**After**

by **Ilikewrite**

**Summary**

After arriving back in town from their expedition, Grizz and his team are shocked to discover the tension running in the town. Allie and Will are in custody, Sam and Becca have a baby, there are new mayors. Can the kids fix this and survive?

**Notes**

Hi! Just a quick note to say sorry if there are any spelling mistakes or grammatical errors etc., I try my best when proofreading but sometimes I miss things! This is my first fanfic ever so I hope you enjoy!
Luke was trying to talk to him, words were falling out of his mouth but Grizz couldn’t concentrate. Allie and Will had been escorted back into the car and driven away. Lexie was storming off with a couple of the guard trailing after her. He frantically searches the faces around him, the bodies walking off back towards their homes. No one seemed concerned. Why was no one concerned? A week, they had been gone a week. Or was it longer? This is a fucked-up hole of a universe, maybe they hopped through another door? No. It had only been a week, he was sure of that.

Luke’s hands grasp Grizz’s shoulders and he finally meets his gaze. Sound slamming to the forefront of his mind. “Grizz? Grizz? Are you okay?” Is he being serious? Is he okay? Had he just watched the same spectacle he had!? He shakes his head and turns to his group. Gwen’s wide eyes were trained on, the now distant, body of Clarke as he sauntered off, guarding Lexie. “Grizz. Look. A lot has happened okay? I’ll catch you up, we’ll-“

“We’ll what? Tell them how everything has collapsed? How everything is-“ Helena and Luke start arguing. This isn’t right, this wasn’t them. What the hell is going on? Had they gotten trapped into another universe?

Grizz’s head was spinning, he needs a seat. He needs air. A laugh escapes his lips. I’m in the fucking outdoors. He has air. It just isn’t enough. He runs his hand through his hair numerous times. Then it hits him. Sam. Where is Sam? Had they arrested Sam? He can feel his breath shortening. Is the ground supposed to feel like water? Sam. Where is he? He realises the noises have stopped. Everyone’s staring at him. That’s making him feel worse.

A gentle hand touches his arm, instinctively he flinches and looks at where it came from. Kelly’s concerned and warm eyes stare up at him. “Grizz? Are you okay?” No. He wanted to say no. He wanted to ask what drugs everyone was on. He wanted to see Sam.

“Sam.” His voice tore through his throat. He coughs but it does little to soften anything. “Where’s Sam?” From the corner of his eye, he can see Gwen’s eyebrows perk a little. Shit. “Becca? Where are they?” Not the best cover at all but no one else seems to notice. Kelly’s previous expression of anguish is tinted with joy. Her eyes sparkle as smile bursts across her face. Grizz knew what that meant before she answered. His gut twisted and rejoiced at the same time.

“They’re at the hospital. She’s had the baby. It’s a girl.” She’s speaking to him like he’s an idiot. However, considering the past five minutes, he understands why.

“I need to see them.” It came out more panicked than he intended, causing Kelly’s smile to falter and the others to raise their eyebrows in a similar fashion to Gwen’s. However, Gwen’s face has added a curious smirk. Fuck.

Grizz takes, what he believes, is a determined step in the direction of the hospital but stumbles immediately. He was exhausted and stressed and confused and everything. Gordie pops up, hovering beside him, swaying slightly, uneasy. “I’m fine.” Gordie’s expression suggests he doesn’t believe that.

“I think you need to go home. We can regroup in the morning and we’ll-“ Grizz stares at Gordie until he falls silent.

“I’m not waiting until morning.” He starts to walk away from everyone. He hears the small crowd scrambling to follow him. Kelly runs in front, stopping him. “Kelly.”
“I know, I know. You’re fine but Becca isn’t.” She quickly corrects herself seeing the sudden panic across everyone’s faces. ‘No, I mean, she’s just had a baby. Gordie and I are going to go back and monitor everything but she’s not taking any visitors until tomorrow. Plus, you look like death Grizz. You need to sleep.” He looks away. Deep down he understands that she’s correct. The last stretch of the hike had really taken it out of them. The excitement of new land was overshadowed by what had felt like a hundred-mile walk.

Bean steps slightly to the side of the group causing everyone to turn to him. “I don’t know where I’m sleeping tonight.” Helena lowers her head, taking Grizz by surprise. Is she responsible for what’s happening? However, that theory is quickly killed by the guilt plastered over Luke’s face. He can feel the prickling of anger rising within him. Anger and frustration. He goes to open his mouth, start yelling for answers when Helena takes control.

“We’ll stay at Allie’s. I am sure she would not mind. It’s not one of the bigger houses but it will hold us.” She turns to Luke. “I imagine you’ll be returning to the guard now. You can message us with what Lexie wants to do tomorrow.” She turns to face the other, back completely turned on Luke. She begins talking with the others, helping them with their things.

“Grizz, you should go with them. You need some rest. Your group needs rest.” Gordie awkwardly pats his shoulder. He stares at everyone behind him. His expedition team stare back at him, awaiting approval of this plan. He gives a slight nod. He’s not happy about it but they were right. Even if everything were to be explained to them now, they’d never be able to take it in. Tiredness is draining them all.

Grizz wanted to make a break for it from the group and go see Sam but he knew he was outnumbered, and it was foolish to do something so rash. Maybe the town needed to realise that.

“I’ll tell them you say hi.” Grizz nods as Kelly gives a worried but reassuring smile. He trudges behind as Helena starts towards Allie’s home.

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It took them longer than usual to reach the house. His team tired, confused and slightly scared, trudged slowly. For a moment, Grizz reminisces about the moment they found the land. A small smile creeps at the corner of his mouth. Those turkeys, those turkeys! He never thought that such a ball sack could look so beautiful. He smirks to himself, well, he can deal with some ball sacks. Sam flashes through his mind and he cringes. He doesn’t think of Sam as a ball sack. That’s crude and beneath him. It’s been a long day.

When they reach the house, everyone stands uncomfortably in the hall. It’s strange to be in the house without Allie. Even Helena struggles to move forward. Everything is untouched, left as it had been. A mug and bowl are scattered by the sink, books and papers lie like a paper trail from the study to the living room. Gordie is not the tidiest of people. Soon the tiredness over rules politeness and people begin to settle throughout the house. It’s an unwritten rule that Allie’s room and Cassandra’s are untouched. They are not to sleep in them. However, Will’s makeshift bed is taken from Allie’s room and into the spare rooms. Helena and Grizz hover in the kitchen. She boils the kettle, grabbing tea from the cupboards. Grizz carefully watches her.

“Sorry, do you want coffee?” Her voice is quiet, slightly broken. Something has hurt her deeply. He shakes his head, grabbing a beer from the fridge. Her lips purse, unhappy with his coping mechanism.
but right now he couldn’t care. It’s just going to be one beer anyway. He sits and rests his heads in
his hands. Mickey enters the room. Helena watches as his mouth opens and shuts, unable to decide
whether it was worth bothering Grizz now or later. Grizz sensing this, waves his hand, calling him
over. As Mickey enters the room further, Gwen and the others appear too. “What’s up?” He tries to
sound light and hopeful but it’s incredibly difficult right now.

“What are we going to do?” Mickey’s voice fades slightly as he asks the question. Grizz, confused at
why they’re asking him this question, stares at them blankly in response. Gwen rolls her eyes.

“Like, we found land on Allie’s orders and now, Lexie is in charge? What are we going to do? Do
we show her the land? Do we-“ She stops as Grizz straightens, turning his full attention to them. He
didn’t want to think about this all right now. He’s surprised they even have the energy to bring this
up to him. The room is excruciating silent as he decides how to handle this.

“Right now, we sleep and eat.” He pauses, letting them take in everything he’s saying. He only
wants to go over this once. “Tomorrow night we’ll discuss in detail our plans but for now,” He
pauses, unsure whether this is treason or not. “we keep the location guarded. No exact details or
anything. When asked, just say we found farming land and animals. If pressed further, explain it is
hard to describe and that we’d need to show them, but the woods are still dangerous just to take
everyone out, so we’ll need to build a safe route to the area. Until we can talk to Allie that is what
we’re telling people okay?” They all nod. Grizz takes a sip of his beer, savouring the taste of it for a
moment before continuing. “I don’t know what’s going to happen, but we need to be careful. We
need to get Allie back but from the looks of things,” He shrugs, “it’s not going to be easy.” The
others nod. “Are you all fine with this?” He knows that the girls had spoken to Lexie before. Before
all of this, they had been friends with Harry. The Guard had been their friends, his friends. Right
now, he was effectively asking them to turn on them, secretly at least. “I know it’s not ideal”

“None of this is fucking ideal.” Gwen states. True. Grizz can’t help but forget that this world is not
their own, this is not how it always was. “We’re with you, we’re with Allie.” There are murmurs of
agreement from everyone. Grizz nods. They’re with Allie. Allie may not have been perfect but had
shown strength in leading them all. She understood the difficulties in deciding, whether she realised it
or not. She made mistakes yes but compared to everyone else she was the best the had. He glances at
Helena. Well, the second best but Helena had made it clear that the church was her job, her place in
this world.

“Go grab some snacks, rest and tomorrow night, once we’ve talked to people, we’ll figure this out.”
They nod and rummage for some snacks in the cupboards. Hands full of food and water, they leave
towards their beds. Grizz returns to the head in hands position.

Helena lets the silence linger a little, making sure that the doors had all shut and all footsteps had
stopped before she spoke to Grizz. The world seemed heavy on his shoulders. The world is heavy on
them all, but in what seemed like a second, a weight had landed on Grizz.

“They listen to you.” Grizz grunts in response and she smiles into her mug. “I’m serious. Whilst they
follow Allie, they also follow you.” He glances up, making eye contact with Helena. “It’s true. They
wouldn’t have come here without your approval. There’s a trust in you.” It was meant to be
comforting but the words seem to have the opposite effect on Grizz. He suddenly feels the weighted
responsibility of the individuals here. He’d felt that on the expedition, but he’d been naive enough to
think they were all equals. He may have been leading that particular job, but he didn’t realise that
they’d relied on him that much, not really. The current situation within the community may have
solidified his role in the matter, however. If nothing had changed by the time they got back, there is
every chance that they’d all be equals again, they wouldn’t view him so highly, wouldn’t hold his
opinion in such high regard. Well fuck. Helena reaches out and touches his arm. He holds her hand.
She blinks furiously, desperately trying to hide the fact something is upsetting her.

“Helena. What happened with Luke?” She lets go of his hand, placing her mug down a little harder than usual. “Helena?”

“Nothing. It’s fine. Just a little argument.” Grizz knows not to push the topic. Whatever has happened between them will blow over. It has too. He’s never met anyone more suited for one another. The two of them bring out the best in one another. It’ll blow over. It has too. “You need to get some sleep.” He rolls his eyes and she drags him towards the sofa. “All beds are taken I’m afraid.” She chucks a blanket and pillow at him before watching him settle on the sofa. Satisfied that he’s comfortable, she starts to leave. “Goodnight Grizz.”

He grunts a “Night” in return and before she’s even switched the light out, he’s fast asleep.
Chapter Summary

Sam finds out about Grizz's return.

Becca and Eden were sleeping. She’d said that in one of the library books it had mentioned that when the baby sleeps, she sleeps. However, Sam didn’t think anyone would argue with her sleeping at this moment in time. She’d just given birth. He still felt in shock. Staring at the beautiful baby in front of him, awe rises within him. Becca did that. Becca created that, created her. She’s beautiful. Eden makes a soft noise. Sam imagines what it must sound like. Searching through every sound in his head he can think of and the one he settles on is a muffled pop of a lid. That’ll do.

There are times where Sam misses his hearing. Most of the time now, he doesn’t mind as much because he can tune people out, choose to ignore or mishear. Back before this happened, he could easily just avoid his parents’ lectures or arguments with his brother Campbell. He frowns at the thought of him. He will not let him hurt his family. He will not be allowed near Eden.

Sam holds out his hand and, softly strokes her cheek. She’s so warm, so fragile. He can’t help but love her with all his heart. He’d do anything for her, anything. This world they live in is wild and chaotic, but he will do whatever it takes to give her sense in the senseless. Whatever the outcome of the election, he will protect this family, his family.

The doors to the ward open. He turns on his heels, trying to see who is about to wake the girls up. He holds a finger to his lips, glaring at Kelly and Gordie as they halt, whispering and signing apologies to him. Sam lowers his hand, a warm smile upon his face. The two huddle around the desk, sorting through the papers on the desk. Kelly starts writing in a notepad.

Gordie had been an obvious choice for a doctor in this town. He is smart and caring, the perfect combination needed. However, Sam had been surprised by this side of Kelly. He’d always thought she’d been a bit of a shallow person. He would never have thought of her as a mean girl, but he hadn’t thought there was much substance there. Yet, she’d proven him wrong, happily so. Kelly and Gordie make the perfect healing team. Their friendship and trust in each other adds to the growing confidence the town has in them.

Sam shuffles his way over to them. Curious at what they’re up to. Kelly glances up as he approaches, smiling, whilst Gordie purposefully avoids eye contact. He’d been hiding something since he came to talk to them about Allie and Lexie. Sam knew he’d been lying earlier, lying for Becca’s sake. He is half grateful for that lie. Whatever the truth is, it would have made it difficult to settle Becca and right now, she needs to recuperate. “Hey, how are they doing?” Kelly speaks slowly, concentrating more on her signing than how she’s saying them. It’s been sweet that many of the town are starting to pick up on signs or learn them to communicate better with him, however, sometimes it can lead to a very stunted conversation. He still appreciates the effort.

“Good.” Sam simply signs this as most people understand that sign. He gestures to the papers, notepads and files. Kelly glances around trying to piece together what Sam is asking, realisation pops into her eyes.

“Oh! These? Well, these are the files the hospital had on us and our families. Well, the latest hard
copies they had. I imagine there are a few missing details but they do help us know everyone’s health history.” She gestures to the binders piled by Gordie. He’s pouring over a blue one, reading through the pages taking notes. Squinting he can see it’s Becca and her families folder. “These are our notes on any illnesses and health problems we’ve had since we got here. So when someone gets sick we can keep track of the type, how long it lasted, what medicine they took and so on. I’m trying to file them in good order so it’s easier to refer back when necessary.” She smiles, proud in her and Gordie’s initiative and work. She should be proud. Whilst many have spent their time complaining and moaning about the harsh new realities, Kelly has found ways to enjoy this life in New Ham. “Oh, and these are the medical textbooks we have. There are a few research papers and medical notes in the offices from those who worked here before” There’s a slight falter in her voice as she remembers the reality of everything, but she quickly pushes it aside continuing, “The pharmacy has like the bible of drugs in there. It’s a bit heavy worded but it’s helping us understand what can be used for what.” There’s an awkward pause as neither knows where the conversation can go from there. Sam is impressed with the work the two are putting into this place and to further their knowledge. It is nice Gordie now has someone to help with this side of his work. He already has his plate full trying to get us away home and investigating why we’re here in the first place. Along with that, he needs to help with Allie’s decision making. Having someone help with the hospital must feel like a weight is being lifted off his shoulders. Kelly pokes Sam in the stomach, trying to bring him back into the conversation. Sam sleepily blinks, waiting for her to continue. “Grizz is back.” Sam’s heart stops. He’s awake now. “Everyone came back safely.” She grabs Sam’s hand, Gordie watches carefully from the side. “They found land, they found animals.” Grizz. Grizz is back and he’s safe. They found land. Grizz. He’s back. Why isn’t he here? Why hasn’t he come to see them? “Sam?” He can’t move. He’s in shock again. Gordie has moved his way around the desk, anxiously studying Sam. Kelly pokes him with the end of her pen, trying to figure out what was said to make him freeze. “Sam?” Gordie is signing something to him. He’s not even registering. His body is screaming at him to go see Grizz. To hug him, to welcome him home but his brain is reminding him of Eden and Becca. He can’t leave his family suddenly. No, he didn’t want to do that. He loves them. Why didn’t Grizz come to see them? Has something happened? What happened out there?

Whilst signing, Sam finally speaks, “Is he okay?” For a split second, he sees the two exchange a look. Sam knows that look, he understands that look, Grizz is not okay. “What is wrong with him? What’s happened? If he isn’t okay, he should be here!” The look on their faces suggests his voice may have come out a little louder than expected. He turns to see that both Eden and Becca were, thankfully, still asleep. His signing becomes more jagged and rushes, he’s stopped with the effort of speaking. Kelly is now looking confused at Gordie listening as he does his best to translate. He’s not as perfect at ASL as Becca but he’ll do. Eventually, Gordie holds out his hands, stopping Sam.

“Whoa, whoa, whoa. Okay! Sam, we didn’t want to stress you.” Kelly shakes her head as she tells them. “Lexie and Harry are co-mayors right now.” Sam shrugs. That’s not his concern right now. What does this have to do with Grizz? Kelly raises her eyebrows, clearly not the reaction they expected. “Um, well, okay. She and Harry arrested Allie and Will.” What? Why? Sam presses his hands against the back of his head, fear running through his veins for his cousin and Will. What the fuck has happened overnight? “Grizz and the others came back as they were pretty much parading them outside the church. Grizz didn’t seem to take it that well.” What does that mean? Sam urges them to continue. Kelly takes over.

“I think he was panicking and worrying. I think he got overwhelmed? I’m not sure but the exhaustion was taking its toll. He wanted to come to see you guys, literally, we really had to insist he did. I thought he was going to push me out the way but-“

“Why?” Sam interrupts. Kelly and Gordie wait for him to expand. What is he questioning, which
part of the story? “Why wouldn’t you let him visit?” Kelly and Gordie exchange another one of their looks. Sam didn’t think he was being very subtly right now but quite frankly, Grizz was in distress and he wanted to show him that they were okay. It was okay, they were going to make it okay.

“Becca just had a baby. You both haven’t slept in a long time. Plus, we wanted the first few days with the baby to be stress-free.” Sam’s frustration, worry and anger subside for a moment. His friends were just concerned, trying to make these days special for his family. He places a hand on both of their shoulders, squeezing slightly, trying to show his appreciation. “Thank you” and he means it. They were right not to tell them straight away, however, he was desperate to see Grizz. “But next time, allow the visitors. Just ask them to lie if necessary. It would have been nice to see friends.” The two of them nod but Sam has a feeling that they still believed their decision had been the better one. As their conversation comes to an end, Kelly gazes past Sam towards the bed behind him. Becca was holding a crying Eden, a grumpy expression on her face. Sam smiles.

The three of them go to Becca. Still half asleep, she sways slightly, soothingly hushing Eden. Sam watches them endearingly, only catching the bits of conversation which Becca was signing. Something about milk and food. Sam’s just about to join back in the conversation when Becca whips her boob out. Both he and Gordie turn away. Kelly rolls her eyes.

Kelly had read parenting books and pregnancy books from the library and understood that there were different positions for breastfeeding the baby. They’d been giving little bits of formula but understanding that it might be a finite source, they want to at least try breastfeeding. Gordie and Sam leave them to the task as it turns out not to be as simple as sticking the nipple in the babies crying mouth. Sam takes this opportunity to assess how bad it is out there.

“Gordie. Level with me, how much trouble are we in?” Gordie’s expression radiates tiredness. This boy just wants to sleep. He just wants to rest for a moment.

