

Chapter 3 (Lachlan): A Hundred Thousand

For what felt like the millionth time in the last forty-eight hours, I ran my hands through my hair. At this fucking rate, I was going to be bald before the end of the day.

"How can you not fucking find her?" I demanded for what also seemed like the millionth time in the last two days. My brother was supposed to be a world-class hacker and tracker and couldn't find Elowyn. She was out there who knows where and I had no idea if she was safe or even alive, and didn't that twist my gut. I always knew where she was. She was a homebody who didn't stray far from our neighborhood unless I was with her. Wyn loved our home and she especially loved the little community she helped foster.

When we'd decided to move in together, Elowyn had asked for a neighborhood with people our age in it and I'd researched neighborhoods and found this one, a small, quiet community of one hundred fifty homes. It'd had three homes for sale at the time, and of the three, Elowyn had chosen ours.

"It's not too big, Lach," she'd said. "And it feels just right to me, like it can be cozy and homey. And it has a great backyard that's a blank slate." She'd confessed to me that she'd always wanted a garden and had plans for turning it into a flowery paradise, complete with a fish pond.

The biggest selling feature to me was the three-car garage; I didn't need much more than that, so if the house made Elowyn happy, I was sold. Not wanting to risk losing the house, I'd put in an offer right away and we moved in before the month was out.

Those memories crowded my head, keeping me from focusing on Wyn's whereabouts. The second I'd realized I couldn't track her phone because she'd left it behind, I'd started knocking on doors, talking with her friends in our neighborhood, and met confused stares and shrugs and concerned expressions. As far as they knew, she was still at home. No one knew where she was or when she'd gone.

Until I knocked on Marisol's door after she got home, our neighbor to the immediate right and the one who was mentioned in one of Elowyn's notes that the prospect had seen on our front door. She was also Wyn's best friend in the neighborhood.

"Yes?" she asked, blank faced and slightly hostile as if she'd never seen me before, as if we hadn't attended dozens and dozens of neighborhood parties together over the years. But her very hostility told me she knew something about my girl.

"Do you know where Elowyn is?"

"Elowyn. E-lo-wyn," she tapped her finger against her lips, drawing out the syllables. "Sounds vaguely familiar. Can you describe her?"

"You do not want to fuck with me on this if you know something, Marisol. I just got home, she's taken over, and I need to know she's OK. Tell me what you know," I demanded.

"Oh, I know her new man's taking good care of her," she purred to me with a wink. "Really good care of her."

"What the fuck are you talking about?" I demanded.

Not possible. No way. There was just no way. Elowyn wouldn't -- would she? Marisol had to be lying. She had to be making shit up just to fuck with me.

"Should I repeat it slower so you can follow along?"

"Quit fucking with me, Marisol." If she'd known me better, my tone should have warned her I wasn't in the mood for her messing with me in the slightest.

"Great guy...well, as much as a cheater can be. Anyhoo, he's in an MC so that makes it all OK. Has an old lady, but they have an arrangement so he can step out whenever he wants and he wants with Elowyn. They're so damn hot for each other. When he pulls up in my driveway, she always runs over and jumps in his arms and plants a big kiss on his lips. So you can rest assured that on those nights you're away on club business she keeps her busy, so to speak -- too busy to be missing her man and thinking about what he's doing at the clubhouse when she's getting a little somethin'-somethin'."

I felt my control slipping as my blood started boiling and was seconds away from putting my fist through the wall. Marisol had to be messing with me. Had to be.

Right?

"Where the fuck is she, Marisol?" I growled, trying not to get in her face.

She leaned toward me, her face an angry mask. "I don't know! She wouldn't tell me. Just told me she'd be in touch when she got to wherever she was going, and I'm wondering if it was Mexico or Canada because she kept mentioning her passport. And by the way, congratulations on fucking up the best thing to ever happen to you! She was so happy when I first met you two. But over the last few years, I've had to watch that happiness dim year by year, you thoughtless, cheating prick! She only told me everything six months ago and only because I pushed and pushed and pushed until it all came out. You stupid, stupid asshole!"

