told me she wasn't happy and that meant she'd probably bolt. Didn't know she was already working her escape plan. If I hadn't been such a coward, I could have faced what I was doing.

Living with the knowledge that Wyn carried the hurt I inflicted on her all the time.

Every time I thought about this one, I wanted to punch myself in the face. Wyn shouldn't be carrying this hurt with her because I was a weak asshole, but it was exactly what had happened. For years, I'd hurt her because something was wrong with me that bled out onto her and scored her deep.

Living with the knowledge that I wouldn't talk about my cheating with her.

That one? That was one of the most fucked things there was. A er I told her I'd cheat and she was still willing to get o icial, that meant she was agreeing to the terms. When she tried to talk about it, I had to shut that shit down because it meant I would either have to walk away from her, and I didn't see how in the hell I could live without my Wyn, or I had to stop cheating. At that point, I didn't understand the need driving me; all I knew was I felt compelled to do it and didn't understand that there was actually something wrong inside me and there were strategies I could use to control it. So the obvious answer was to stop any and all attempts she made to talk about it. Period. Fucking genius move. Insert motherfucking eyeroll.

Living without Elowyn.

This sucked in too many ways to count. Every aspect of my life was dull. I didn't care about anything but improving myself and becoming a man who could win her back. Life without Wyn was like a life without air.

"Hey, brother," Orion came up, interrupting my thoughts, and sat on the bar stool next to me and signaled for a beer from the bartender.

I tipped my bottle to my lips and took a long swallow. "Hey," I said.

"You see Wyn?"

He and Butcher were the only ones who knew that the main reason I wanted to see if a chapter of the Mayhem would work here was Wyn.

"Not since last week," I said trying not to sound like a sad little bitch.

Last week when she'd opened up a little about her childhood, I'd wanted to burn the earth to the ground. Mother, with Butcher's approval, was working on some things for me, so we'd see if he could unearth anything. If anyone could, it'd be Mother. That bastard had skills, and I needed him so I could go on a hunt. So far, he'd gotten me Wyn's medical records and shared them with Butcher and me. That sort of shit didn't fly with any of us, and that was why Butcher had given the go-ahead for the deeper dive that would provide names and addresses.

A er the bartender shoved her shoulders back so we'd notice her tits and slid Orion's beer in front of him, I told her to beat it until we wanted another round. She gave us a disgruntled look but walked away to help some customers at the other end of the bar. Everyone was giving Orion and me -- and our Mayhem cuts -- a wide berth.

We were hard to miss. Orion was as tall and wide as I was, maybe a little taller, but we all teased him about being a pretty boy because where my face looked like it been sculpted in stone using nothing but a hammer, Orion looked like one of those statues. Some rando had come up and hit on him in front of a lot of us one night when we were on a run and said he was beautiful, like the statue of David.

That had all of us whipping out our phones and Googling that shit if we'd missed it in our college art appreciation classes.

"This statue guy's barely got any dick," Trap howled. "She saying you're a dickless wonder, O?"

"Agreed, man. I'd be fucking sad if my dick was that scrawny looking," Mother had laughed.

A er that, one of the brothers had ordered a small statute of David and set it up on the bar at the Mayhem clubhouse where it stayed until Butcher saw it and told us to get rid of the naked fucker

"You think Butcher's going to go for a new chapter here? Potential seems good."

I thought about Orion's question. "Hope so. I think it'd be lucrative, and I need it to work here."

"What if he says no?"

I shrugged. "I leave the club. Move here to be near Wyn."

"You'd really quit?"

"Only for Wyn, but yeah, I'd quit for her."

"What if he gives the green light, you move here and she doesn't get back with you?"

"Haven't thought that far ahead yet. Can't think of a life without Elowyn. What about you?" I asked him. "If we set up a chapter here, you bringing your family or staying back there?"

That was a sore subject with Orion. He finished his undercover work and discovered he had a seven-year-old child and his old lady had just found out she was pregnant. He'd cut Kadie loose right before she told him, but it didn't matter to him that she was having his child. She'd unknowingly helped sell his undercover position as a biker and when his cover had been blown, he had no more use for her, pregnant or not.

So he said. When Butcher sent him on this run to check out the area, he'd le Elijah in the care of two club girls, paying them to watch his boy. Kadie had taken o and even Mother couldn't find her.

"Only got the kid," Orion said. "And I don't even want him."

We brothers were live and let live. Straight up. Didn't interfere in one another's personal lives. All we cared about was the club business getting done, being handled. Beyond that, unless the home life interfered with that, we never said shit.

But that pissed me the fuck o .

"Doesn't matter if you want him or not," I said, remembering how it felt to feel like I was in the way of my father's life. Unwanted "I'll fucking knock your head o you ever say shit like that again."

I turned on my bar stool to face him fully. He was glaring at me as I went on.

"You don't want him, but you got him, asshole. He ain't some thing He's a little kid who not too long ago lost his mom. You're all he's got and I don't give a damn you don't want him -- you fucking step up, fucking manup and see to him."

"Yeah, thanks for the advice, Shadow. That's rich coming from a man who fucked around on his old lady so bad that she took o and ghosted you. Tell me how to handle my shit when you can't even handle some bitch."

I didn't even think. Quick as I could, I grabbed his hair and smashed his face into the bar, probably breaking his nose.

"Call Wyn a bitch again," I dared him, still holding his hair in my fist.

The bartender flew over to us as I pulled Orion's head back and he swung out wildly, his nose bleeding badly. She had not one thought of flashing us her tits this time when she stopped in front of us.

"Take it outside," she snapped.

Releasing Orion, I stepped back, pulled my wallet and threw down a hundred dollar bill.

"Apologies."

Then I added another hundred.

"For your troubles," I explained.

I added one last hundred and inclined my head toward Orion.

"That's from him, with his apologies."

With that handled, we walked out of the bar, Orion holding his riding bandana to his nose. We stood by our bikes for a minute, while he tried to stop his nose bleeding.

"Don't know shit about being a father," he said quietly a er a minute.

"Never thought about being one."

"Don't know shit about being a good man," I returned, a little hesitant to keep going because this wasn't the kind of shit any of us talked about. "But I'm trying my best. Reading a shit ton of books to help, watching videos, listening to podcasts. Doing my best to be better, to be someone Elowyn deserves. I'm sure they got books to help clueless assholes who suddenly become fathers, too."

Orion looked away. "Books?"

"Yeah, they're these things with words on pages."

"Fuck o , asshole," he said, still mopping up his nose. "Is there a book store around here?"

"Yeah, I just happen to know where one is."