“A lot.” Sam stares across at Becca. Eden seems to be content feeding. Becca has a few tears rolling down her face, overwhelmed by the connection between the two of them. Her emotions have been slightly wild recently, but this moment is the calmest she’s been in a while. She deserves this time of peace. They need to hold onto it because Sam has a sinking feeling that it’s going to be a battle from here.
Grizz wakes to the sound of a boiling kettle. For a split second, he believes he is home. His mum is making her breakfast and that he’s late for school. Then reality comes flooding back as he’s greeted with the family photos of Cassandra and Allie hanging on the wall. His clothes are crumpled in a pile on the floor, whilst his blanket has been flung to the side. Clearly, he’d been tossing and turning all night. He sighs, unable to find the strength to sit up. He didn’t really remember falling as sleep. He lay down and now he’s awake and it’s the next day.

He can hear the creaks throughout the house as others wake up and move about. Whoever is in the kitchen in shuffling their feet, closing cupboards as quietly as possible, making sure not to disturb anyone. It seems that no one else has left their rooms. What time was it? It’s daylight outside and with it being late in the year it must mean that it was quite late. He pats himself down, trying to find where he put his phone. Nothing. He scans the room and finds it on the coffee table. He debates the effort of reaching for it but knows that after yesterday, it’s probably best he check it. Sore and stiff, he grabs his phone and is immediately greeted with messages from The Guard and Harry. His stomach drops. The Guard were mostly welcoming him home, mentioning something to do with Campbell. The thought of that boy turns his stomach. How, after everything they knew about him, did they trust him? He notices Campbell’s name popping up in The Guards chat. He switches to Harry’s message, hoping it will lift his spirits. He knew it wouldn’t, and it didn’t. It was asking him and the others to come to meet them today to discuss the land they found. Grizz didn’t want to tell them shit. He went out under Allie’s plan. Allie had a plan for when they found land, these two didn’t. They’re going to feel in over their heads. In high school, Harry revelled in popularity, feeling important, being rich. He was nice enough, funny and liked to have a laugh but when it came to the world, he lived in a bubble. He liked to be the sun, the people around him are planets to him. When this world happened, Grizz knew he struggled, struggled to understand that the rules from before do not apply the same here. The societal aspects of life that Harry had always enjoyed were thrown out the window. There was no time for it. Right now, it’s about survival and once we survive, we can thrive. Once we have a working community in place, Harry could go about trying to be a pompous twat again. Grizz ignored the message. He’ll get back to them later. He wants to see Allie, Will, Luke and… His heart skips a beat. Sam., He needs to see Sam. He doesn’t want to see Harry or Lexie until he’s spoken to everyone else. However, he knows that to get to some of these people he’ll have to see Lexie and Harry first. He groans.

Gwen pops up, head peering over the sofa staring down at him. He falls off the sofa. “Oh my god! I’m sorry!” Grizz sits up, rubbing his face. Gwen holds out a coffee. He takes it, purely to wake himself up a little. Gwen’s hair is slightly wet, she’s wearing a dressing gown that doesn’t quite fit her properly. Grizz hears the low hum of the washing machine. If he’d known a wash was going to be put on, he’d have given them his- “I put your other clothes in the wash, you should have something clean to wear today.” Oh. He smiles his appreciation. She moves to sit on the chair whilst Grizz slumps back onto the sofa. “So, what are we doing today?” The truth, Grizz didn’t know. He didn’t know what to tell her, or anyone else for that matter. However, he knew the others wanted to know his thoughts, wanted him to make this decision.
“Lexie and Harry want to meet to discuss the new land we’ve found.” Gwen nods, watching the steam from her coffee billow up into the air. It’s an uncomfortable thought having Lexie and Harry as the new Mayors. They’d grown used to Allie and her rules, but I guess, there had been Cassandra before as well. Grizz knew that had been different though. Allie had led the community for months and through so much more than what Cassandra had done. He hadn’t grown accustomed to Cassandra the way he had with Allie’s rule. Grizz was curious at Gwen’s uncomfortableness however, she wasn’t exactly Allie’s number one fan. He would have considered her to fall before Lexie rather than Allie. Gwen would be one of the ones he thought to love the change in the throne. Perhaps, it’s due to the way they had entered the town yesterday. If it’d been less of a mob, with Allie and Will not in custody, maybe she would be more willing to be following Lexie. “Are you fine with what I said last night?” He cautious, neither of them are looking at each other. It’s obvious that the town essentially has two fractions. What they’re essentially doing right now is telling half-truths to protect themselves, to protect their own ideas. “You know, the plan of what we’ll tell people?” Gwen takes a moment, sipping the coffee silently before finally meeting Grizz’s gaze. “Yes.” She pauses, contemplating her next sentence. “I think it’s the best option for now. The town doesn’t seem as stable as before.” Grizz nods in agreement. There was never comfortable stability in this town but the atmosphere in the air now is similar to that after the murder of Cassandra. It is unsettling. “Do you believe what they’re saying about Allie and Will?” She’s quiet, unsure of herself, of what she is saying. Grizz had to admit, he had no idea what they were saying about Allie and Will. He still had no idea what was going on.

The texts messages flash across his eyes and he picks his phone up again, Gwen raises an eyebrow. He scans through The Guard’s chat and see’s Luke’s message of Allie and Will being arrested for voter fraud. He laughs. Are they serious? Is Luke serious? Voter Fraud or not, the level of viciousness the crowd showed clearly suggested a more complex issue that Lexie and Harry were exploiting. Any idiot could see that. He passes, well, maybe not. Maybe because they’ve been away, their heads are clear of the propaganda that has happened during the election. Gwen’s watching him curiously, waiting for him to answer. He slumps, downing the coffee. “No. I don’t believe it.” She nods and he continues. “She has made many difficult decisions, has helped establish some order, some sort of normal and made mistakes but I do not believe this.” He waves his hands about, frustrated with the community, his peers. “I think people don’t realise that no matter who is in charge, the hard work will continue, the hard work, confusion and life continues. Allie and Will were not the cause of that but Lexie and Harry are making them the scapegoats.” Gwen looks down, biting her lip. He gets it, she, like everyone else, have, at some point, been frustrated with the monotonous and prison-like feel of this place but that’s what needs to be done right now, that’s life now. They let themselves drift into silence for a bit. Gwen continues to sip her coffee, whilst Grizz plays with his now empty mug.

Helena enters the room, dressed, coat hanging off her shoulders. Her face is not pleased. She doesn’t bother to take her shoes or jacket off, instead strides towards Grizz. His eyebrows raise at the attitude emitting off her. “You all missed breakfast. A few of the workers who are not out of their minds are coming with any leftovers.” Both Gwen and Grizz stare, unable to give an answer, more seems to be going on with Helena but Grizz knows that she won’t share unless it’s on her terms. “Grizz, Harry said you haven’t messaged him back yet.” Grizz huffs, Helena rolls her eyes. “I know. But this is life now. We can’t help anyone if all our allies are behind bars.” Grizz shifts, uncomfortable at the thought. He doesn’t like the idea of being trapped. He wouldn’t be able to cope with such a thing; he wonders if Allie and Will feel the same. Grizz chuckles his phone at Helena, she catches it with ease, he’s impressed.

“Tell them we’ll talk once I’ve seen Allie and Will. Alone.” It’s a bold move. He’s hoping their need for information is great enough he can speak to them, but Helena’s face hardens at his idea.
“Don’t be idiotic Grizz. That’s how we got here.” Not true. They came here on mystical busses that transported us to another plane of existence. Regardless, he knows Helena is right. Going straight in with a defensive attitude will lead to conflict. They need to play this smart, whether he has the patience for it or not.

“You know my thoughts. I said them last night. Tell them I’ll meet with them this afternoon. 3 o’clock.” He shrugs. He knows he wants to put this off for as long as possible to try and get his story straight but also so he can go to the hospital and see Sam. Since waking up, he’d put the thoughts of Sam to the back of his mind. It had been a constant hum in the back of his mind. When they first entered back into the town, he knew all he wanted to do was see Sam but that’s clearly not going to be so easy.

“3 is a bit late.” Helena is unsure as keeping them waiting all day will seem suspicious like he’s planning something but Grizz shoots her a look telling that on this, he will not compromise. “At least give me a reason for the time.”

“I’m visiting Sam, Becca and the baby. My group need to recuperate a little longer. Add what you like. You’re in charge of my phone now.” He didn’t mean to sound so demanding and exasperated but he was already done with all of the shit. It’s been six months of shit and just when things were on the up for him, this whole thing comes crashing down.

“I’m not your lackey. I have business at the church and my own responsibilities.” Yet she types the message, anyway and pockets his phone. “You’ve said you’ll be at the church at 3. I expect you to show up Grizz.” She walks to the kitchen, sorting through some stuff. Grizz glances over his shoulder and see’s the others have made their way down and were all relaxing. No one seemed happy but they certainly weren’t emitting the same energy as before. Grizz sighs, standing. He better get ready if he is planning on a trip to the hospital first. Gwen stands with him. He raises his eyebrows at her.

“I’m coming too. Moral support.” Grizz smiles and nods. It would probably be best. It’s going to be a long day.

*

Gwen and Grizz left the others in Helena’s care. They agreed to be as vague about the trip as possible and help Helena at the church until they knew what to do next. No one was happy but it was better than nothing.

Grizz is nervous. His stomach is swirling and his hear is beating faster than it had when he’d asked Sam to kiss him. Gwen has suggested they stop off at one of the shops to get a present. The town was eerily empty. Those they did meet greeted them but didn’t do much else. He got the sense that those who support Lexie knew that Grizz didn’t. There is a children’s shop that has lain empty and untouched for months. No one thought to go near it, there had been no reason too. They weren’t babies or children. But now there is a reason.

They picked up as much as they could fit into a rucksack. Once Becca and the baby were discharged, he imagines rules about commodities will start to be put in place. It’s not going to be long before currency is introduced into the town, but for now, they can raid this shop and give them enough for a good start.

Grizz didn’t hate Becca and he certainly didn’t hate the baby. If anything, he was jealous that they have Sam. He’s definitely got mixed feelings about everything. He likes Sam but this whole situation is complicated. He doesn’t understand how they could work things out. Sam has a baby. That changes everything. Regardless, Grizz knew that right now he wanted to see him. He knows things
are different now and he doesn’t want to be some secret in Sam’s closet, so he’ll keep his distance after today. But for today he wants to see him.

“What if the baby’s ugly?” Grizz’s eyes shift to Gwen as she babbles next to him. She’s surprisingly lifting his mood. She’s not asking him anything deep or personal, she’s just talking nonsense. It’s a nice change. “Like what if it’s really ugly.”

“It’s not going to be ugly.” Grizz sighs.

“All babies look like old men.”

“No, they don’t.”

“Yeah, they do.” He laughs at her insistence on the matter. They continue to discuss what babies truly look like when they’re first born. It eases Grizz’s stomach slightly, they were just visiting friends. Their friend had a baby. That’s all. He and Sam don’t have any history. There’s nothing- He sees the hospital and falters in his step. Gwen doesn’t notice and he’s easily able to catch up with her. The nerves were back and firing through his body. This is going to be awkward.

Gordie is walking through the front door as the approach. He jumps as Gwen calls out to him. There’s a wry smile on his face. Ever since Cassandra’s death, he had never been the same. However, Gordie always tried his best to figure the puzzles out, make things better but he needs the right people around him for him to fully thrive. Allie let him have the autonomy, checked in on him and had meetings but left Gordie to be able to investigate and solve in his own way. Will Lexie and Harry allow the same?

“Can we see them now?” Grizz manages to hide his extreme nervousness for uncertainty. He just sounds like he’s unsure if now is the right time instead of the-man-I-fancy-just-had-a-baby-with-his-best-friend nervous.

“Uh, yeah, yeah!” They start to make their way in when Gordie turns on them and holds up his hands. His face is slightly contorted as he’s sorting out the wording of his next sentence in his head. “Just one thing uh,” he pauses, pursing his lips. Gwen and Grizz look at each other and then back to Gordie, waiting. “Can we not mention the whole Allie, Will thing?” Their mouths drop. “Do they not know!?” Grizz’s voice comes across a little aggressive as Gordie flinches slightly. He straightens up, “Sorry, but what the fuck?” Gordie smiles slightly accepting the apology.

“Well, Sam knows but Becca doesn’t. We explained to Sam last night, but we just want some normalcy for Becca and Eden until we think she’s ready to head home.” He holds his breath, eyes flicking to both of their faces, trying to gather what they’re thinking. No one says anything, he lets out a breath and focuses on Grizz. “Sam was worried about you.” His heart squeezes. His mouth is suddenly very dry and struggles for words so instead, he just raises an eyebrow. “We didn’t explain things well last night, so it made it sound like you were hurt or something and then with the whole Allie and Will stuff, it just got a bit stressful, so he’ll be relieved to see at least one of you is fine.” He had been worried about him? The thought sends butterflies flying through his stomach and he desperately just wants to stride past Gordie right now, but he has to keep his cool.

“You guys need to work on your wording.” Gordie flashes a nervous smile before turning and allowing them through.

He can hear the faint cries in the distance. Gwen and Gordie have sped up, excitement filling Gwen. Grizz however, finds himself slowing. His limbs, chest and head heavy. He can hear the baby. She’s real. This is real. The cries quieten and he can hear the murmurs of voices, he assumes Kelly and
Becca.

They turn a corner and Gwen squeals seeing the baby. She rushes forward with Becca’s face lighting up at the sight of them. Sam is laughing at Gwen’s rushed talking, his eyebrows raised trying to understand what she’s saying, it is too fast for him pick up on everything. That’s when he turns. Everything in Grizz’s world stops. He doesn’t know what to do. He doesn’t know what to say. Sam’s frozen too. Their last moment together playing on repeat in his head. The worry he’d felt as Grizz had wandered off into the unknown, afraid he’d never see that face again. The others haven’t noticed their sudden stillness. Becca is the first to address Grizz, she smiles brightly as she makes eye contact with him. “Grizz! Gwen says Allie and Will couldn’t make it because of election issues. Is everything okay?” He shakes his head, his hair falling in front of his face. As he pushes it back, he regains his composure and smiles.

“Honestly, I’m still trying to settle back in, I’m not sure what’s going on.” It’s the truth. He’s not entirely sure what’s going on. Becca nods pleased with the answer. Grizz awkward holds out the rucksack. Gwen rolls her eyes whilst the others just stare at him. “Uh. Gifts.” Becca looks to Sam to take it from Grizz but notices his malfunctioning brain and instead turns to Kelly.

“Sorry about him, I kept waking him up through the night. Just because he can’t hear, he thinks he can get away without having sleepless nights. Not on my watch.” Grizz emits a rather forced and nervous laugh. Gwen eyes him strangely as Kelly takes the bag off him. Gwen is given the baby. “Be careful.”

“I’ve got this, I used to babysit the neighbour’s kids.” In a rather hushed and cooed voice, she addresses the innocent child. “Hi, Eden. Aren’t you adorable?” She sits in a chair cooing at the child. Grizz’s eyes wander over to her. Eden, a fitting name. A pure untouched soul surrounded by chaos. She is beautiful. And so small. She makes a soft baby noise. Grizz could only describe it as a soft pop, nothing crazy but he finds himself smiling. This baby is going to be loved by everyone. He hadn’t realised he’d moved towards them until his hand was reaching out towards the child. He gently shakes her hand. Her fingers for a moment grasp his hand.

“Nice to meet you, Eden.” His voice cracks slight as he finds himself overwhelmed with emotion. So soft and warm and small. Such a fragile human. They have to do whatever it takes to protect this child.

A tear rolls down Sam’s face. Becca tugs at his top. “Are you okay?” She signs, not wanting to draw attention to the sudden emotional mess her friend had become. He nods. She frowns but doesn’t push the matter. Wiping the tears away, Sam finally finds his legs and walks around the bed. Grizz turns at the sound of footsteps and finds himself embraced by Sam. He doesn’t hesitate and pulls him in closer, their heads buried deep into each other’s shoulders. The grip each other tight and if they didn’t have a crowd both of them would have kissed the other by now. For a moment, it is just them. Grizz can smell the disinfectant and baby smell off Sam. Not his usual scent but all the same it was weirdly comforting whilst Sam basked in Grizz’s musk, the clean air from outside clung to him like he’s clinging to him now. Gwen breaks their moment.

“I didn’t get a welcome like that.” Her sarcastic tone is followed by a laugh. “No, I didn’t, did I, Eden? Clearly, your parents have favourites. It’s like they forgot I went away too!” The baby voice she puts on breaks the tension in the room. Becca is eyeing them suspiciously but seems to let it slide as she watches Gwen with Eden, both laughing at Gwen’s ridiculous voice. Gordie has returned with notes, pulling Kelly aside. Sam and Grizz break apart but still hold onto each other, making sure they don’t disappear. Grizz is the first to let go and he sees a flash of panic across Sam’s eyes for a second, but he’d been practising this and wanted to do it.
“I told you I’d see you soon.” He mouths robotically whilst signing the gist of what he’s saying. Sam’s smile widens and a small laugh break from him. Grizz isn’t sure if this is because he did it right or he did it wrong. “Did I get it wrong again?” He turns to Becca who’s laughing as well. “I did, didn’t I? I’m trying!” Becca carries on a laugh and goes to sign when Sam cuts her off.

“No, you got it right, just a bit messy.” Sam and Becca exchange a look suggesting that he had gotten it wrong, but they didn’t want to tell him. Grizz is unsure of what to do now. He knows what he wants to do but it’s inappropriate.

“Well, are you going to open the presents or not? Grizz and I spent ages this morning picking stuff out.” Gwen’s exasperated tone helps move things along and Grizz swears she mouth you’re welcome to him as the attention is taken off him. Had she figured it out? No, Grizz is too good at playing it cool for her to have done that.

Sam settles back in his seat and Becca starts going through the rucksack. There are plenty of things in there that Grizz has no idea what they’re called but Becca squeals and shows them off to Sam super excited so he’s happy she’s enjoying them. There’s a pang in his stomach as he watches them interact, knowing that this was Sam’s life now. This is his family. And that this was Grizz, on the outside. The thing he hates and loves about Sam is his love and loyalty towards the ones he cares about. Grizz would never want it but Sam would never give up on his family, no matter how much he wanted Grizz. Sam would be loyal and staring at Eden now, Grizz wouldn’t want it any other way, no matter how much it hurt him.

They get to the end of the rucksack, Becca has said thank you over and over again but honestly, these would have gone to waste without Becca and Eden so it’s no problem. Gwen passes Eden seamlessly back over to Becca and jumps up from the seat. “Your go.” Gwen beams at him. Grizz confused just looks around at everyone. Becca is smiling at him, nodding. Then he realises.

“Oh, no. No. It’s fine. I’ll break her.” He holds up his hands standing back a little. Gwen, however, pushes Grizz into the chair. He has no choice in the matter apparently. Becca guides his arms as he takes Eden. She’s heavier than he expected but still feels like nothing in his arms. He’s never been so still. Becca and Gwen giggle as they watch him awkward hold her. “Is that good? Is she safe? I’m not hurting her right?”

“You’re doing fine.” Sam smiles as he says it. Grizz and Sam lock eyes and smile. This is weird but sweet. Eden makes a noise and he looks down at her. Her eyes are identical to Becca’s. She truly is a beautiful soul. Grizz’s heart is melting.