She stepped back and slammed the heavy door in my face. I stood on her porch, breathing heavily, fists clenched at my side, fighting not to lose control. In a few minutes, I turned and walked back home.

My phone rang, and I almost fumbled it as I grabbed it from my pocket, hoping it was Elowyn. My whole body slumped when I saw it was only Specter.

"Brother," he said. "Something going on you need to tell us about?"

In the two hours since I'd discovered Wyn had taken over, I hadn't told anyone in the MC yet that she'd pulled a runner, hoping I could find her or she'd return home before I called in the professionals to track her down. She had no money -- the two thousand I'd left her before I went on the club run was still sitting on the counter. She hadn't used her debit card or either of the credit cards, so I had no fucking clue what she was using for money. Unless she really was with a man and he was paying for everything. No way. No way! I felt sweat break out on my forehead as it seemed more and more likely that maybe she was with another man -- no. That wasn't Elowyn. She wouldn't --

She wouldn't do the same thing to you that you did to her?

"What have you heard?" I asked my VP sharply, just not ready to admit that my old lady had left me, not wanting to listen to that voice in my head. Fucking conscience.

"My wife got a letter from Elowyn. Was just delivered to the house. Few of the other old ladies got one, too. All four letters say the same thing. She appreciated their friendship over the years, wished she could tell them more, but wanted to let them know she was gone, she'd miss them and would be in touch once she was settled."

"Fuck" I bit out. "Where were they mailed from?"

"From town, Shadow. They were mailed right here in town."

"Shit." My voice cracked like I was going through puberty. I still had nothing to go on, and I was starting to lose my mind. Why had she suddenly changed our rules? Why was she now taking exception to our way of life that we'd had from the start? Had something happened? Like another man --

Raking my hand through my hair, I forced myself to calm my sweaty, voice-cracking self down.

But I kept circling back to Marisol's words. Could Elowyn really have a boyfriend like Marisol had said? No. I couldn't believe that. That wasn't...it would explain a lot...but I couldn't see it happening. No

Plowing my hand through my hair, I forced myself to calm down yet again. Specter had said something to me and I'd completely missed it

as I thought about Elowyn having a boyfriend.

"I have no idea where she is," I confessed, feeling all sorts of idiotic at having to blurt out that Wyn had left me.

"That's not the only letter. It was addressed to the clubhouse. Hand-delivered to a prospect. It was addressed to Yomi, and he brought it to me. Something seemed off, so I opened it and all the note said was you can have him!"

Well, this just kept getting worse and worse. Fuck! My life had taken a one eighty in the last week and I felt like I was sinking in quicksand.

"Brother, we can find her. You OK with me getting Mother involved?"

Motherboard was our club's tech expert, a world-class one who could find Elowyn in probably no more than five minutes.

Two freaking days later, Mother kept blowing my mind with bits and pieces he'd picked up about Elowyn but he hadn't quite found her.

Yet.

"Would have helped, brother, that you told me she had a job," he'd scolded me like I was a fucking kid.

"She doesn't have job," I'd snapped at him.

"Dude, she's had a job for the last four years. How'd you not know that?"

"She doesn't," I insisted, wondering how I could have missed that my woman had a full-time job. For four years

"She did. She has a bank account, too. Looks like only direct deposits for the last four years, no money taken out until this week when she bought the car I told you about."

His finger pointed at the screen, showing me the account number, the name on the account and the amount in the account.

"That's not our bank," I protested, but I couldn't deny that the

account holder, one Elowyn Novak, had an account at a different bank.

"Holy shit," I said when I looked at how much she had in the bank.

Over a hundred thousand in her savings account.

And that's when it dawned on me that not only had Elowyn left me, but she'd been planning to for years.