

## Chapter 2 (Lachlan): No Help

The last hundred miles of the trip back home were taking forever. It'd been a shit week from the very beginning, even before the fucking trip had started. I'd had my first clue the night before when Elowyn had turned me down flat in our bed and brought up things she'd never once mentioned to me in the five years we'd been together.

I'd been wracking my brain to figure out what had flipped her switch, but couldn't pinpoint anything I'd done recently that would have triggered her reaction. Elowyn was my girl, always had been since the first time I'd seen her. First woman I'd ever wanted to make mine, first woman I took one look at and knew she was different and was going to be in my life in a permanent way. Only woman I had ever loved. When I'd explained the biker lifestyle to her, she hadn't backed away from me, hadn't even batted an eye. She accepted right on that sometimes I'd fuck other women, but I'd always come home to her. And she'd never mentioned it in all the years we'd been together until the night before the trip.

Shivers and changes like that always raised my antennae and my radar was pinging.

Then, when I was leaving in the morning, she wouldn't let me kiss her lips, and she always returned my kisses, her mouth sweet and eager against mine. Always. Ping. Ping. Ping.

Instead, she'd told me to have a safe trip and waved good bye to me as I'd kissed her cheek, and I rocketed out of the driveway on my bike, my mood sour. Even the prospect of a day of riding didn't improve my mood, and I lived to ride.

We took off, and only an hour into the trip, one of the brothers signaled he needed gas, which irritated me even more. What moron doesn't fill his tank the night before a long road trip? While all of us topped our tanks, I had time to shoot off a text to Elowyn, hoping to calm down whatever was bugging her.

Her return text surprised the hell out of me. She'd followed me to the clubhouse and took a picture of Yomi kissing me. The club girl had jumped in my arms and pressed her lips to mine before I could step back, before I could remind her that I didn't want her mouth on mine, that she wasn't allowed to initiate shit. Her hands were gripping my hair like it was the only thing preventing her from falling off a cliff; it took me a minute to break free. Long enough for Wyn to take a picture and read more into this than there was, had been or ever would be. I'd aimed a few pointed, poisonous words at Yomi before we left the MC compound and tamped down my irritation as we took off. Now, with everyone gassed up, our road captain was signaling it was time to move on, so I shot off a quick text to Elowyn.

**Don't piss me off by reading anything into this bullshit that isn't there**

Tucking my phone into my cut, I didn't have time to wait for her reply. When we stopped three hours later, I grabbed my phone so I could see what she'd said.

And what she'd said was...nothing. Elowyn hadn't answered but she had read my text. Once again, my radar was pinging because she always responded. We bantered, we argued, we joked; that was something we did. My girl had a sharp wit and I had a dry sense of humor and the two blended together well. What we didn't do was not reply to one another.

At every stop for the next eight hours, I'd text Elowyn and she'd read my texts...but she wouldn't respond.

**You know I don't like games. Answer me.**

**You need to answer me**

**Why did you follow me to the clubhouse?**

**Answer me, Wyn. What's going on?**

I hadn't been this angry since the one-year anniversary of Elowyn becoming my old lady. We'd gone out to a nice restaurant and I'd proposed with a simple, elegant diamond ring. It was pure Elowyn and the second I saw it, it reminded me of her.

Then she'd turned me down. Didn't even pause to think about it.

Being your old lady's good enough for me. I don't need or want a legal commitment.

She gave me the same answer every year when I asked her to marry me on the anniversary of her officially becoming my old lady. It always pissed me off when I brought up marriage and she shut me down, refusing to discuss why she wouldn't consider it other than saying she didn't want a legal commitment.

It was about two weeks after our first anniversary that I first stepped out on Elowyn. Spent the night at the club drinking with the brothers as I'd had a quick, successful run, feeling frustrated, like I wanted to shed my skin, without understanding exactly why and didn't say no when a club girl offered to wipe the scowl off my face in her room. As I'd been feeling more in control, I'd gone to my room alone, sent Elowyn a text saying I was staying at the club and stared at the ceiling all night, trying to drown out voices I didn't want to hear, fighting the urge to go home and get into bed with Wyn.