“She’s so small.” He gives another nervous laugh. This is slowly becoming his normal laugh at this rate. Everyone laughs alongside him. Eden starts to cry. He panics. “What did I do? I’m sorry, I’m sorry. No, don’t cry. I’m sorry. Help” He looks up to the laughing crowd. Becca takes Eden off him and hushes her slightly, letting her suck on her pinkie. “Is she okay?”

“Yeah, she just needs to be fed.” Becca looks at Sam, who nods. Gwen picks up the signal that it was time for them to go. She picks up the empty rucksack, hugging Becca and saying bye to the baby. Grizz gives a somewhat awkward half hug to Becca, afraid he’ll make the baby cry once more. Becca rolls her eyes. “You’ll see them out?” Sam nods. He shuts the curtain behind them as they head.

As they pass the desk, Grizz stops. Gordie raises his head, stopping the discussion he and Kelly were having. “We need to talk tonight. Can you come to Allie’s around 7? After dinner?” He nods. “I’m meeting Lexie and Harry this afternoon. I’ll debrief you later.” Kelly goes to speak but Grizz walks off. He doesn’t want to get into this right now. He needs to prepare for the meeting. He’s seen Sam. He’s made sure he’s fine. Now it’s time to get back into the real world and try and sort it.
He reaches the door where Sam is standing waiting, breathing deeply taking in the fresh air. Gwen is nowhere to be seen. Grizz takes a moment to just watch Sam. His eyes are shut and if he didn’t know he was deaf, he’d be sure he’s listening to the world. Maybe he’s listening to what he thinks it sounds like? Is that a stupid idea? Grizz isn’t sure.

Sensing something, Sam turns to find a concerned Grizz staring at him. “Gwen needed a pee.” He nods but still doesn’t move closer. This is the first time they’ve been alone in a while. There’s a tension between them, he’s unsure if it’s a good thing or bad. Grizz walks closer to him, standing next to him. Sam hasn’t taken his eyes off him. They’re incredibly close.

“The book was helpful.” He’s whispering. Something about right now is making everything he’s doing so loud. This right here needs to be contained. Just being here with Sam, alone, needs to be contained. Sam reaches up and touches his cheek, wiping a tear away. He was crying again. It really had been an emotional few days. Sam leans forward, standing on his tip toes, and kisses Grizz. It’s a gentle kiss, reminiscent of their first one. Grizz leans into it and Sam can feel his longing bubbling through him. It’s Grizz, however, that’s the first to pull back. He looks down, sniffing, not wanting to make eye contact with Sam, not wanting to say what needs to be said. Eventually, he looks up so Sam can read his lips. With certain words signed, Grizz bites the bullet, he can’t wait any longer. “I needed to see you. I really want you but you have a family. There is almost nothing I wouldn’t give to be with you but breaking up a family? No. I won’t do it. I care about you too much to make you do that.” Sam’s heart cracks with every word Grizz says but he understands and knows that ultimately he’s right. He made a commitment to Becca, to her, their, child. Biological or not, Eden is his and he needs to be there for her right now. That doesn’t mean this doesn’t hurt like hell. “I know you care about me, but you have to put everything you feel about me aside. I’m not being the hidden guy, I’m not…” He chokes, unable to speak anymore without crying his eyes out and he didn’t want Gwen to pop up and see that something is wrong. “Sam.” It’s all he can say. There’s enough emotion in that word to break a thousand hearts. There’s such a sad longing there. All they’d wanted was someone to share their life with, someone to see the best in them, someone to hold. Yet it was the wrong place and wrong time. A cliché but the truth.

“I wish it wasn’t this way.” Sam’s quiet words hit Grizz hard. He feels the air leave his lungs and the tears prick at his eyes. Much like his own anguish, Sam mirrors the emotions. They were sacrificing all of it before it could really begin but they know it’ll be worth it for the pure and innocent child that needs to be protected and cared for. Grizz rests his forehead against Sam’s, eyes shut, breathing in time with one another. Once more their lips touch, a final kiss. Goodbye.

They hear the door open. The two fly apart. Sam shuffling his feet, staring at them, hastily wiping a tear away. Whilst Grizz turns around, staring up into the clouds squinted as if he’d seen something, wiping his tears away too.

“I didn’t realise how long we were there. If we don’t leave now we’ll be late for…” Gwen trails off looking between the two. Eyebrows both raised, she is about to question it when Grizz locks eyes with her. She shuts her mouth.

‘Late for what?’ Sam’s voice is hoarser than usual and Grizz has a feeling he’d rather just sign right now until his voice recovers but he didn’t have Becca to translate. Grizz glares at Gwen, who holds up her hands in defence. He swings his head towards Sam.

“A meeting with Lexie and Harry.” Sam’s face hardens. “Hey. Before you think anything, I originally didn’t want to meet with them until I’d seen Allie and Will but Helena pointed out that making demands could just throw more of us into the dog house, or wine cellar.” Gwen perked up at the subject of wine, Grizz gives her another glare. “Look, we’re going to be vague. I’m mainly going to ask about Allie and Will to see if we’re able to see them.” He lowers his voice slightly. “I’m not
on their side.”

“What if they get angry and arrest you to?” Grizz had thought about it. He didn’t think it would happen, Lexie had seen how the town had reacted to Allie and Will’s arrest. He hopes she knows if she were to arrest more people, they’d think of it as a witch hunt and more than likely turn on her. He’s relying on her being smart enough to see these things. She was smart enough to run a smear campaign, she’ll be smart enough to see all this.

“I’d like to see them try” He gives a small laugh but Sam’s continued concerning gaze burrows deep and he leans a little close, hand on his forearm. He squeezes it. “It’s not going to happen.” He pulls back remembering Gwen is there. “Plus, I have Gwen here. She’ll protect me with her kind words and supportive attitude.”

“Eat a dick.” Gwen grins at him as she says it.

“Gladly.” Grizz returns the smile and focuses back on Sam. He doesn’t seem comforted but seems to have dropped the subject. “You focus on Becca and Eden. They need you right now.” He nods and they clasp each other in the friendliest hug they could manage but even then Grizz suspects it lasted longer than need be. Sam hugs Gwen goodbye and they part. Just as they turn, Grizz turns back once more. “You need to tell Becca.” Sam’s eyes go wild for a second and Grizz realises what he thinks he means. “About Allie and Will. About everything that’s going on out here.” The panic dissipates but it’s quickly replaced by a grave expression. The enormity of the issues happening around us is taking a toll, but Becca deserves to know what’s happening. She deserves to know what to expect, especially since she has a child now. Sam nods and enters back into the building. Grizz and Gwen make their way to the church. Today just will not end.
Chapter Summary

Allie rots in a cell whilst Grizz tries his best to outsmart people.

Allie couldn’t sleep. This isn’t unusual but at least when she lay awake it was in her bed and now on the cold hard floor of a cellar. She hadn’t slept all night and she thought the exhaustion might help for a nap during the day. However, no such luck. She’d be deemed a greater risk than Will, put in the wine cellar whilst he was in a room upstairs. Luke sat on the other side of the glass doors. He’s facing away from her. Every time it was his shift, he’d move the chair, so it’d face away from her. He didn’t want to look at her. She couldn’t figure out whether it was due to guilt or disgust. Did he genuinely believe all the lies? He was instrumental in her arrest, so he must to an extent. Yet, she couldn’t help but feel its guilt that keeps him turned. Someone you think you know turns out to something they’re not. Except Allie hadn’t hidden anything and this was all bullshit. She slams herself slightly against the wall, huffing. Luke flinches. So, he is awake at least.

As much as she wants to blame the entire situation on Luke, she knows it’s partially due to her behaviour the past six months. However, she can’t help that it’s been shit. This whole thing is shit, no matter who is in charge. Lexie is going to discover that soon enough. When you’re in charge you change, you say you’re not going to be a certain person but the position changes you. You have to change; you have to make decisions that you don’t want to make. Dewey’s dead body flashes across her eyes and she shudders, the sick feeling rising up her stomach. It was never going to leave her, she knows that. She has to live with the ghosts.

Dewey’s dead body is one of the few reasons she does not want to return home. Would the judicial system understand? No. She’d be locked up for murder. But here, here in this world, it was necessary. She had to keep telling herself that, she had to make herself believe that otherwise, she’ll go insane.

Being in here is driving her insane. She tried to reason with Lexie and Harry but it fell on deaf ears. She hadn’t realised the hatred harbouring for her. No, that’s a lie. She knew, she just chose to ignore it. There were bigger issues than having everyone like her. She scoffs. Harry is going to have an issue with that. Lexie might be able to handle it, but not for long. She promised these people change, a more fun regime compared to Allie’s hard labour. Except the hard labour is needed right now so, things are either about to fall in chaos or Lexie is going to realise she’s in over her head and fall into Allie’s rules once more. It’s a harsh reality many haven’t accepted yet, even after six months. Allie had tried and clearly failed to have everyone understand that right now it’s not about liking thing, it’s about getting on with it.

Fuck everyone. She huff and slams herself again the side again. Luke’s head slightly turns. So he’s paying attention to her. She wonders what Helena is thinking of all of this. Helena had agreed that she didn’t want Lexie or Harry in charge. Had they fallen out? Or were they fine?


“We weren’t friends.” Ouch. He turns back around. What is going on with him? They weren’t
friends? After everything, they’ve been through? He had been one of the most trustworthy Guard members. Grizz and Luke were the two she knew she’d always be able to count on and now? Allie wishes she knew what happened to deserve this betrayal.

Grizz. She sits up straight. He found land. They were going to make it through next summer. Hopefully. If they could figure out the farming. They’ll need to spare people to go make the land workable. They managed to cope with the loss of a few members, but will they be able to handle more leaving? The trash duty could be done by a smaller amount of people. It would be longer and more gruelling shifts, but it would allow more people to join Grizz and the team. There needs to be people in the kitchen and stores. There isn’t a way to lose people there as they’ll need to keep careful track of the supplies. A few of The Guard could go. Maybe some of the “weaker” members, the ones that cannot cope with their guarding duties alone, the ones that can’t handle situations alone. She continues planning what to do about the new land when suddenly she stops. She’s not in charge anymore. She might be dead by the morning, who knows what Lexie is going to do. No, she won’t be dead by morning. As much as there was a personal vendetta against Allie, she knew that ultimately Lexie cared about justice and fairness. Things Allie had failed to show her. A possibly fatal mistake.

Get over it. Why didn’t she just take action? She knows why. There is so much shit going on that at the time it didn’t seem like a big deal. It was a big deal, it is a big deal. Her sister would have done something. Every time Allie felt like she was finally doing well on her own, the ghost of Cassandra would come crashing back in. She misses her sister and wishes she was doing all of this with her. No, she wished none of this actually happened.

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“What’s going to happen to me?” she’s given up with the bravado, at least around Luke. What’s the point? She’s lost. Even if she makes it out of this alive, how can she regain the trust of the people? Her name has been completely torn to shreds.

“No.” Huh. He actually responded. “Yet.”

“Right.” She shuffles towards the door so she can hear better. They’d taken all the wine from the cellar so she could drown her sorrows. All she has right now is to try and talk to Luke, try to entertain herself. “Can you send a message for me? Or a couple?” He doesn’t move. “Please?” He shifts. She’s wearing him down. Maybe if he knew the messages, he’d change his mind. “Can you send a message to Sam and Becca? Tell them congratulations for me and that I wish I could see her, them?” He turns his head slightly, not enough to properly see her but enough to know he’s listening. “Then can you send one to Grizz and the team, telling them I am so happy and proud of what they’ve done. It’s dangerous and they managed it. I am grateful to them.” She can feel the prickling sensation of tears in her eyes. Who knew sending a message from a jail cell could be so emotional? “And finally, if, when, you guard Will, tell him I’m fine. I’m okay. And that I hope he’s okay.” She can feel a tear fall down her face. She quickly wipes it in case Luke turns around. She knows he can hear the emotion in her voice, but she doesn’t want him to see how much this is breaking her. Having everyone turn on you, having the world shut you up is soul destroying. She’d felt so on top, so hopeful, like she finally had a purpose and now. Well. Now, she was rotting in a cell. Okay, Allie, *bit dramatic,* she thinks to herself. “I mean that’s all I want to say so if you feel bored or you’re not up to much, that’d be great, cool, fun.” She shuffles back to the sleeping bag. A sudden wave of exhaustion has taken over her. Maybe clinging onto the stress had been keeping her up all night? She wasn’t entirely sure. She crawls into it, feeling the hard floor beneath her. Not the comfiest but sleep had finally won the battle.

Luke turns around after about five minutes, curious at the sudden stillness in the rooms. He sees Allie’s lifeless body and panics for a second before watching her chest rise and fall. She’s finally found some peace to sleep. Guilt growths within Luke. He’s conflicted, watching someone he’d
grown to respect seem so pathetic sleeping upon the floor. He doesn’t have much time to dwell on it though when Clark enters. He’s increasingly dominating demeanour had left his appearance somewhat menacing. Something glinted behind his eyes as he stared at the still body of Allie. Since arriving in New Ham, something had slowly changed within Clark and with Lexie and Harry in charge, Allie in prison, something seems to be bubbling to the surface. “You’re on break then Lexie has something for you.” Luke glances back at Allie. “Don’t worry, I’ll take good care of her.”

“Lexie made it clear not to interact with her.” He’s defensive. Luke had heard about what had been done to Lexie. Some of The Guard really didn’t have boundaries. In fact, Luke suspected that power had gone to most of their heads. Clark, in particular, seemed to enjoy having people trapped.

“Not to speak to her.” He asserts, rolling his eyes.

“Clark.” Luke’s tone is a warning. Clark rolls his eyes and sits in the chair, clearly annoyed.

“I’ll just sit bored then. She’s not even a flight risk, why are we doing this?”

“It’s the rules.”

“Her rules.” Luke doesn’t have time to argue with him. He doesn’t want to talk to Clark for much longer. Anyway, he has messages to deliver. He glances over to Allie once more before Clark rolls his eyes, pushing him slightly out the way with his feet. “I’m not going to do anything.” Luke wished he believed him.

Lexie and Harry sat on opposite sides of the church. Harry, boldened by his new role, sits relaxed, legs crossed, arms leaning on the back of the seat. To him, this is pointless, he just wants to spend the day in that quiet, clean house of his. He might go get a beer later, some snacks and just enjoy the quiet. There hasn’t been much quiet. Yet, the images of himself in the bed, alone in the quiet, numb, push to the forefront of his mind. He shakes his head, trying to get the thoughts out. This is different, this quiet will be a good one.

In contrast to Harry, Lexie sat straight, arms folded across her body, foot tapping on the ground. Her eyes constantly flitting around the room, eyeing each door and window, as if expecting something. Any noise causes her to flinch ever so slightly, not a big enough jerk for someone to notice, but enough for her to mentally curse at herself every time she did it. She’d never set out to be in charge. Months ago when all this happened, she had been quite happy to be part of the crowd but then Cassandra died and it just seemed to get worse from there. Worked to the bone, rations docked, The Guard eerily watching everyone, it was like some sort of fucking police state. Allie had been the problem. She let The Guard do what they want with everyone, not to mention she worked everyone to the bone for her own benefit. When was the last time she actually did something? She just appeared out of nowhere, said a few words then disappeared into the house again. She never shared anything or real value. Well, that is going to change, all of it is going to change, Lexie is going to make sure of it.

Helena appears from one of the doors and stops, standing in front of the two sitting before her. She’s not pleased with the outcome of everything, but she’ll do her best appear impartial. That would be the best for now. Mediator between all parties, defence to the damned, a safe place to the scared, that is what she is. Personal opinion aside is key, no matter how hard she is finding it.

Her lips purse as the two before her gaze at her, Harry impatient, Lexie a mix between fear and anger. What a competent combo. “At least sit on the same side.” They stare blankly at her. “You’re meant to be a team. Look like one.” Harry doesn’t move, nor does Lexie. Instead, they stare at one
another. If Harry were to move then he’d be relinquishing power to Lexie, she’d take it as she was
the one in charge. Unfortunately, Lexie feels the same. Helena sighs. A table had been placed in the
centre at the top of the church. A single chair sat behind it. Helena strides to the back. She’s gone for
a minute at the most before she frustratingly carries another chair out. It’s slammed down next to the
other chair. She waits expectantly. Lexie shuffles, which Harry mistakes as movement and he stands,
he curses slightly. Lexie follows suit and both of them move towards a chair. Helena’s eyes roll in
their sockets, *Lord give me strength.*

Harry and Lexie do not have long to settle before Grizz strides into the room, Gwen following
quacking behind him. Helena notices that Grizz’s expression has become more pained than the
morning. His emotions were unsettled, swirling around in his head. Helena knew this was going to
cloud the man’s judgement. Gwen better have her wits about her for this meeting.

Gwen was shit scared of this meeting. She must admit, she could be a shallow person and during all
the room sharing, she did what it took to keep her own space. However, the town she came back to
feels like something out of, what was that play? The witchy one? The Crucible. People spreading
rumours and then hunting them. Wow, she had been paying attention in English. Or maybe she was
thinking of Mean Girls? Months ago, she’d felt like Cassandra had been hunting the boys but that
wasn’t a war. And to be honest this isn’t one yet, but something in Gwen’s stomach knew it is
probably the start of one. If she felt it, then Lord knows, the individuals within this room must. She
glances at Grizz. He’s standing strong, present but she knew there was something battling at the back
of his mind that was not this meeting and she’s worried that it’s going to get us in trouble. Helena’s
here though, she’ll keep them on track, right? Her eyes flit across to Helena. Her smile doesn’t match
her eyes. Well, fuck.

“You both wished to see me.” He’s eyes cautiously. He’d tried his best to keep his chill tone but it’s
been a very stressful morning. The chair squeaks as Harry twitches in his seat, keen to get this going
so he could be gone. Lexie, on the other hand, is very still, wide eyes staring at Grizz.

“Um.” She’s unsure. Grizz’s eyebrows raise, waiting. Lexie isn’t sure what to ask. She and Harry
didn’t exactly plan what needed to be discussed, they’d both known it was important to talk to Grizz.
“So. A lot has happened since you were last in-“

“We’ve been filled in with what has happened.” Gwen cuts her off. Lexie frowns towards Gwen.
They’d asked for Grizz, she didn’t expect anyone else. Lexie unfolds her arm, stretching them across
the table, drumming her fingers on the counter. All eyes are on her. Helena coughs slightly. Grizz
can tell that the two of them had no idea how to handle this.

“Right.” Lexie glances at Harry only to be greeted by a bored expression. She’s going to be doing
this on her own then. She takes a deep breath. She’s got this. “Explain what you found from the
beginning.” She wants to hear exactly what they found.


“Right but, how far away is it? What are the challenges, can you find your way back there, I need
details?” She’s surprised by how calm she’s managing to keep her voice. She knows the frustration is
showing on her face but she’s managing not to scream at him. Grizz takes a seat in the front pew.
Gwen glances at him before copying. Lexie catches the exchange and understands that their alliance
isn’t with her. This could be a challenge.

“We know how to get back there; it wasn’t just aimless wandering. It is a trek to get there but we
could set up a small settlement there and farm the land, establishing a trade line between the two
places. This would keep everyone fed. There are animals, we’re unsure at how many but we could
breed and slaughter or just let the wildlife do as they please and we hunt as we go. Whatever you
want to do. You two are in charge, the next steps are on you. Now,” Grizz leans forward, Harry and Lexie straighten slightly. “Allie and Will. What are you planning on doing?” Gwen and Helena watch everyone carefully. Grizz bombarded them with information and then went straight into why he really agreed to meet them. Gwen had to admit, watching the faces of Lexie and Harry slightly malfunction as they tried to figure out what their next move was, is entertaining. “You just keeping them locked up? Why?” Grizz’s hands fly up into the air. Helena grits her teeth, trying to communicate telepathically to Gwen to get him to cool it. He’s going in way too hot. “From what I gather you’re keeping them locked up for voter fraud, right?” He waits for a response, but they don’t give him one. He shakes his head slightly. “That’s not a dangerous crime and let’s be honest, they never did it, never got the chance. Regardless of whether they’ve done it or not though, keeping them locked up seems a bit extreme for the crime they’re accused of. They need to be released.”

Lexie laughs and Grizz grins at her, eyebrows raised, “Something funny?”

“They need to be locked up.” Lexie stands, nodding as if reassuring herself of her judgement. “That’s what you do.” Grizz nods slowly, understanding Lexie’s logic but it’s flawed.

“Right. What about parole?” They’re speechless. Helena can’t help but smile at Grizz’s quick thinking. She hadn’t even thought to ask about parole. “People have told me you’re the fair rulers. Parole is fair.”

“We’re not letting them out on parole. Anyway, this isn’t what-“ Harry is trying to regain control of the conversation, trying to move it away from the business that didn’t concern Grizz in his eyes. They were in charge now, they could do what they want.

“Hang on. The only way in which parole is usually denied is if they are proven to be a danger to society.” He looks around the room at the uncomfortable faces. “I think we can all agree they’re not a danger. If anything they’re in danger. Or have you forgotten that mob from yesterday?” Lexie stares at her hands, ashamed. She sinks slightly in her chair. Grizz can’t help but feel bad for the way he’s making her feel but if she really wants to be a better ruler than Allie, she cannot let her own vengeance dictate her actions. “The second reason would be a flight risk.” He lets out a short laugh that echoes throughout the church. “Where are they going to run? Even if they did magically find somewhere in the woods, they wouldn’t last long and they’d die. We cannot afford to lose anyone else. We need every person possible to make this community work.” He pauses, letting his points sink in. He doesn’t want to lose momentum, but he needed his points to be heard so they’d work. “You let them out on parole, keep them confined to the house if necessary, have Helena work on their defence, have their trial and punish if,”

Lexie interjects, “When.” Grizz pauses. It tells him all he needs to know about this situation. “If.” He emphasises, “they are found guilty. Innocent until proven guilty, right?” There’s an eerie silence. Harry’s stone-cold expression proves that whatever friendship Grizz and he had at one point, is gone. Grizz had made it clear where he stood, as had Harry. Lexie glares up. A face coated in determination. She is not going to be pushed around by another boy.

“They need to be monitored and keeping them in the cellar allows that job to be easier.” She is slow and methodical with her wording. Grizz and her lock eyes. Gwen shifts next to Grizz. She’d hope this would have been a quick meeting, one without much tension. She was wrong. Grizz had drawn a clear line in the sand, for someone so smart, he wasn’t playing his cards close to his chest at all. Helena worries that this rash move may be the beginning of his fall.

“I understand that but think how it looks to the rest of us. We’re hurt by Allie and Will but once that hurt subsides, and trust me, it will, we’ll wonder if every time we make a mistake we’ll be locked up, we’ll be forced into some cellar, packed in there like sardines.” Though his voice has lowered, it still
has the same effect as his animated arguments. “Lexie, you’re smart.” Harry scoffs, trying to get into the line of sight of Grizz, feeling completely left out of this discussion. He’d been left out of everything so far, he’s meant to be a mayor here. They shouldn’t be leaving him out again. “You know this will show everyone how you’re different, how you give the second chances, how you are fair. This will show everyone change.” Gwen and Helena relax a little. Grizz had played this well. They exchange a look between one another. Harry frowns, holding his hand out in between Grizz and Lexie.

“Lexie? Lexie! Are you seriously considering this? It’s clear he’s on Allie’s side! He’s using this as a way to manipulate—“ Grizz stands up and Harry falls silent. Grizz is a big guy, he could easily knock him out.

“I don’t care about who wears the crown. I care about the survival of the town and right now it’s coming across like you’re afraid of them. Are you afraid of them, Harry? Locking them up is a coward’s move, not a power one. Are you scared, Lexie?” She studies Grizz’s face, trying to determine whether what he’s saying is the truth. Did he not care? How can you not care? As unsure as she is with Grizz’s intention she believes his points. Dewey had been locked up because of the crime he’d been accused of. He’d been a danger. As much as she wants humiliation and justice for Allie’s tyranny, this isn’t the way she wants people to view her. Plus, she isn’t scared of Allie. There is no way she’d be able to turn things around now before the trial. Lexie is smart, she knows it, she knows what she must do, what she needs to do to keep the power. Lexie bites her lip and glances at Harry. He throws his hands up in the air, knowing what is about to be said.

“We’ll release her and Will.” Grizz holds back a smile but Helena and Gwen can’t help it. “They’ll go into your care, if anything happens it’s on you. Helena,” They all turn to Helena who quickly removes the beam that is on her face. “You are to be Allie and Will’s defence. The trial will happen a week on Saturday.” She nods and the other turn back to Gwen and Grizz. Helena gives a small thumbs up to Grizz who grimaces, slightly embarrassed and gives a short nod.

A cold winter sun breaks through the clouds, shining through the windows, hitting the backs of Lexie, Harry and Helena, whilst blinding Grizz and Gwen slightly. To anyone else it is just the weather changing but to Helena, she knew, this was a sign that they were headed in the right direction. Her hands drift to the delicate cross that hung across her back.

Grizz and Gwen start to move, gathering themselves and their rucksack. They need to prepare for Allie and Will’s return, the house is a bit of a mess with everyone that stayed last night. “Wait.” They turn to see Lexie standing, silhouetted by the sun. “They will be released into your care tomorrow morning if you join the council with immediate effect.” Harry jolted upright, standing furious next to Lexie. He’s already growing frustrated that she isn’t including him on any decision. “You counselled Allie, then you will counsel us too until the next elections. Otherwise, I’d fear you did care and just tried to trick me.”

“I wasn’t on the council—“ Grizz starts to protest, he didn’t want to be in this position, didn’t want to get this involved. He had just wanted to get Allie and Will out and have them take over again. To be honest, he wanted to farm. “Everyone knows you weren’t just the glorified explorer, Grizz.” Grizz is distracted for a moment by her choice of words. He has just explored and found new land for them to use, so in his eyes, he’s not glorified anything. “So? Shall I,” She glances at a furious Harry. “We see you at the meeting on Friday?” They’re all watching him. He does the wrong thing, it could go sideways very quickly. He swallows, slowly nodding. Lexie smiles. The sun disappears. A bit on the nose, Grizz can’t help but think. “Good. We’ll see you soon.”
Lexie saunters around the table and past Gwen and Grizz. Gwen’s mouth hanging slightly open, astonishment radiating off her. Grizz’s expression has soured, almost matching Helena’s. Harry frantically glances between everyone, not quite understanding what has just happened but knowing it didn’t go the way he wanted it to have. As if he were two again, he stomps out the church, his footsteps echoing angrily through the church.

Grizz locks eyes with Helena and he knows he underestimated her. He thought he’d managed to play it perfectly but so had Lexie. She’s not incompetent, she just wanted them to think it.

Luke was already sitting in the kitchen when Grizz, Helena and Gwen arrive back at Allie’s house. His head is hung over a mug, guilt wrecking his insides. He'd barely sipped at the cold coffee. Helena doesn’t acknowledge him, instead heads straight to the bathroom. Luke’s stomach flips. Mickey and Bean greet the others, their spirits slightly raised at the sight of them. Their team complete once more. Grizz enters the kitchen, eyeing Luke with suspicion.

“Kettle boiled?” Luke shakes his head slightly and Grizz makes his way around the counter, filling and switching the kettle on. Silently, he moves about mindlessly make the cups of tea and coffee for those in the house. His mind had been filled all day with words, thoughts, emotions and plants, right now he’s happy to let it be empty. They’ll have their tea and coffee then go to dinner and then have their meeting. That was the rest of today’s plan, tomorrow Allie and Will are back in the house and they can take over the planning, the leadings. For the love of God, Grizz hoped they took it over.

“I have a message for you.” Grizz glances up for a moment at the defeated body of Luke. He’s not looking at him, so Grizz continues working away in the kitchen, cleaning dishes and putting things away. People from his team dip in and out, grabbing things, giving Grizz trash to put away etc. “It’s from Allie.” Gwen who had stepped into the kitchen at this very moment steps out again, turns on her heels and decides to hang out with Grizz another time. Grizz places his mug down a bit more aggressively than necessary. “She wants to say she’s proud of the work you and your team have done, she’s happy you all came back.” Silence. Luke still hasn’t made eye contact with Grizz. Grizz stares down at the shell of a friend he once knew. How can one week change so much about a man?

“I’ll tell her thank you when I see her tomorrow.” Luke’s head shoots up, Grizz doesn’t flinch. He expected that to be his reaction. Luke’s mouth opens and shuts, processing what he just said. “I got her and Will out on parole.” He stands up, hands behind his head, pacing suddenly in a circle. “Luke?” He stops, eyes slightly wild staring at Grizz. What the fuck is going on?

“I need to go. Where’s Helena?” His voice is hoarse as if someone had scrapped sandpaper along the inside. As Grizz is about to answer. Helena comes rushing in, grabbing her jacket and flinging it on. Luke grabs her, slowing her down. She glares in response. “We need to go.”

“I am going. What is wrong with you?” Her confusion is mimicked in Grizz’s face as he shrugs when she glances over to him.

“Great. We’ll go home and-“

“No. I have something I need to do. Someone I need to see.” Luke stands, hands off Helena, confusion now on his face. “I have church duties you know. Whatever is going on with you, sort it. I’ll see you at home.” And off she goes. The door shuts and Luke slowly turns, eyes locking in on Grizz’s. Grizz isn’t sure what to do.

“Fuck!” Luke storms out the house, almost crashing into Gwen as she reappears to see what’s the matter. She stares at Grizz. He sips his drink.
Helena rushes passed groups of people, making her way towards the otherwise of town. In all the chaos recently, she’d forgotten something very important, someone very important. Internally she curses at herself. So, caught up in the drama of everything that she forgot the one person who is probably in the most danger. Elle. Allie had tried to protect her but with Allie away, Campbell was able to take Elle back. She had to see if she is okay, to make sure Campbell hadn’t killed her. People move out of her way, seeing from a distance that Helena has no time for niceties right now.

The air is cold and with the sun finally setting it is getting unbearable. This winter is going to be difficult. She could see her breath as she pants, starting to tire slightly but forcing herself to march ahead. She will see Elle. As soon as she had Allie and Will back, they need to find a way to put Campbell away. Away where though?

Lost in her thoughts, she trips and stumble over a pothole in the street. Slightly twisting her ankle, Helena swears, cursing to the darkening sky. She punches the air frustrated, tears pricking the back of her eyes. She reaches what seems to be a deserted part of the town. She lets out a gut-wrenching scream. She screams a few times, the frustrations pouring out with each shout. Why just why. It buzzes through her head. No. Stop. Elle. Find Elle. She shakes herself out, composing herself once more, forcing herself to put up a front. She needs to focus on Elle right now, she needs to see she is alive.

Trying to storm through the pain in her ankle she makes her way over to their house. It takes her fifteen minutes. Campbell is already at the front door, a sneer on his face. Her stomach clenches, her footing falters but she carries on. He stands in the way of the door; she tries to push past. He grips her arm, squeezing slightly. “Was that you screaming?” Helena doesn’t say anything, staring deep into his eyes, wondering how God could let such a man exist.

“I’d like to see Elle please.” Her voice cold and monotone. She will not show her fear in front of Campbell. He lets out a bark of a laugh.

“No. She’s not well. The ordeal of being arrested and held captive by Allie has taken its toll on her. She wants peace and quiet. She wants alone time.” He throws Helena’s arm down. Helena’s nostrils flare. Campbell continues to smile, infuriating her more. “That is your cue to leave.”

“I am not leaving until I see Elle.” Campbell rolls his eyes, not budging. Helena tries once more to enter the house. Campbell easily pushes her back.

“Now, now, breaking into someone’s house is against the rules. Wouldn’t want the Pastor being arrested now, would we? Who would be able to defend Allie and Will?” He’s right. Helena knows it. She cannot afford to get into trouble. It would help no one. Elle would be left with no one on the outside. She needed to be smart. Yet staring straight into the devil’s eyes, it’s incredibly hard not to let her emotions get the best of her. She yells past Campbell, “Elle! I don’t know if you can hear me but I’m here! I’m going to get you away from him, okay? I’ll find a way.” Campbell just looks exasperated, done with her feeble attempts. She’s not much of a person really. He’s impressed she stormed her way out here to talk to his pet but apart from that. Was she going to pray, and hope things got better? He snickers at the thought. Helena’s attention focuses on Campbell, a defiant and disgusted stare directed straight at him. Is he meant to be scared? “You hurt her, and I will end you.” Campbell leans in, it takes every cell in Helena not to step back.
He whispers in her ear, “I don’t think God would agree with that reasoning, do you?” Helena spits in his face and freezes. What has she done? Her hands clam up and she can feel fear flood her body as Campbell straightens, slowly wiping his face. He then smiles. “I’ll remember that.” Helena goes pale. That could mean anything, has she just put Elle in more danger? Oh shit. “Goodbye, Helena.” Still frozen in place, Helena watches as Campbell shuts the door, disappearing into the house.

Feeling returns to her legs and she hastily walks away, tears streaming down her face. She can barely breathe. When she turns back, she sees one of the upstairs windows curtains move. She’ll get Elle out. She’ll find a way. She has to, she just has to.

*

“What!?” Sam holds Eden in his arms and tries to shush Becca as she leaps out the bed towards him. “You’ll wake the-“ She doesn’t pay attention to his signing and starts angrily signing back.

“I do not care if I wake her. You’re telling me Lexie and Harry are BOTH in charge and Allie and Will are in jail.” Sam didn’t know how to react to that. Becca is pacing around in circles, breathing heavily. It’s reminiscent of the early labour from a couple of nights ago. He was going to point it out but the anger on her face leads him to stay silent. Becca stops, holding onto the bed then slamming her hands down on it. Eden stirs slightly and this time it’s Sam who shoots her a glare. She returns it. “Do you not understand the severity of this situation Sam!?”

“Of course, I do but waking Eden up is not going to make things better, it will make things worse.” Becca’s eyes narrow but she stops speaking, instead signing everything. He’s right but she wants to scream right now. This isn’t fair. This is ridiculous. Voter fraud! Voter fraud. Allie may sometimes be misguided in her reasoning but voter fraud, she wanted people to choose her! Becca is pacing again, out of the corner of her eye she sees Sam start to sign again. She stops to focus on it. “Grizz is on the case.” Becca stares deadpan at Sam who gives a weak smile, understanding he didn’t say the right thing.

“What’s he going to do, dig them out with his gardening skills?” Becca hisses at Sam, trying to keep her voice low. Sam’s face hardens. Becca and Grizz haven’t had time to bond or get to know each other and Sam may be extremely biased, but anyone could tell Grizz was more than a glorified gardener. Sam moves around the bed and places Eden back in the cot, she starts to stir again so strokes her hand, she settles.

“Maybe he will! But if someone can lead an expedition to find land and bring everyone back alive, I’d have a little more faith in them.” Becca and Sam glower at each other. She’s standing arms crossed, lips pursed whilst Sam’s eyes had narrowed into slits. Sam and Becca argue but Sam is taking this one personally. He realises Becca won’t understand, and doesn’t know, the personal side but he can’t help it. It’s stinging her lack of faith in him.

“Faith? You want me to have faith in a member of The Guard? In some baffoon?” Somewhere deep inside Becca knows she’s being unreasonable and quite frankly rude, but hormones are all over the place right now, she’s had little sleep and quite frankly, she’s pissed at the world right now.

“He is not a baffoon.” Sam’s brows have furrowed into a scowl that he shoots towards Becca. She needs to calm down. “He’s smart and-“ Becca cuts him off, leading to him throwing his hands in the air.
“He knows a few words of poetry and can plant a carrot. That’s pretentious, not smart!” She starts pacing again. She needs to protect Eden and having the world out there be in the state it is has unsettled her. There’s nowhere for them to run, so how can she protect her? She doesn’t know how to protect her. She wants her to be safe, she’d do anything to keep her safe but what if that’s not good enough. Tears start to roll down her face and Sam stands up. Becca frustratingly stands there, waving her hands about but not making any signs and not saying anything. Sam tentatively goes to her, pulling her slowly into his arms. She resists at first but soon falls against his chest, sobbing as quietly as possible. Sam rubs her back and sways slightly side to side, resting his head on top of hers, holding her tight, making her feel safe.

Kelly walks in holding clean and sterilised bottles, a bag of formula underneath her arm. “Oh.” She goes to walk out again but Becca pulls back from Sam, wiping her tears, gesturing for her to come in. Kelly places the stuff on the side cabinet and sits on the bed. Becca sits next to her and Kelly holds her. Sam hovers for a moment before sitting on the other side of Becca. He doesn’t watch what Kelly is saying to Becca. He’s her go to make her feel better. Maybe she’ll listen to Kelly. Instead, he watches Eden sleep. Eat, sleep and repeat. Such a simple and pure routine. Watching Eden, he understood Becca’s fears. But no matter how horrible Lexie and Harry are as leaders, they’d never hurt a child. No one could harm anything so helpless. He ignores the images of Campbell popping into the back of his head. He wouldn’t let his brother near this child. Though he knew Campbell is smarter than that, he knows he can’t have people turning on him. Survival in this world counts right now. Nevertheless, he isn’t allowed near Eden.

He didn’t think he’d feel so protective over her. He wanted to be her father, but he knew ultimately, he wasn’t the biological one. He thought that would have meant he’d care for her less, not have this instinct to love unconditionally. Yet, when she was born, when she’d started to cry, when he saw her move her mouth, her head, felt her warmth, he knew. She was his. She was always going to be his. He sticks his hand into the cot again, touching her tiny hand with his pinkie. Is she real? She never seems real. Even when Becca punches him in the night, making him stay awake whilst she feeds her or making him change her nappy. She never feels real. Will she ever? Becca’s head rests on his shoulder. Kelly is holding Becca’s hand. She sticks out her other and signs, “Beautiful.” Sam nods and kisses her forehead. “We must protect her.”

“Always.” And he squeezes her hand. The three of them sit there watching Eden for a bit. Kelly is the first to move. Becca and Sam turn as she straightens herself up and stretches. She looks as exhausted as they feel.

“Gordie and I are going to be away for a bit, do you guys think you’ll be fine?” They nod but as she’s about to turn Becca stops her.