She'd been quiet when I'd come home early the next morning, where I found her in the kitchen with the coffee brewing and whipping up some eggs to scramble. I could smell the bacon in the oven and she'd already made biscuits, which were cooling. When Elowyn turned from the stove, there was a look in her eye that hadn't been there before last night. Not knowing what to say, exactly, we sized each other up for a few awkward moments before I finally spoke, realizing I needed to get us back to normal when I saw she'd only set one place at the table. Breakfast was always a shared meal. Every morning, without fail, she and I ate breakfast together, the same as we ate dinner together every night.

"Wyn," I began gently, pointing to the table, "I told you I'd always come home --"

"I know, Lachlan. I know," she said, and her crisp tone clearly let me know she didn't want any more words out of my mouth on the subject of last night. "I just didn't know when"

"Always in time to have breakfast together. Had a shower at the clubhouse but don't like the hard water there, so I'm gonna go grab a quick shower, change clothes. Then we'll eat, and we can make some plans for today, yeah? Maybe go for a ride? Stop by the garden center or whatever you want to do."

My girl loved gardening and was in the process of transforming our backyard into paradise as she called it. My job was laying a brick patio and putting in an outdoor grill.

Taking a deep breath, she smiled at me, but it wasn't her usual big smile, and I knew I was the reason it was dialed back. "OK, Lach. Go shower off the hard water and breakfast will be ready. There's enough for both of us."

And now, Wyn wasn't answering my texts, wasn't picking up my calls and I could barely concentrate on the MC's business.

My VP, Specter, took me aside during a break one morning. "Not sure what the fuck your problem is, Shadow, but get your head outta your ass and back in the game. If you fuck up the numbers, Prez'll kill you."

I did better, but underlying every business discussion, I wondered why Elowyn wasn't answering, why she wouldn't take my calls so I could explain that fucking picture. I'd probably sent her more than two hundred texts and made at least sixty calls. We'd never been out of touch this long. I had a prospect ride over to check on her, but he said her car was in the garage and there was a note on the door for Uber Eats to just leave the food since she had popped over to a neighbor's.

Probably planning another event for our neighborhood -- cookouts, margarita nights, pool parties, book clubs, food trucks -- she planned it all with a few other neighbors who were as social as she was. When I had the prospect go back to check the next day, he said there was no food bag outside on the porch but there was a different note on the door telling her friend Marisol that she'd had to leave early for book club to grab some wine and she'd tried to text her to let her know, but her phone had been acting up and her texts weren't sending.

That should have reassured me, but my motherfucking radar was still pinging like crazy. The next day, we left bright and early for home, and I kept wanting Specter to go faster, get us home sooner. It was such a fucking relief to finally pull into our garage, right next to Elowyn's car, just as the sun came out, so I could lay eyes on her.

"Wyn?" I called out when I walked into the house through the back door. I needed to make this right with her. A week without talking with Wyn was seven days too long. "Elowyn?"

No answer and the house felt like it did when she wasn't home.

Empty and still. Completely wrong. As if the life had been drained out of it.

"Wyn --" I called again before my eyes focused on the kitchen island. Wyn's phone was there, plugged in, but that wasn't what made my heart stop.

It was her cut that was laid out next to her phone that drew my eyes. I snatched up the note that was on top of her cut and read it several times before it sunk in.

Lachlan --

I'm gone. I could see what was coming, and that's OK because I realized I needed more. I needed to be the only one for you.

I wish you the best

Elowyn

P.S. Maybe you can give this cut to your girlfriend. I was going to say it's only fitting since she's already gotten a lot of what was mine, but then I realized...you were never really mine.

Oh, fuck, no

I flew through the house to our bedroom and threw open the closet. All her clothes were gone. Her shoes were gone. I yanked drawers out of the dressers and onto the floor when I saw they were empty.

Running to the bathroom, I saw her shampoos and body washes were gone, and the drawers in the vanity were likewise emptied of her makeup and hairbrushes. With a sweep of my arm, I pushed all of my things on the countertop onto the floor.

At this point, I didn't even realize I was yelling her name at the top of my lungs as if I could conjure her up, bring her back to me. Without thinking, I ran out the back door to get on my bike, bringing up the tracking app for her phone...only to stop dead when I realized that, with her phone sitting on the counter, I had no way to track Wyn. No way to find her. Not the first clue where she was or how she'd gotten there.

I pulled up our banking app on my phone, but that was no help. The only transactions had been mine.

She was gone.