“Where are you going? Is it to do with Allie and Will?” Kelly hesitates for a moment, unsure of whether it’ll set Becca off again, but Sam had made Gordie and her promise to now include Becca in everything.

“Grizz went to see Lexie and Harry today. I’m not sure what happened but we got a cryptic message earlier from Gwen saying its good and bad.” She waits, studying Becca’s face, making sure she doesn’t start crying again.

“So Grizz might have fixed it a bit?” She speaks slowly as well as turning to Sam who was grinning in an incredibly smug manner. Kelly backs away sensing a small tiff about to happen. However, as she looks behind, Becca is smiling, playfully pushing Sam as he bear hugs her. She nods knowing that they’re feeling good, she feels fine to leave them now. Gordie meets her at the front door with her jacket. He chucks it at her, and she catches it.
“All good?” He shoves his hands in his pocket, mentally preparing himself for the night ahead.

“All good.” *For now,* she continues in her head. It won’t be truly *‘all good’* until she hears what Grizz has to say.
Everyone sat there silently. Grizz surveys the faces before him. He and Gwen had given a detailed account of what had happened. Gwen exaggerated a few of Grizz’s actions but he had been quick to reign that in. He doesn’t want people getting the wrong idea about him. “Well.” They all stare up at him. “They will be back tomorrow, they’ll come up with a plan, I’m going to start on my plans for the new land—“

“You’re on the council,” Gordie states blankly. Grizz screws up his nose shifts his shoulders a bit. “You don’t think that will be a problem?”

“I’ll show up, listen and leave.” The others do not seem happy with his answer. He doesn’t really know what else to say. Although he’s been the main individual to do with exploration and agriculture the past few months, he’s tried to stay on the sidelines, only stepping up when he needed too. Today had been a day like that. Now he wants to get back to his garden and books, plan for how they’re to farm and just live. Being part of the council is a pain but ultimately, he doesn’t have to do much. Gordie seems to think otherwise. He holds out his hands as if grasping at words to try and string together a sentence.

“They’ll want to know about the land and—“ Grizz shrugs leaving Gordie speechless.

“I mean, if Allie had been in charge they’d know about the land, anyway. I think, for the benefit of the town, I need to divulge the information.” They shift uncomfortably. Even Kant would agree. Probably one of the only times the two moral counterparts ever overlap. “I understand it feels like a betrayal to Allie, but this isn’t about politics, it’s about people, it’s about our survival. Lexie is smart. Harry is…” He trails and screws up his nose. Kelly can’t help but shoot a glare towards Grizz. Harry is smart, just misguided. Grizz catches it and swiftly moves on. “Look. Allie and I had a plan. I intended to act out that plan. Lexie and Harry didn’t know her plan, I can make it seem like it is solely my plan and therefore they won’t mess it up.” He smiles at everyone, hoping they finally hop on board with it. Also, he’s fed up of talking about plans. He’s said the word too much. It’s 10 o’clock and at this rate, he knows it’ll get close to midnight before they even start to come to a resolution. Did they still have the curfew? He’s not entirely sure.

Kelly stands up, eyes turn to her. “Grizz is right.” Grizz smiles. Finally! It feels wrong to be
discussing plans and everything without Allie or Will but it’s necessary to have everyone on the same page. “Our focus right now should be making sure Allie and Will can stay out of the cellar. Grizz, you can keep us informed with the Lexie/Harry situation.” Grizz nods, happy to take a step back for a moment. “I still think you should be vague with them though.” Grizz nods again, obviously. He didn’t trust the two of them. He isn’t going to divulge everything. They’ll know what they need to know.

“Who made you the leader?” Gwen’s irritated voice cuts across everything. The eyes switch to her. Grizz gives her a warning look. It’s no secret that Gwen didn’t get along with some, most, of the girls but he seriously thought the fact they had bigger fish to fry meant she’d go with the flow.

“What?” She holds up her hands at Grizz, and he rubs his face.

“I’m not trying to be the leader Gwen. I’m just trying to make sure we’re all on the same page and no what we’re doing.” Kelly’s exasperated tone mimics everyone’s face in the room. It had been a long day. They’d waited a good hour for Helena and Luke before getting started but neither showed up, which had just left Gordie, Kelly, Gwen, Bean and Mickey. Once they’d known it was just going to be them, it had still taken a good two hours to go through everything. Right now, everyone wants their bed.

“Well, you’re sounding like a leader…” Gwen sings the last word, pouting her lips, eyes sliding to the side. Grizz straight out scowls at her and he watches her shrink back a little. If she is going to act like a toddler, Grizz will tell her off like one. This isn’t the time nor place. “Sorry.”

“Gwen, Bean and Mickey will help me with the farm stuff. They had travelled with me, they know everything, so it only makes sense.” No one argues against Grizz. One because it makes sense and two, who can be bothered? Bean and Mickey seem to relax a little. Gwen smiles, happy with what is being said. The three of them had been worried since returning that they’d be split up and forced into their old jobs once again. The expedition had been tough at times but ultimately fun and they respected Grizz. They trusted him. Kelly and Gordie believed it’s for the best too. Gordie could recognise the leadership qualities within Grizz. Whether he wants it or not, he’s got it. What had been a team of volunteers, had turned into his own little following. Though the members of his team ultimately believed Allie as their Mayor, they’d wait for Grizz’s approval before doing anything. Kelly could see that being in Grizz’s care settled the others. She hadn’t pegged Gwen as much of a hard worker but clearly, Grizz helped bring that out in her. She’d do what he asked anyway. “So, can we say this land stuff is finally settled? At least for now?” Everyone nods. Grizz takes a seat, leans back and leaves the floor to Gordie, who awkwardly takes his place. Grizz shuts his eyes, listening.

“I am still on the Committee of Going Home or CGH, so I will also attend council meetings I imagine but, um, not as often as Grizz. Aside from that, um, I help with the hospital and pharmacy.” Gordie is babbling slightly, Gwen rolls her eyes. Gordie nods, realising he’s being long-winded. “Look, we need everyone to help with Allie and Will’s defence. I have a lot of work alongside this, so it’s all-hands-on-deck. Helena was meant to be here to outline her defence plan, but she’s caught up.” He pauses for a moment, hoping the next thing he outlines is what Helena is wanting otherwise he’s just confusing everyone. “The main evidence is a witness statement, so we need to dissect and dismantle that. People have already lost their trust in them so it’s not about making them seem trustworthy, it’s about making the evidence seem unreliable.” Everyone’s silent again. They were meant to be going off to college, meant to be in college by now. Yet here they are, discussing politics and law as if they’d been studying it for years. “Helena had messaged me asking if we could start interviewing people who had been around Allie and Will in the days leading up to the arrest, retrace movements etc. Hopefully, we can find where the miscommunication happened and fix this mess.”

“How do we know they weren’t actually planning on doing it?” For the third time that night, Grizz
glares at Gwen. “No, I’m not apologising for this one. Someone has to say; we’re all thinking it.”

Grizz continues his glare, “Fine. I was thinking it.” She sighs. As much as Gwen loved annoying people, she did hate how it always made her the bad guy. However, this time she knows she's right to question this. She’d been away with the others; they didn’t know what had happened other than what people had said. They hadn’t seen the evidence, heard from the witness or anything. She didn’t believe Allie was a bad person, but good people can do bad things when they panic, when they’re stressed. Plus, if she’d been running against Harry, she knows she’d try anything to win. No one really wants to see that idiot in charge.

“Gwen.” She meets Kelly’s gaze. “I get it. This place makes you question everything and everyone but I, we, truly believe in Allie and Will. I know it’s not much, but I hope it’s enough.” Gwen watches as everyone’s eyes become somewhat pleading, begging her to understand and just go with it. She doesn’t like being told what to do but, she does know everyone in this room isn’t an idiot. She finally turns to Grizz who is just glaring at her. Not as sympathetic to her doubts as everyone else then. “Well?” Kelly prompts and Grizz sort of nods in her direction, willing her to move on so the meeting could end. She sighs, waving her hands out in defeat. Kelly smiles and Gordie bobs his head, starting to babble about something else but everyone in the room has resigned. No one is paying attention anymore. Everyone’s said and made their peace. Well minus Mickey and Bean but to be honest, Gwen and Grizz know they’re just happy to follow along with them.

The thing about this town, that is somewhat nice and awful, is the silence. Although they have cars, not many use them to get around and they hadn’t seen any birds near them. You don’t hear anything until it’s very close to you. It can be unsettling in the middle of the night, there’s no hum, no creaks or groans. At times, it’s peaceful, other times, unsettling. It did mean when talking with people, you ended up babbling more than usual, filling the silence. However, as they all grew closer together, being in silence together could be comforting. Gordie tonight is clearly uncomfortable. He’d lost one Pressman sister; he isn’t about to lose another. He is on edge about everything. Things have gotten out of control way too much. Murder, poison, voter fraud? It is starting to get to him. Not to mention they hadn’t made any progress about finding a door back home. How do you open a door when you don’t know where it is or where the key is? All of this was contributing to his anxious babbling. He didn’t want silence to sit and think about all the things he’s got on his plate. He can’t deal with that tonight. He doesn’t want to deal with that tonight. However, Kelly cuts him off.

“Before we finish this meeting, I need someone tomorrow to help me move Sam, Becca and Eden back to their house.” Gwen watches as Grizz perks up at the mention of Sam. Gwen had her thoughts about this but knew now isn’t the time to pry. Kelly noticed too but assumed this was due to the idea of the meeting coming to an end.

“I can do it.” Grizz’s attempt at a cool and even tone of voice fails. Gwen’s smirk tells him it’s failed. He knows he’s meant to be staying away from Sam and Becca but if they need help, he can help. It’s not as if they are going to be alone. They’re going to be around each other so it makes sense for him to help out.

“No.” They turn to Gwen. “You can’t. Allie and Will are coming back, and you need to be here when they do. You told Lexie and Harry you’d be here. I’ll go.” Grizz can’t help the look of disappointment spread across his face. He runs a hand through his hair, sighing in defeat. It’ll be for the best, but he can’t help the sadness swirl in his gut. Whilst lost in his thoughts, Kelly raises an eyebrow to Gwen.

“Really? I know you came to visit today but I didn’t think you and Becca really got on?” Gwen rolls her eyes in response.

“I don’t have to get on with her. Plus, that baby is adorable. I need to see her again.” Kelly can’t help
but laugh. Gwen is annoying, yes but she can also lighten the mood. “Okay, be at the hospital but 10.” Gwen smiles and pats Grizz on the back.

One by one, people start to leave. Kelly and Gordie decide to spend the night at the hospital since they have to be there early in the morning anyway. Bean and Mickey have gathered their stuff and have taken Grizz’s keys. It’s going to be their base for now. Once Allie and Will have been acquitted, Grizz will return to his team there, but for now, he has to stay here. Gwen hovers in the kitchen as Grizz starts to wash the dishes. “Aren’t you going back to Clark?”

“No.”

“Oh.” Grizz shifts slightly, watching Gwen from the corner of his eye. She’s playing with the sleeves of her jumper, staring intensely at the skirting board. Her can see on her face that’s she’s unsure of what to do. “Want to stay here tonight?”

“Yeah.” She shuffles through to the living room and Grizz carries on cleaning. He’s starting to enjoy Gwen’s company. She’s not as bad as his friends think she is. Gwen is very good at passing time, there’s always something on her mind she wishes to talk about. Since coming to this place, she’s proven herself to be just as ready to get down as dirty as the rest. Well, he ponders, she’ll do it but complain. He smiles to himself, memories of their trek dancing across his mind. He much preferred being outdoors. Here’s hoping things settle soon. But he knows as soon as he’s thinking it, they won’t.

* *

Grizz awoke to a bang at the front door. Gwen had taken the sofa and he’d fallen asleep in the armchair. Both jolted up at the noises. For a moment they stare at each other, unsure if they’re imaging things. The banging starts up again. Grizz jumps up, hastily striding towards the door. He swings it open, a puzzled expression upon his face. Allie is grateful to see Grizz, but a little bit upset at the fact he’s just in his underwear. He better not have been in her bed. Will and Allie are thrust forward, past Grizz. Allie snaps at Clark who simple smiles sleazily back at her. Lexie steps forward into the house, pursing her lips at the surroundings. She regards Grizz and Gwen, who is peering from around the corner, eyes wide at the spectacle. “A week Saturday is your trial. It’ll begin at 10. You are not allowed to leave the grounds of this house. A guard will be placed outside at all times.” She nods and Clark removes the handcuffs off of Allie. Todd removes the rope that had been straining Will, Grizz caught a glimpse of rope burns. They both rub their wrists. Will reaches out to Allie, gently touching her hand. Allie doesn’t seem to be paying attention, glaring at Lexie. Lexie turns her attention to Grizz. “I expect to see you tomorrow. 9.” She nods at Gwen and leaves with Todd. Clark settles on the steps out front, waving happily at Grizz. Grizz gives a weak smile before shutting the door.

Both of them appear exhausted. Dark bags under their eyes with their skin slightly grey paired with greasy hair and dirty clothes give them a rough look. Grizz grimaces. Allie half-heartedly smiles at Grizz. His expression is not helping her mood. With that said, being in her home does bring some comfort. It takes a step and a half for her to fall onto Grizz and embrace him. He slips an arm around her, squeezing her slightly. Will can’t help but feel a pang of jealousy, but it dissipates quickly as Grizz reaches out for him too. Will accepts the hug. The three of them, standing holding each other, thankful that they’re all safe and alive. Allie steps back, straightening up. Will hovers close beside her. A hand rests on her hip and she raises an eyebrow towards Gwen and then stares up at Grizz.
“What the fuck is happening?”
Becca has some fears whilst Grizz has a visitor in his garden.

Becca isn’t Gwen’s biggest fan. So, when she sees her stride through the doors with a, what is essentially stolen, pram, she can’t help but groan. When she had visited yesterday with Grizz, she’d been nice and polite, but Becca knows that this girl has two faces, and one of those faces did not like her. She stops by the front desk, chatting to Gordie who gathers up documents and sprints out the building. Becca frowns.

Sam pops into her view and all worries melt away as she sees Eden. From the clothes given to them yesterday, Sam had put on an enormous snowsuit on her. She’s swamped in it, arms sticking out like a starfish. A hat falls over her eyes and Sam proudly hands her to Becca. She laughs softly. Sam cocks his head, confused. He’d personally thought he’d done a good job. It’s a bit big but she’ll grow into it. Becca holds Eden against her chest, gently kissing her forehead. She’s nervous about today. She’s nervous she’ll be too cold and die on their walk home. She’s nervous that she’ll fall out the pram and die. She’s nervous that she’ll be taken by an eagle and die. Sam and Kelly had told her she was overreacting. Yes, the eagle scenario is unlikely but the others? What if someone is drunk and driving recklessly? They’ll be squished, she’ll be dead. Although, with the padding from this outfit, maybe she’d survive. What on earth was Sam thinking? There had been better outfits to put her in. Nevertheless, she tells him it’s fine.

Sam had surprised her in this short amount of time how dedicated he was to this family. Something is up with him but he’s pushing it all aside for them. She feels a bit of guilt that she’d been so selfish recently but once they get home, once Eden is settled, she’ll ask him what’s going on. He’s been with her through this whole pregnancy, kept her secret, lied to everyone, the least she can do is ask him what’s up. She should have asked him sooner, but she’d wanted privacy. Kelly or Gordie had always been around them and as much as signing gave them some privacy, she felt as he held back when others were around.

Kelly pulls back the mint green curtains, revealing an overenthusiastic Gwen. Her arms are outstretched, and Becca immediately knows what she wants. Sighing, she hands Eden over, her stomach tightening as she does it. “Be careful.” It’s her go-to phrase at this moment in time. She’s petrified people will drop her. Gwen, however, holds her with each, resting on the best as Becca and Sam sort out their stuff. Becca keeps one eye trained on them at all times. Kelly brings over clothes she’d taken home and cleaned for them. “Thank you.” Becca gives her a hug and squeezes her tight. “And not just for these, for everything. You delivered a fucking baby. I don’t feel like anyone is talking about it enough. You delivered a baby.” She holds Kelly at arm’s length, staring deep into her eyes. Kelly goes red, shuffling her feet. She’d never been thought of as much but Becca’s right. She delivered a baby. A baby. “Thank you.” They embrace once more and Becca packs up the clothes.

“I’ll be round in a couple of days to see how everything is going. I’ve been reading some books and
stuff and there are a few reflex checks and weighing I need to do at some point but not until a couple of weeks from now.” She smiles as Becca signs to Sam, informing him of the plan. Kelly hands a notebook to Becca. “Just try and keep track of feeding and nappy changes. It’s fine if you can’t get everything all the time but it’ll help us with health checks.” They nod at her. Sam and Becca’s face mirror each other with slight surprise at how on top of things Kelly is. Originally, she’d intended to accompany them home but a couple from the kitchens burned themselves on boiling water during breakfast, so she needs to stay and check them out. There isn’t much she can do but the book gives her a few helpful tips to make them feel better. Plus, it’s handy to take note of the injuries and illnesses each person has in the town.

Sam holds out Becca’s jacket and she stares at it. As soon as she has that jacket on, she’ll have to leave. This place had felt safe. She doesn’t want to leave safe. Gwen gently places and straps Eden into the pram, she barely stirs. In the back of Becca’s mind, she’s impressed by how easily she manages it. Gwen may be the new babysitter.

“Are you okay?” Sam signs to her. She nods but still doesn’t move. He glances towards Kelly who pulls Gwen away for a second, giving them some privacy. “What’s the matter?” Becca feels guilt swirl at the pit of her stomach. He’s always concerned about her. He truly is her best friend, her family.

“This place feels safe. Out there is chaos. I don’t want to risk her life.” Sam gives her a sympathetic look which just makes her feel pathetic. Ultimately, she knows she’s being stupid and that they can’t live in the hospital, but she just wants to protect her daughter.

“I understand, but I’m here and you’re here. We’re her protection and we’ll protect her every day until we can’t.” He lets his words sink in before holding out the jacket again. Becca hesitates but slips into it, throwing a scarf and hat on too. Kelly and Gwen pop back over. Gwen picks up one of the bags.

“The great thing about this pram is that it’s sturdy and we can shove a shit tone onto it. Honestly, even when she’s too big for this, keep it, it’ll come in handy so much.” Becca smiles as Gwen loads up the pram.

“I guess, it’s time to go home.” Becca sighs and stares at everyone. Kelly hugs both Sam and Becca and shoots a warning look to Gwen who just rolls her eyes. Becca holds the pram and stares down at Eden. She did not think she’d be pushing a pram. She didn’t even know the town had prams. Of course, that’s an idiotic thought. They had shops in this town for babies and toddlers, there had also been a nursery so of course there are prams. Still, it felt slightly weird to be pushing one.

Sam holds out the doors and they make their way through the corridors of the hospital. He holds open the final door, Gwen casually steps through. Becca halts, staring at the dreary world ahead of her. She glances between Sam and Eden. Eden’s eyes blink open. Oh no. With a big breath, she begins to cry. Becca rushes forward into the world. A puzzled look on Sam quickly vanishes as he sees the screaming child in the pram.

“This walk better send her back to sleep,” Becca yells back as she strides ahead.

It’d taken Grizz another two hours of his life to explain everything to Allie and Will. However,
instead of discussing things further like with the others last night, they thanked him and went to bed, wishing to discuss it further tonight, when they’d finally had a rested sleep. Helena is due to come over tonight and walk through everything she can with Allie and Will. Neither seemed hopeful about the trial, Grizz understood. It’s not going to be much of a fair trial when the whole town hates you.

Grizz had stopped off at his house to inform Bean and Mickey of the tasks he wanted them to carry out. Grizz had just above average knowledge of agriculture. He knew how to garden on a small scale, understood plant rotation in theory, and germination of seeds. Most of these things had been picked up through biology lessons and gardening with his mother. He’d been keeping an eye on the gardens here but trying to produce a mass amount of food? He didn’t really know where to start. Before he’d left, Allie and he had briefly discussed what they’d do once the land had been found. With winter fast approaching, the land was sure going to freeze, and they needed to at least turn the soil over as soon as possible. Certain crops can be planted at certain times of the year, certain plants need a certain temperature, certain plants blah blah blah. There were a lot of factors he needed to account for. Not to mention, they need to find seeds. The garden centre had some but what about wheat? Did it have wheat? He didn’t think so. Regardless of all the factors, Grizz needed more information before starting. He’s sent Bean and Mickey to ransack the town of agricultural, gardening, and nature books, as well as a few survival books, from every bookstore and library. They’ll spend the next week nose deep into them, gathering the information they need. Once they have a good theoretical grasp of what needs to be done, they’ll start gathering supplies. Grizz had mentioned to Bean and Mickey to focus on historical books as well. They need to know the tools they’ll need to do this. Allie had been worried about the labour work. Grizz had a few ideas of how to help reduce the pain but he needed more information before he can act on it.

Lost in his thoughts, Grizz doesn’t realise the direction he’s walking in. He’d intended to head to the bookstore in town, but he’d turned on autopilot and his feet had taken him in another direction. He doesn’t acknowledge the people as he walks past, they pull puzzled expressions but shrug, seeing the intense concentration upon his face. Soon the groups of people fade, and the noise of chatter dies down. There’s no one but him. He kicks a stone along a path, murmuring to himself and counting with his hands. He turns a corner, slips through the gate and stops. He’d ended up in the gardens. He wouldn’t have thought anything really of his deviation if it hadn’t been for the figure kneeling by one of the plant pots. Their body was counted in a thick jacket and they had fingerless red gloves on. A matching scarf dangles down, skimming the top of the mud. If they had been wearing a hat, it would have taken longer to figure out who it was but the glints of orange in what most assume is just brown hair told him exactly who this is. “Sam.” His voice is a little raw and raspy, haven’t spoken in a while and the shock of seeing Sam there had taken him by surprise. He doesn’t move, continues to inspect the soil and check the plants, writing in a little notebook. Grizz frowns, then slaps his forehead. Am I a fucking idiot? He shuffles his way towards him. A small stone hits Sam’s leg by accident but it alerts him to Grizz’s presence. He jumps slightly, not expecting him to be there. Grizz stops moving, his hand goes behind his head and he scratches, waving slightly with the other hand. Sam stands up awkwardly, notepad falling to the ground. “Hi.” He smiles, Sam returns the smile. That damn smile. His stomach has started to swirl slightly, the butterflies waking up and starting to flutter. “Uh, so…” Grizz can’t think of what to say. It has never been a problem around Sam, not really. But today, after what he’d said yesterday, it’s hard to form a sentence. Instead, he gestures to the notepad and plant bed.

“Oh, I’m sorry. Whilst you were away I kept checking on them, making sure they’re okay. I kept notes for you.” He scrambles getting the notepad and hands it to him. There are measurements, timings, colour descriptions etc scrawled across pages. This is actually handy in keeping track of the plants. Grizz smiles.

“This is really sweet, thank you.” They stand awkwardly. Sam picks up his bag.
“I guess I’ll go. You’re back now so I won’t—” Grizz starts shaking his head. Sam pulls a perplexed face and stops talking. He’s unsure what he’s said.

“Stay.” Grizz knows he should just let Sam go but it’s nice to see him alone. Nothing can happen but that doesn’t mean they can’t hang out. They can hang out. Right? “Unless Becca needs you?” Sam shakes his head. Once they’d gotten home, Gwen had taken it upon herself to help with the unpacking and tidying of the house. Sam had found there wasn’t much for him to do. Becca had suggested he visit Allie, but he’d found himself in the garden instead. He wasn’t sure Allie and Will would be up for many visitors today. Plus, he wanted to bring Eden with him for their first visit.

For the past week, he’d meticulously study each plant whenever he had a spare hour or two. He’d gotten the idea when he’d watched Kelly and Gordie write up Becca’s health records. He thought it’d help with the plants as well. Also coming down here had brought him comfort when he worried about Grizz during the expedition. However, since he’s back he probably shouldn’t have come here.

Grizz moves forward, stopping just inches in front of Sam, brushing his hand against his. There’s a moment where they stare into each other’s eyes. Grizz is barely breathing, the butterflies fully awake in his stomach now, heart looping in his chest. *Nothing can happen,* he reminds himself. Therefore, he sits, staring up at Sam, waiting for him to join him. Sam hesitates but sits. “Explain the notebook to me?” Grizz opens up the notebook Sam had given him, flipping through the pages until he gets to the most recent page. They’re fingers touch as he hands it over. Electricity flits between them for a second before Sam’s hands fall to his lap. He begins to go through everything but Grizz isn’t paying attention, not really. He’s just enjoying watching Sam’s eyes light up as he goes through his genius idea. Grizz had taught him a little about the garden but Sam had taken it upon himself to help make his hobby (now full-time job) easier. Using these notes, a trick Grizz really wished he’d thought of himself, will help in the future and help train others. The cold is no match for the warmth Grizz is feeling listening to Sam.

Grizz hadn’t noticed that he’d started stroking Sam’s leg, just using his fingers to swirl patterns on it. It’s an unconscious motion, Sam could tell Grizz had no idea what he was doing or how crazy it was driving him. The intense stare Grizz is giving him had also caused heat to rise throughout Sam. The fact that both had said nothing can happen, meant everything is amplified. The tension growing between them is crushing. He would give everything have Grizz kiss him again, to feel the rough hands hold onto him, the… He stops himself before he gets carried away. Sam finishes talking and silence hangs between them. Grizz leans back, stretching, he’s stopped stroking Sam. Sam can’t help but feel a slight ache, wishing he’d carry on. “You should be on my team.” Sam frowns, unsure of what team he’s referring to. Grizz lets out an easy laugh smiling. “Yeah, so apparently I have a team. We’re basically glorified gardeners.” Sam laughs and Grizz beams. “Seriously, you’d be a great addition. I know with the baby you and Becca have your hands full but if you’re ever stir crazy or bored you can always bring everyone down here and help out. Gwen will happily entertain Eden.” Sam’s smile fades. Grizz concerned, puts a hand on his, “Did I say something wrong?” Sam shakes his head.

“No one deserves you.” Grizz is a little taken aback, it’s not the answer he expected. Sam intertwines one of his hands with Grizz’s, stroking the back of it with his thumb. “After everything…” He struggles with how to phrase it. Grizz sits patiently. “You care for everyone no matter what. You didn’t have to come see me or bring presents or even invite us to come whenever. I don’t deserve you; no one deserves you.” Grizz doesn’t really know how to respond. It hurt a little that Sam thought so low of himself. Yes, he’d fucked up but upon reflection, it was kind of hard not to have fucked up. It still hurt Grizz, yes but he’d rather have Sam in his life than not. In spite of the pain he feels about Sam, Becca had never done anything wrong. She hadn’t hurt him, and Eden. Well, Eden is the most innocent in this situation. He’ll never hurt any of them. He wants to help them.
“Well, you know, it had been Gwen’s idea to bring gifts.” Grizz lets out a nervous laugh, Sam smiles. He takes his hand away but Grizz’s grip reflectively tightens. Sam keeps it in place and Grizz relaxes. They stay in this moment for a bit, staring at their hands, basking in just being in each other’s presence. “Aren’t your hands cold?” Sam laughs, a full laugh, not the nervous kind that they so often produce around each other.

“No.” He shakes his head. Grizz shrugs.

“There’s no finger bits.” Sam laughs harder. “I don’t get it. I’m genuinely concerned. It seems a bit counterintuitive.” Sam rests his head against Grizz’s shoulder, still laughing.

“Do they feel cold?” Grizz engulfs both hands with his, holding them for a moment. They weren’t freezing but they weren’t warm either. Sam pulls back so he can see Grizz’s response.

“Could be warmer.” He laughs, shaking his head. He yawns. “Tired?” Sam nods. He checks the same and lurches up, standing and grabbing his stuff. Grizz’s eyebrows shoot up, watching the panic unfold on Sam’s face. He slowly stands, hands on Sam’s shoulders. “What’s up?”

“I have to go. We’ve been here for hours. I told Becca I’d only be away for one.” Grizz is shocked. He could have sworn they’d only been here for an hour. Had it really been so long? They stand awkwardly for a moment before Grizz pulls Sam into a hug. He fights the urge to kiss him when he pulls back. Grizz goes to give him the notebook but he pushes it back. “It’s for you. I’ll see you soon.” Grizz signs it back to Sam who beams before skipping out the gates.

The silence hurts as Grizz stands alone in his garden. He didn’t think being around Sam could be so easy and so challenging. On the other hand, being around him didn’t compare to when he leaves. The butterflies had gone, killed by the heavy lead settling in the pit of his stomach. Shoving the notepad into his coat pocket, Grizz sulks out the garden. He didn’t want to be in there alone anymore.

Chapter End Notes

I'd like to say thank you to everyone that's taken the time to read this! I really appreciate it. <3
Chapter Summary

Plans formed and secrets revealed.

Chapter Notes

Hi! So I'd just like to say a few things, sorry if I deviate from the series slightly, sometimes it just works better for my narrative but I try to stay as true as much as possible. I hope you guys still enjoy it though! Also, I have a Tumblr, ilikewrite, where if you want to ask questions or say anything you can send in an ask, I'll try and respond to it!

Thank you to all the lovely comments and kudos I've been receiving, I hope everyone continues to enjoy it.

Luke woke up to Helena placing a cup of tea and toast on the coffee table. For the past few nights, he’d been sleeping on the sofa. He holds out his hand, stopping her from leaving. They hadn’t spoken properly in a while. It is killing him, this silent treatment she’s resorted too. Guilt had already weighed heavy on his shoulders from his false accusation against Allie and Will but having Helena treat him this way, it’s torture. He deserved it though. He knew that but she doesn’t understand, it’s for the best. He’s been told it’s for the best.

“Wait. Please.” She doesn’t look at him but as he takes his arm away, she doesn’t leave either. He sits up, rubbing his hands together nervously. He can sense her watching him from the sides of her eyes. “Helena,” his voice cracks, she turns. “I don’t know what to do.” Every emotion from the last seven days bubbles to the surface. Tears roll down his face, he doesn’t make an effort to hide it. He doesn’t want to hide it, not from Helena. She drops to her knees, holding his hands kissing them. “I don’t know what to do without you.” The stony expression he’d grown accustomed to the past few days cracks. She’s angry, not inhumane.

“Luke…” She trails off kissing his hands. She doesn’t quite know what to say either. There is too much to say. She’s angry, furious, at the accusations he’s thrown towards Allie and Will. She cannot understand his reasoning; she cannot believe it’s true. She’d insisted that he must have misunderstood but he stuck to his guns. The worst thing is that he’s sided with Campbell and The Guard. She knew The Guard had given him purpose, given him strength in this trying time but she never thought… Helena and Luke stand on opposite sides.

Luke cradles his head, rocking slightly, whilst Helena kissing the top of his head, moving one hand from his hands to stroke the back of his head. She’s trying to soothe him. Seeing him like this wrecks her. She loves him with all of her heart, she’s just hurt. “Luke. You still have me.” He raises his head, tears still streaming. God, he looks pathetic, but it still melts her heart. She cups his face. “I am angry, but just because I am angry does not mean I have stopped loving you.” He sniffs, she smiles. “I love you but…” The anguish on his face intensifies. “You and I are on different sides right now,
so I am finding it incredibly difficult to understand you. I feel like we’re on opposite sides of the world when we used to be right next to each other. You’re allowed to have your own opinion, but this goes beyond that. I am defending Allie and Will. I am on their side. This world is so complicated, and you’ve made it worse.” Luke hangs his head in shame. He wishes to tell Helena the truth, but he can’t. He knows he can’t. She’s already struggling to hold onto her love for him, if she knew he lied, he’d lose her completely. Not to mention everyone else. He’d be alone.

Helena lifts his head up and slips onto his knee, he wraps his arms around her. Her arms loop around him, she brings his head to her chest as she continues to stroke his hair. They stay like this for a bit, every now and then Helena whispering her love for him. Eventually Luke pulls away, staring up at her.

“I’m sorry.”

“I know.” She wipes away his tears. “I know.”

*

Will kisses Allie as she starts to crawl out the bed. He tries to pull her back in, but she gives him a look. He knows the look. He knows every look. She shoves a top on and pyjama bottoms before disappearing out the door. He flops onto his back, arms outstretched. Ask him a year ago if he’d be sleeping in the same bed as Allie Pressman, he’d have laughed and been grossed out. It’d have been a defence mechanism. There had always been love there, just taken him a while to find it. He reaches out for his phone. They’d been returned to them when they had been released back into the house. Sam and Becca had sent him and Allie a picture of Eden. She didn’t seem real. It didn’t seem real that there was a baby in this world. Crazier things have happened though.

Helena is due at the house in half an hour. Grizz should be back any minute and then the craziness starts once more. Will is pissed. Allie and him never intended to rig the election. Allie had accepted her fate and asked him to do so too. He rubs his face, frustrated and punches the mattress. Allie walks in, eyebrows raised. He smiles up at her. She sits on the side of the bed. “Still angry?”

“Yes.” She nods in agreement. She’s angry too but what can they do? “I don’t get how everyone turned on us so quickly as well. And the way they-” He holds his hands up in the air, face screwed, unable to comprehend the behaviour exhibited by his community.

“Yes. I hear you.” Will pulls her into a hug. Allie had been through so much since arriving here and this is how the world paid her? Fuck them. They’ll prove everyone wrong because they are wrong. Fuck this. “I’m exhausted, Will.” He kisses her forehead. “I don’t know if I can keep fighting everyone much longer. Maybe Lexie and Harry can do this, maybe-” Will pushes her off him to straighten her up. Her eyes go wide.

“If you give up, you know you’re letting Campbell win?” Allie retracts slightly, the statement Will’s making doesn’t sit right to her.

“Oh fuck no. Fuck him.”

“By giving up, you’re letting him win though. You and I both know he’s inserted himself into Harry and the Guard’s life. It’s obvious he’s running things from behind the scenes. If we don’t keep fighting, then this community is doomed.” Will’s right, Allie knows it. Harry didn’t have the balls to
be Mayor until Campbell started interacting with him again. The Guard doesn’t come up with ideas themselves. Only Grizz and Luke had brain cells and they tended to use them on other issues. For them to have risen to power as quickly as they did, they’d have needed a smart guy behind the scenes. Campbell is the guy. A terrifying thought enters the back of Allie’s mind. He had Elle. Allie didn’t want to think about how she failed Elle. From the day Campbell showed up at the house and “rescued” her, she’d felt a pang of heavy guilt. Every injury or psychological torture Elle goes through now is her own fault. She never managed to keep her safe. She couldn’t fulfil her promise. She doesn’t even know what to do now. How can she get her back? She’s trapped in this house and they will be sent straight back to that cellar. Allie knew she needed to find a way to make sure Elle had protection out there. Campbell’s smart so Allie hopes she’s somewhat safe for now, that Campbell hasn’t done something irreversible. Her stomach ties itself in knots. Would all have this happened if Cassandra was still here? Probably. Although the public had started to resent Allie, there had been more resistance for her sister. Mind you, she never killed anyone. Will wipes the tear falling down Allie’s cheek away.

“What you are thinking about?” he whispers so quietly she struggles to catch his words.

“Allie,” he whispers again.

“Allie, it’s been a hard road, but you’re doing well. You’re strong.” Will nods.

“Right,” she whispers back.

“So… Grizz filled us in and I’d like to just start by saying how amazed I am of you guys with your expedition. Like that wasn’t an easy task, it seemed like it might have been hopeless and after what happened too…” She trails off as everyone thinks back to the first expedition they’d tried. “Well, I am happy you’re back safe and are working on getting the farm up and running.” Gwen flips her hair back; Bean rolls her eyes at her. Mickey plays with his hands, slightly embarrassed. Grizz nods at them. “Right. Down to business. We didn’t do it. We didn’t plan on doing it. We didn’t want to do it. We were fine with losing. Obviously not like fine but we were fine with whatever outcome came. How are we going to prove it?” Allie studies the faces around her. The people here, plus Becca and Sam, were her allies,
they were her last hope. She turns to Helena. “Okay. What you got?”

“Luke is the witness.” If they hadn’t been quiet before, they were quiet now. Everyone stares at Helena, different emotions pouring into the room. Grizz stands, then sits, then his arms extended, he’s flexing his hands. His eyes turn to slits.

“Luke? Luke? LUKE!?” His tone gets more incredulous by the second. Even Gwen is shocked, left speechless for a change. No quick whip to add. Her mouth falls open and then shuts numerous times, like a goldfish. Allie and Will watch gravely as one by one more people join the conversation, talking over one another trying to understand what that means. Helena stares through the chaos straight at Allie and Will.

“I’m not on his side.” Helena is not loud, nor is she quiet but her voice brings the room back. Grizz watches intensely, anger radiating from him. “I don’t believe him. I don’t know why he’s lying; he’s insisting he’s not, but I know he is. We just have to prove it.”

“How can I believe you?” Allie is straight to the point. They don’t have time for more liars. It explains the guilty eyes Luke had for her every time he saw her. He knew he’s the one that put her there, that he’s an integral part of her downfall. “How do I know you won’t just sabotage us for him?”

“In all honesty, I can’t say anything to make you believe me, all I ask is that you have faith that no matter what my personal judgement is I will do my very best to defend you. I did it with Dewey. But, I can honestly say, I am on your side. Believe it or not.” Everyone waits for Allie’s response. She glances at Will, his head resting in his hands. He raises an eyebrow at her. She slowly nods. “Okay. Okay. What’s the plan then?” The room relaxes slightly but now everyone has their guard up. The fact that someone they thought they could trust turned on them so easily and quickly has blown morale. Grizz is tempted to go yell at Luke but the small voice in his head tells him it’s not worth it. Fuck. The others start to discuss options and who they want to interview. Grizz searches for his phone. He’s too aggravated to listen into the conversation right now. He needs to blow off some steam. He starts to panic as he can’t find it when out the corner of his eye, Helena reaches into her pocket and holds it out. A few people watch the action, but Helena carries on talking whilst conducting the action so holds most of the rooms gaze. He takes the phone and nods at her. He’s wary of her now but he didn’t think she’d turn on them. Mind you, he didn’t think Luke would.

Unlocking his phone, he sees messages from members of The Guard but that’s about it. He goes through them, but nothing is important. It’s the usual stuff. Sam’s name pops up in recent messages and his thumb hovers over it. It’s not too late, he’s probably still up.

_Hey._ He debates on how to end it but ultimately just sends the Hey. He slams his phone down, suddenly panicking that he actually messaged Sam. The room turns to him. Gwen’s smug face stands out in the crowd. “Right. Sorry. I just, what would you like me to do specifically?” his voice cracks and raises in pitch at the end, clearly trying to hide the real reason for his sudden movements.

“To be honest Grizz, I want you to just talk to people. See what they have to say. We can’t have too many people putting the pressure on for information otherwise people will close up.” Grizz nods along to Helena’s words only half listening, glance at the upside-down phone on the arm of the chair, waiting for it to buzz. Gwen smirks. The room falls back into their own conversations and Grizz sighs in relief, the attention no longer on him. He watches as Allie takes Helena aside. Will goes to follow but Allie stops him. Dejected, he sits down, ignoring the words flowing around him.

Grizz watches as the two try to hide the animated discussion. He frowns, unsure of whether this is due to Luke or another situation altogether. Helena leans in and whispers something that causes Allie
to embrace her. Perhaps it’s not to do with Luke? Helena and her nod, agreeing to something before re-joining the group. Helena gathers her notes whilst Allie stands, giving an exaggerated stretch and yawning. The room falls silent.

“I think we should turn in for the night. Everyone has their jobs; we’ll meet on Sunday to discuss what we’ve gathered so far. If anything, urgent pops up, do not hesitate to come round or contact us sooner.” She pauses, serious. “I really, really, appreciate everything. I do not think I’ll ever be able to express… I, thank you.” She stands, suddenly vulnerable. Allie had appeared vulnerable to the group before, but this is different. Having seen her in a position of power for so long, to see the walls come crashing down, even for a second, is refreshing. Instead of being greeted with doubt and hurt for being so vulnerable to group respond with compassion. It’s a different feeling to what Allie had been used too. This world had needed a strong leader and she’d been that, to be this vulnerable and have it accepted and have them still view her so highly, is nice. They file out the room, wishing Allie and Will a good night’s sleep. Gwen hangs back discussing some things with Grizz. A few of the group nice this. Helena raises an eyebrow.

“So…” Grizz raises an eyebrow at Gwen. She’s after something, his eyes narrow. Gwen rolls her eyes. “Relax. I’m just curious at who you’re texting? Hm? A girl? Or maybe…?” She flashes a knowing grin. Grizz’s hands clam up, knowing the next word she’d about to say. She whispers, “Or maybe, it’s Sam?”

Grizz covers her move as she goes to speak again. Her eyes sparkle, knowing she got it right. Grizz glares and shoots a smile back at a confused Allie and Will before dragging her into the kitchen. “Shut up.” He takes his hand off her mouth.

“So, I’m right!? Like does Becca know? Are you guys all together? Oh, very modern.” Grizz rubs his face, before standing and glaring at Gwen as she babbles on about polyamory and sexuality. He grits his teeth.

“It’s not like that Gwen.” She stops and studies his face. A glint of pain twinkles in the back of his eyes, just shining through his annoyance at her. Her face softens, she places a hand on his arm. “We shared a moment. It was beautiful and… He has a family and I’m not the kinda guy to break up a family.” Gwen tugs at his arm and the next thing he knows she’s pulled him into an embrace. She squeezes him, she’s not very strong but it’s comforting. Grizz leans into it. He needed this.

“That. Sucks.” Grizz cracks a small smile. Not the most poetic way to put it but the truth all the same. They pull apart. “I’m sorry. If you ever want to talk, I’ll pretend to listen..” Grizz nudges her and a laugh escapes his lips. She beams, seeing how she’s managed to cheer him up. “Right. I’ll see you tomorrow. You’ve got a council meeting, remember?” Grizz grimaces. “I know.” She gives one last quick hug to Grizz and yells goodbye up the stairs to Allie and Will, and leaves. Grizz flops onto the sofa, laying his phone onto his chest. His eyes start to drop, the exhaustion suddenly taking hold of his body. It’s heavy and comforting but on the outskirts of the feeling, it’s lonely. He sighs, letting the sleep slowly take him away.

Buzz.

His eyes fly open.

Buzz.
No One

Chapter Summary

Sam texts whilst Harry sips.

Chapter Notes

In this chapter, there is underage drinking and mild references to depression and substance abuse. If this is uncomfortable for anyone, please do not read it. The references are after the astrix so the first half should be fine.

Buzz.

Sam glances his phone. He’s in the middle of changing Eden’s nappy. For something so small and sleepy, she does like to wriggle. She starts to open her mouth and screw up her eyes. Crying. Great. He hums to her, trying to not panic. His hands move swiftly as he swaps in the new nappy and buttoning up the grow. He picks her up, frowning at the grumpy expression she holds, before holding her against his chest. He continues the humming until he feels her stop wriggling, settling happily against him. As graceful as possible, he stands, grabbing his phone and sinks into the sofa. He places Eden onto his knees and smiles down at her. Her eyes are wide with wonder staring around him and at him. He wonders how well she can see. She’s happy lying on him like this.

Becca had decided to have a shower. She’d needed it. Sam loves her but my god, her hair was starting to mat. She’s nervous to let Eden out of her sight. This world is scary enough when you’re trying to look out for yourself but then adding Eden, it can be overwhelming. She’d been angry at him when he eventually returned this afternoon. She knew that Sam appreciates his hour to himself but now that Eden is here, he can’t just wander off and forget about the time. If he says he’s going to be back at a certain time, he has to be. He stomach swirls. It’d never been his intention to be as late as he was. He had just enjoyed having Grizz by him. There’s a comfort in Grizz that he’s never felt with anyone before. It’s a comfort he selfishly wants to continue feeling. Eden’s arms uncontrollably fly out. He stares at her. As selfish as he wants to be, he knows he can’t be. Part of the sacrifice of having a child is putting their feelings first, not your own. This is why he’ll be more careful; he won’t lose track of time; he’ll try his best to not be selfish anymore.

Buzz.

His phone reminds him of the message. Changing Eden into a more stable position against his chest, he finally unlocks his phone. Grizz. Well, speak of the devil. The smile has appeared on his face before he can stop it.

Hey. G.

That’s all it says and it’s all it needs to say. Sam wonders whether to respond or not. He literally just talked to himself about selfishness and now he wants to message Grizz. However,… He’s with Eden. He’s here. Texting Grizz doesn’t mean he’s not here for his family. He’s here, he’s taking care
Hey. S.

He sends the message and Eden squirms. He smiles, an idea popping into his head. With a bit of juggling, he aims the camera towards them and smiles. The photo is not the best, but it’ll do. He’ll appreciate it. He sends the image of himself and Eden to Grizz. Just as he’s about to lock the phone, Grizz responds.

She’s so small. I can’t get over how small she is. Makes you look big. G.

Sam snorts. Just because he has to stand on his tiptoes to kiss him doesn’t make him small. He thinks for a moment about the handful of times they’ve kissed. His lips tingle, memories dancing across them. The phone buzzes again.

How’s being home? G.

Sam sighs. It’s nice to be in a home but he did miss his family home. Campbell had laid claim to it months ago and during the late stages of Becca being pregnant, he’d moved in with her. He loves being in a proper bed, being able to make a cup of tea/coffee whenever he wanted and grabbing snacks, he actually likes instead of the kind Kelly brings them. Those things were nice, but he did miss his home. Or this pocket universes version of it. He’d been caught up in everything, that he hadn’t had time to actually add personal touches here to make it his own as well. Becca wouldn’t mind, in fact, she’d mentioned it when they’d talked about nurseries. They still didn’t have a nursery. That’s the job for the next few weeks. At the moment Eden had been sleeping in a basket with cushions in it. Come to think of it, they hadn’t prepared that much for the arrival of Eden. If Grizz, Kelly, Gwen and Gordie hadn’t been giving them presents and bits and bobs over the past few days they’d have nothing. He knows at some point they’ll run out of nappies, but they had a large stock of reusable ones so hopefully, they’ll do. He screws up his nose. The thought of washing poo ridden nappies turning his stomach over. Both him and Becca were struggling with that with disposable nappies.

Okay. Weird. How are Allie and Will? S.

Becca and Sam were going to visit them during their trip to town tomorrow. They were looting the baby and furniture shops for a cot and change table etc. Now he thought about it, they didn’t have a way to get the furniture back to the house. He can carry some of it but not all of it. Buzz.

Unsure. They spent most of the day upstairs and I kind of zoned out a bit in the meeting. Just a bit tired. They’ll be excited to see you tomorrow. G.

Sam smiles. Imagining the dopey face of Grizz, drooling slightly, his head on his chest, gentle snores. Things cannot happen between them, but it doesn’t stop him imagining. He likes to imagine.

What are you doing tomorrow?

Sam bites his lip as his thumb hovers over the send. Grizz would be a useful pair of hands with everything tomorrow. Plus, he just wants to see that face. See the way he scrunches up his nose when he’s confused or annoyed, his eyes always so soft and caring, and his hair. Sam laughs slightly, causing Eden to shift. It’s an interesting style, Sam didn’t think he’d like it so much but there’s something lovely about. However, as Sam fantasises about him, he realises he doesn’t know how comfortable Grizz would actually be. The handful of times he’s hung out with him and Becca, have tended to be in a large group of people problem solving and not exactly having fun. Not to mention the times in a small group, it’s been a bit awkward. After spending the day together too,
would it seem inappropriate? There were times today where things had felt inappropriate, moments that shifted slightly over the line that they’d decided to establish. Would inviting him to help just so he could see his face be selfish of him? Sam knew the answer. Yes, yes it would. He can tell Grizz struggles to see him with Becca. Why couldn’t he have come to him sooner, before he’d made his promises to her? Eden shifts in his arms. He heart skips, no, he’d still have made his promise to Becca. He’d have always made that, for his friend and for this child. Sam’s weakness is also is the greatest strength, his unwavering loyalty to his friends and family. They come first. He erases the text.

*We’re excited to see them too. We’ll be round about 12/1 so make sure there are things to eat. Becca will be starving. We’re out all morning. S.*

It pained him slightly to keep it so casual, so mundane when all he wanted to do was tell him how much he missed him. How much his expedition had caused him pain, that he’s terrified for Eden and that he’ll mess it up, that the thought of Grizz having to go on numerous treks to create this farm makes him blue. All he wants is to tell Grizz that right now, he wants to just sit and watch some Netflix with him. Have Becca and Eden on the chair, all of them laughing, his happy unconventional family, that’s all he wants. But you can’t have what you want, not in this world. *Buzz.*

*I’ll leave them a note. I’ve got this stupid council meeting tomorrow. I don’t want to go. I’d rather be in the garden or library. G.*

Sam knows exactly what he is referring too.

*Cicero.*

All you need in life is a garden and library. Well, not the exact quote but that had been the gist of what Grizz had told him. Except, he knows Grizz doesn’t have everything. Guess almost is good enough. It had to be, for both of them. *Buzz.*

*Yeah. Cicero. You remembered. G.*

Sam’s throat tightens. Of course, he remembered.

*I’ll never forget. S.*

He’s not just referring to their first time in the garden. He’s meaning so much more.

*Me neither. G.*

Sam stares at the message, emotion welling up inside him, unsure of how to continue this conversation. He doesn’t need to think long before it buzzes again.

*I’m headed to bed. See you soon. G.*

Sam glances at Eden, her eyes shut and mouth slightly open. He hadn’t realised how late it is, he always loses track of time when it comes to Grizz.

*Night. See you soon. S.*

He places his phone next to him, sighing deeply. He glances between it and Eden. He’s loyal to his friends and family. Even if it hurts him.
Harry grabs the bottle of whiskey. It burns but that’s why he’s drinking it. Without the burn, it’d be pointless. He’s not drinking to fuck himself up, for fun, he wants that burn. The pain, the disgust, it’s keeping him from feeling numb.

He’s running low of drugs; he’ll need to pop Campbell a message soon. For now, he’s good. Is it good? He takes a swig from the bottle. No one else is in his house anymore, no one to judge him or whisper about him. No one. There’s no one. Another swig from the bottle.

He’d never been so excited than when he kicked everyone out and cleaned everything up. He had enjoyed the cleaning, he’d taken pleasure in shoving items in the bin, wiping the surfaces. He’d been taking back what was his. Yet, as the night had worn on, the silence had become deafening. Another swig. There was no longer joy in having his things back so he had thought destroying the smug faces of Allie and Will would bring it back. Parading them in front of that mob, seeing the hatred towards leaders they had respected. That had been satisfying. Until the rocks started flying. Another swig.

Over six months ago he slept with Allie Pressman. They’d both been searching for something that night. She’d been rejected by Will and Cassandra. He swigs as her name and face flash across his eyes. He’d been rejected by Kelly. They both wanted an escape, a fuck. Maybe this is why, when the rocks when flying, horror had struck him. The same horror that had hurtled him out his car and running to Allie the night of fugitive. Another swig. Maybe it hadn’t been that, maybe he’s just a caring person. He snorts. No. If these back few months have shown, he’s not caring at all. He’s selfish.

Allie Pressman. Allie *fucking* Pressman. Her face, those startling eyes, her voice, swirl around his head. She’s been swirling in there for a while now but she’s more prominent now than ever before. Maybe it’s guilt, maybe everything he’s feeling towards her is guilt. Yeah, there’s a bit of guilt there. Guilt can’t stop justice though. And it is justice. It may not be the morally correct way to get to it, but Allie was going to be a tyrant. He way of running things shouldn’t be the way. It shouldn’t. Another swig. He just can’t explain why. Campbell explained it to him. Lexie has. He’ll ask them again.

The bottle is getting lighter. His body is becoming sluggish and slow. His head rolls. He’s too tired to leave his chair. Harry makes the decision to just stay here for the night. There’s no one to stop him. No one.
Council Meeting

Chapter Summary

Grizz attends his first council meeting.

Chapter Notes

I'll be honest, I'm tired so my proofread may have missed things, I am sorry if that's the case and I hope you can read through the mistakes!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Grizz didn’t sleep much. Sam’s face kept him up all night. Every time he closed his eyes, it was there, kissing him, loving him, holding him. He can’t take it. He needs to get over it. Why isn’t he getting over it? Probably because he kept talking to Sam. The thought of trying to cut him out though just hurt more than this. He’d rather have him in his life than not at all. Maybe he’ll just avoid him more. Make sure they’re never left alone.

He finishes his cereal and hears the front door slam. Gwen comes storming in. Allie and Will rush down the stairs. Grizz merely raises his eyebrows.

“Clark is such a dick.” Allie and Will roll their eyes as Gwen slams her bag down, flopping herself onto the sofa. Grizz casually strolls through. “Like fuck him. Fuck him.” Grizz merely uh-huhs and ohs along to her rant. Will and Allie chill in the kitchen. Gwen had been broken up from Clark for a while now and they have an agreement but my god he is doing her nut in. His cocky attitude has skyrocketed recently and honestly, she wants to be back in her tent. Why she ever screwed him in the first place is beyond her! Well, no, he’d been kind then. Had it all been an act? Is that how he gets his girls? Lures them in with kindness and then kicks them. She stares at Grizz, why couldn’t there be a guy like him. Like obviously not him because he’s gay but someone like him. She finishes her rant. Grizz carries on nodding. It’s her turn to raise her eyebrows. Grizz notices she’s stopped speaking. He cracks a smile and she rolls her eyes. “Are you ready to go? We need to go now.” She taps her foot impatiently.

“We’d be early if we left now.” He sips his tea and watches Gwen rub a hole in her sleeves with the way she’s playing with them. She’s anxious, nervous. He didn’t realise what an effect Clark had on her.

“Yeah well, I’d rather be early than deal with him.” He nods. Understanding that being around an ex can be awkward. He downs the scolding tea, holding back a scream and grabs his jacket. He stops in the kitchen to have a brief word with Allie and Will.

“That’s me off. I’ll tell you guys about it all tonight. Don’t worry about everything.” Not the most comforting he’s been but he squeezes Allie’s shoulder and she leans into it. She knows Grizz would do more if he could but with Gwen pacing around the hallway, anxious to get away, he didn’t have much time. If just bumping into Clark on the way into the house led to this, imagine if she has to spend time with him. He fist bumps with Will, and they exit the house.
Grizz didn’t think he’d have to jog to keep up with anyone, but Gwen seemed to be making it her mission to get his blood working. He’d never seen her move so fast.

The air is cold and crisp today, the skies are surprisingly clear. The coats had become thicket and people were layering up. December nipping at their heels and would soon be upon them, and then they’d be at the mercy of winter. If Lexie and Harry do not plan properly, people might freeze or starve. People roamed the streets, moving from place to place, trying to find something to do. The responsibility of jobs seeming to be in the back of their minds. They’re dejected, hurt, from the chaos of elections. It’s better than the rioting and restlessness from Cassandra's death. Granted, nothing would be better than a happy society but if he’s being honest, he knows that most likely won’t happen. What they’d had with Allie had been the best they’re likely to get.

They reach the church. Gwen is standing impatient as he jogs up. She acts as if she’d been there for ages but Grizz had been at most 20 seconds behind her. Once he reaches the steps, she goes to open the door. Grizz puts a hand on her shoulder, pulling her around. “Gwen.” She avoids his eyes, instead shuffling her feet from side to side, playing with her sleeve. “What’s up? I don't want you going in there without a clear head.”

“Like that stopped you last time.” Grizz scratches the back of his head, grimacing at the memory. The other day he had gone in here worked up from his reunion with Sam but he’d managed to keep his cool. Gwen didn’t have the same control on her emotions though.

“Gwen.” His tone is warning but also concerned. He doesn’t want her doing anything stupid, not just because it might make things difficult for everyone but because she might end upon trouble herself and therefore hurt. “What did Clark say?”

“A number of things. Whore, weak, traitor.” She chews the inside of her cheek, staring up at Grizz. “It’s not funny. But I think it hurts more because…” She trails off, swinging side to side, “because I used to be like that. Back before, even whilst here. I’ve called people that. I didn’t…I don’t like how it makes me feel and I don’t like how I have made others feel.” She clenches her fists, frustration, hurt and anger swirling inside her. The realisation of years of being a mean girl, years of bitching behind peoples backs, spreading rumours and gossip, hitting her like a ton of bricks. This place has forced individuals to face the worst parts of themselves.

“Yeah, that sucks. You were shitty. *Were* being the key word, Gwen. None of us are perfect and the petty things we did in high school we thought we’d escape in college but unfortunately, we’re stuck with our mistakes here. But you can either hide and cower from them or face them and move forward, stronger and better. You *were* shitty but you *are* so much more than who you were.” Gwen could cry. Grizz has been kinder to her than most people she’s known her whole life. Yeah, she had friends but after months she’d come to realise that all they had were surface friendships. There wasn’t much substance to them, but with Grizz, she felt like she could be vulnerable and not feel judged. She can trust him in a way she can’t trust others. It’s nice to have a friend like that. She pulls him into a hug, and they stand like that for a couple of minutes. An unlikely friendship but a meaningful one.

Lexie coughs behind them. The pull apart. Her arms are folded, her eyebrows are knitted together, and lips are pursed. She’s in such a good mood today. “You’re early.” Grizz smiles awkwardly at her. She focuses her attention onto Gwen, a fake smile plastered on both their faces. “It’s nice you walked Grizz here, but this is a meeting for council members only so…”

“Actually, she’s my plus one.” Lexie’s smile falters and she turns on her heels to Grizz. Grizz stares down at the angry girl.

“That's not a thing. We’ll be done in an hour, you can pick him up then I guess. Honestly, I don’t know why you trust her so much.” She walks past them and into the church. Gwen leaps forward,
ready to grab Lexie but Grizz catches her in the air, holding her as she scrambles.

“She’s so fucking annoying!” Grizz plops her down and she kicks the wall. He sighs, waiting for her to calm down. After about two minutes of swearing, punching the air etc, she turns, anger still in her face, but calmer than before. “I’m getting a coffee. Don’t have too much fun without me.” She stomps toward the centre of town. Well, that will put her in a bad mood for the rest of the day. He prays for the poor soul that bumps into her next.

Staring at the large doors in front of him, he takes a deep breath. Nerves suddenly wrap around every muscle in his body. He knows the individuals in there will not trust him. They know he’s currently living, he guesses, protecting Allie and Will. He shakes his head. It’s fine. He’s just explaining his plans for farming. That’s all he’s here for.

He rolls his shoulders back, chin jutting out slightly, false confidence running through him and strides through the door. He stops. Campbell lazily leans back in his chair, a slimy smile plastered across his face, whilst Lexie seems extremely uncomfortable. His eyes flit to Grizz, leaning forward and jumping up.

“Gareth. Grizz. Which do you prefer now you’re in the council? I feel like Gareth is appropriate, more formal, wouldn’t you agree?” He saunters around the table, sitting on the edge of it, arms outstretched as if welcoming him into his home. Grizz doesn’t move. He doesn’t speak. “I’m going to take that as a yes.” He gestures to one of the empty seats. “Sit.” Grizz still doesn’t move. There are five chairs around the table. Lexie sits in one, body closed off and facing away from Campbell. She doesn’t seem pleased that he’s there. Apart from that, no one else is here.

The door swings open and Gordie runs into Grizz, dropping his book and papers. Campbell smirks, “If you’d just taken a seat...”

“Alright. Shut up, Campbell.” Grizz grumbles and turns, helping Gordie with his work. “Sorry.”

“It’s okay.” They gather up his graphs, charts and reports. Most have been handwritten whilst a few seem to come from official documents the adults had made. None of it made much sense to him. He knew Cassandra and Allie had spent numerous weeks and months into research to try and figure out what had been going on, but he wasn’t sure how much progress they’d actually made. Gordie freezes next to Grizz as his eyes lie on Campbell. Grizz had forgotten that Gordie and Cassandra had been romantically involved. He wasn’t sure if he’d ever gotten over the accusations thrown at Campbell. If he was honest with himself, he hadn’t gotten over it either. He’d never really trusted Campbell, he just didn’t have a trustworthy face.

“Harry said he’ll be here in five and to just start without him. Please. Sit.” Lexie doesn’t glance up from her phone as she says it. Her voice is cold and quite frankly done. She and Harry haven’t even been a team for a week and the cracks in their leadership are showing. Grizz couldn’t help but enjoy it. Campbell moves to hold out a seat for Gordie. Gordie grits his teeth and sits in it. He swiftly moves to his head, leaning back and placing his feet on the table. Grizz is the last to sit. He takes the seat next to Gordie. He’d rather sit next to Harry than Campbell. He wondered why Harry is so late. Lexie coughs. They all stare at her. “So Harry and I plan to make some changes. Ideally, he wishes to do that as soon as possible but...” She trails off for a second, inspecting everyone’s faces, making sure they were listening. “We’ve decided to wait until after the resolution of the trial.” Grizz suspected that it hadn’t been a we decision. It sounded more like a Lexie decision. “What this meeting is really about is catching myself, Harry, and Campbell with the projects Allie had been working on.” She pauses once more, practically glaring at Gordie. He guesses that Gordie must have been difficult to convince to come here. “As well as hearing Grizz’s plans for the next couple of weeks.” She attempts a genuine smile at Grizz but there still seems to be a distaste behind it from
their last encounter. He’d wished he’d been kinder to her but at least she was trying to keep the peace and pretend they didn’t have issues.

“I’d just like to point out that I wasn’t on the council officially before as well. I just had the expedition really.” Both Campbell and Lexie eye him suspiciously. He can tell they don’t believe him, even though it’s true. He is a friend to Allie and someone she can lean on. They didn’t do much business together. That had been more for Gordie and everyone.

“Right. Well. How about we go through your plans first then whilst we wait for Harry.” She smiles, it’s even more forced than before. Grizz sighs and pulls out a crumpled piece of paper. Campbell can’t help but snort. Grizz glares at him. Lexie’s expression falters and he can tell she suddenly has a little less faith in his abilities. He hadn’t had much of a plan, they were still researching, he’s not Gordie, he doesn’t take meticulous notes.

He clears his throat. “Um. So, you all know we found land and animals. We want to keep a good amount of animals alive for now and breed them. We’ll need to capture and contain them, so we at least need wood for that. We also need wood or something to create a base there as it’s about a three/four-day trek out there so it’s unrealistic to just keep going back and forth. I don’t think we’ll be able to start on the land until spring. I was hoping to get Gordie to test the soil to see the acidity of it but unfortunately, with the colder weather, I believe it’ll be frozen by the time we get back out. So, over the winter we should focus on bases and animals. We’ll need to start, I dunno, chopping trees and creating planks and—“ He hasn’t realised the overwhelmed faces staring at him. Campbell even holds a slightly surprised look. He feels slightly smug, yeah one little bit of paper holds all this information.

Lexie cuts him off, “Wait. Wait. How are we meant to do this?” Grizz screws up his face, biting his lip. This is the part he’s not sure on. He knows what he’s meant to do but not how to do it. They’re still trying to figure that out themselves. Bean had her nose in historical books which explained how they did agricultural back before technology but there aren’t blueprints for the contraptions, they made so it’s going to be trial and error sorting everything out. Grizz scratches the back of his head.

“Um, well, so we’re still researching that. Um, however, I was going to ask if we could get some of the metal shop and wood shop students from before to help us? We’ll need to build things and they’re some of the more experienced people.” Lexie frowns for a second as Campbell leans forward.

“I don’t know. I don’t think we should.” Gordie’s mouth opens. It’d been a reasonable request. It’s not like he was asking everything to stop their jobs and help him. He’s asking for a couple of people at the most to help with details and to iron out problems.

“With all due respect Campbell, we’re advisors here. It’s up to Lexie and Harry. If we want to survive, we need people who are as proficient as possible to help create the tools.” He turns to Lexie. “I only need a few people to begin with. They can swap shifts; it doesn’t need to be constant just once a week.” She bites her lip, thinking for a moment before nodding.

“Ohkay. You can have two people. They’ll only be able to work with you one at a time, they will cover the others shift.” Grizz leans back, relaxed for a second, happy with the outcome. Lexie stares down at her phone before audibly tutting. “Harry has a stomach bug. I’ll send Campbell later to catch him up.” Campbell frowns. She shows him her phone. Grizz frowns as Campbell rolls his eyes, slightly annoyed but accepting whatever is on the phone. “You can start with your new recruits on Monday.” She turns to Gordie and Grizz zones out. This was just him rehashing everything. He didn’t need to listen; these weren’t his problems exactly. They were but the detail Gordie is going in is…it’s too much for him. It’d just confuse himself when it came to his own work. When Gordie
needs his help, he’ll help.

About an hour goes by. Grizz had noticed Gordie trying to be as vague as possible without giving away he wasn’t telling the whole truth. Grizz is unsure how wise that is. There is loyalty and there is stupidity. They may be loyal to Allie, but Lexie did need to know what’s happening. If she does end up being the permanent Mayor instead of the interim one, she will not be happy at being lied too. Then again, he could be being vague because he genuinely doesn’t know the answers yet. None of them really knew the answers. Faking it until they make it, that’s the attitude at the moment. Lexie’s expression grows more and more tired as she listens, the stark reality of leading suddenly starting to take its toll on her. She hasn’t even had a real problem yet. Campbell, on the other hand, is paying attention to everything single thing. Every movement and facial expression that passes off Gordie’s face, every sigh and pause. He’s taking it all in. Whilst Lexie wrote notes, Campbell did nothing else. It unsettled Grizz.

The meeting starts to slow and they all agree to meet after the trail to see progress and what Lexie and Harry’s plans were for the town.

“That’s if they’re found guilty.” Gordie mutters, half to himself. Lexie hadn’t caught it but Campbell did. He leans over the table to Gordie.

“They’re pretty guilty,” he whispers and Gordie’s expression hardens. As much as Grizz agreed with Gordie, he didn’t want to end this meeting on an argument or brawl. It wouldn’t end well for anything. Especially Campbell. He’s about to say something when the doors swing open. They turn. For a moment they expect it to be Harry but instead, Gwen, Becca and Sam enter the building, pushing a small baby in a pram. Lexie goes through many emotions. She starts annoyed at the sight of Gwen and then her face melts when her eyes flit to Eden, before going back to annoyed at Becca. Becca glares at everyone in the room. Sam’s eyes are trained on Campbell. “Is that my niece?” Campbell actually sounds slightly confused. Grizz remembers that not many people know about Becca giving birth. It’s only been a few days. Although people texted, it’s not like there is social media to mass post a major life event. Even Lexie is slightly perplexed. Grizz stands, staring at Gwen, trying to communicate wordlessly to her, a what-the-fuck-are-you-doing stare.

“Eh. I’m sorry for interrupting Lexie.” Becca is the first one to speak. She’s the first one to move forward. Sam seems glued to the spot, eyes trained on Campbell. Grizz is slightly annoyed he’s not seen him but then again, the hatred between the brothers could overrule any emotion.

“No, no, it’s fine. Is this…?” She stands and surprisingly gracefully glides over to them, bending down and smiling at Eden. Grizz watches Becca flinch as if wanting to pull Eden back but stopping herself. A smart move.

“Eden. Yes. We’re getting some supplies from town, but we actually wished to speak to you about a sensitive matter.” All heads flip to her but Sam’s. No one is signing so he actually has no clue what’s being discussed. He hastily strides next to Becca, watching her, trying to ignore Campbells intense, inquisitive stare.

“Would you like to speak more privately?” Lexie’s eyebrow raises as she straightens, curiosity dancing across her face. Grizz moves to beside Lexie. He’s flat out confused. He stares between Sam, Becca and Lexie. His stares linger on Sam.

“No, it’s not too private. It’s about Allie and Will.” Her face hardens. Campbell lets out a laugh. Becca and Sam shoot a glare towards Campbell. He strides forward.

“Baby or not, family or not, she’s under house arrest. She will appear before the court.” He signs as he speaks, venom glinting behind his eyes. He’s annoyed that they’d even ask for her release. Lexie
had already shown weakness in allowing them to be placed under house arrest. If Campbell had been there, they’d have stayed in the cellar and bathroom.

“It’s not about getting the charges dropped.” Everyone stares at them. Campbell is taken aback, he thought he knew them inside out. Becca nervously glances towards Sam, who nods encouragingly at her. She takes a deep breath. “We... We were wondering if you could allow Allie and Will to come to our house tomorrow night for a small gathering of friends in a celebration of the birth of Eden. Before you flat out say no,” She holds up her hands as she sees Lexie’s reflective reaction, “Helena and Luke have been invited and they’ve both said they’d happily be in charge of Allie and Will. Luke and Helena will, with Grizz, take them to our house around half seven and then at half nine take them back to the house and stay overnight. It’s just a lot for us to be out of the house at night and we want them to spend some time with Eden before... well, before you know.” She trails off as if unconfident, but her shoulders are back and her face is up, suggesting she just wants the individuals around them to believe she’s unsure.

“Absolutely not.” They all turn to Campbell. “This is some stupid excuse to help them escape. You cannot listen to them.” Lexie eyes them. Grizz clears his throat.

“Look. I know I am friendlier with Allie and Will but, isn’t Luke your key witness? Why would he allow them to escape and, may I point out, there is nowhere to run? You all keep insisting people will escape but there is nowhere they could go. Not to mention we’ve already established they are non-violent offenders.” Lexie purses her lips, unhappy with the situation. She’d honestly prefer to keep them in the cellar, but she knows that part of the reason people were hopeful about her rule, is for a kind and merciful heart. Maybe it’s not their number one priority for their new leader but she knew that she didn’t want to treat people the way they treated her and Dewey. He may have been a murderer but his time in the cellar had been cruel, her cuts and bruises showed that. No, she won’t be like that. With that said, if she keeps letting them get what they want, they’ll get cocky and she’ll seem weak. “Luke will be with them. What have you got to worry about?” Lexie surveys the room, trying to distinguish who she could trust. No one.

“One hour. They can stay for one hour. Luke and Clark must be in their presence at all times, even in the bathroom. They must be in the house twenty minutes after the hour is up to account for travel time.” Campbell’s jaw falls to the ground. Even Becca and Sam seem shocked. They hadn’t expected anything. No one says anything. Lexie rolls her eyes and addresses them all. “I am not cruel. I am not the enemy. They’re family to you two. We’ve already lost enough family. Now, I have someone I need to see.” She gathers up her notes and exits the building. Campbell snarls at towards Sam.

“You’re such a pain in my fucking side.” Grizz moves forwards ready to defend Sam. Campbell turns, a little bit of surprise in his eyes, “I wouldn’t.”

“I just might.” He steps forward but Sam signs something, catching in his peripheral vision. He stands down. Sam signs thank you subtly. Campbell squints his eyes at Grizz, unsure of what just happened.

“I honestly don’t have time for you all.” And he storms out. The rest of them stand awkwardly about, no one is sure of what to do. Sam stares at Grizz, Grizz avoids the gaze. Gwen is the first one to talk.

“So. Grizz, Gordie, we’re invited tomorrow...” Becca rolls her eyes as Gwen starts speaking animatedly.

“I mean, you invited yourself...” she half mutters, Grizz smirks whilst Gordie and Sam seem to miss the comment.
“All three of us were invited explicitly. “Her eyes widen as she cocks her head at Becca. The two stare at each other because Becca backs down and nods in agreement. “Anyway, I told Sam and Becca you’d help them with their things today.” Gwen stands behind Becca and Sam. She wiggles her eyebrows and jerks her head towards Grizz. His stomach drops. What is this girl trying to do? Grizz rubs his face exasperated. Gordie frowns.

Taking a deep breath, putting up a front, Grizz smiles at the family in front of him, “Sure, what do you need?”

Chapter End Notes

Feel free to comment or ask any questions on here or on Tumblr! My Tumblr is ilikewrite!
Build

Chapter Summary

Sam and Grizz build a changing table.

Chapter Notes

Okay. This is very Grizz and Sam-centric and I hope people enjoy it. There will be more from the other characters soon. Maybe not the next chapter... but soon.

P.S. Sorry for any spelling mistakes or grammatical errors!

Becca had not expected the request to go well with Lexie. She was in shock, still in shock, that they managed to get some time with Allie and Will. The small gathering had been her idea. She had been getting fed up of Gwen being the only one able to visit her with the baby. With that said, Gwen had been very helpful. Her time as a babysitter for most of the town before the incident had left her very skilled at changing nappies. A job that both her and Sam still did not like.

It’d only been a few days since Eden had been born but Sam and Becca had already fallen into a small routine. They knew each other’s jobs and they supported each other. That didn’t mean it was easy. The morning hadn’t started off well. It’s incredibly difficult to yell at your partner when they are deaf. He wasn’t changing her right which had left Eden grumpy. It takes a lot to get a newborn grumpy and he’d done it. However, he was insisting that she’s just over tired due to the fact she’d been up most of the night and was finding everything grumpy. Becca knew otherwise. It’d difficult to sign at Sam when you’re trying to sort a baby. However, they were managing. For now. Gwen’s helping hand the day they moved back into her home had been helpful. It’d allowed for both of them to shower and change clothes without worrying about Eden.

Tomorrow night had actually been Gwenn’s idea. She believed it’d give everyone a boost of positive energy. Becca begrudgingly agreed. It wouldn’t be a super late party, but it’d be nice to show off her baby. It’d also be nice to see Allie and Will instead of chatting to them through people.

She glances to her left, Sam’s carrying some bags, his heads hung, and his expression is somewhat gloomy. She’s yet to have time to ask what’s wrong. She had been planning on talking during this trip. It would have been the perfect opportunity as if he was struggling with an answer, he could just pick something up and have his hands full. Also, if they were doing things then he might be more open and not overthink what he’s signing. However, as soon as they reached town they bumped into Gwen. Becca rolls her eyes at the thought. She’s been piping hot with fury when they’d bumped into her. They’d taken her to a café and she went on a rant for 45 minutes. Sam got away with pretending he could read the lips fast enough to keep up, so Becca had to console. She sighs. As annoying as Gwen could be, she had to admit, she had seemed to be having a rough morning.

Her eyes flit to Gwen and Grizz, both whispering in urgent and hushed tones. She hadn’t through Gwen and Grizz would form such a close friendship. She can’t help but think there’s something more going on between the two of them. Yeah, right now they’re arguing but she also keeps making
him laugh. Gwen had also mentioned earlier how Grizz seems to be the only thing at the moment keeping her going. She did say that both Bean and Mickey were relying heavily on him too. She tried to make it not as personal as possible, but Gwen couldn’t help but think that there was something more. Sam must notice too. He keeps glancing towards the two of them.

Becca still hadn’t had a moment of quiet to chat with Sam honestly. Eden takes up a lot of time. Newborns were meant to sleep all the time but when she was sleeping Becca and Sam either took a nap or did chores. She’s yet to sit him down and be like what-the-fuck-is-up? Maybe less aggressive than that. Then again, maybe not. If he is going to pretend one more time that he can’t “hear” her slapping his arm in the middle of the night, she’ll not hold back.

Grizz hulks a few of the larger boxes which each carry flatpack furniture in them. Gwen and him were arguing about the fact he won’t speak to Sam whilst they are walking. Grizz had pointed out two very valid but irritating points. 1. Sam can’t sign whilst carrying things. 2. What’s he going to say? I can’t deal with this, I want to kiss you, I want you. No. Gwen needed to step back and realise that these two are never, NEVER, getting together. Gwen infuriatingly wasn’t taking no as an answer. According to her, you don’t need to sign with the language of love and she isn’t suggesting an admission of love, just a good ol’ flirt. Grizz is not impressed but her explanations make him laugh. She flutters her eyelashes, gazing up at him, pretending to swoon. It’s a side of Gwen he can tell people don’t tend to see. However, she is the one that comes up with games at parties. Maybe they’d all just missed the goofier side of her before. Either way, even when she is being particularly aggravating, Grizz can’t help but smile.

Sam is trying not to stare at Grizz. After agreeing to help them in the church, he’d awkwardly kept himself separate. Sam felt sick, had he done something wrong? They had been texting last night, he thought that was a good sign, that they could be friendly. Maybe he’s over thinking it? He’d agreed to help after all. He’d even tried to help pick the furniture. Both him and Sam had discovered that they weren’t great at choosing furniture. Gordie disappeared for a bit to retrieve an old kid wagon so had missed most of the picking. He traileled next to them, boxes piled high. Sam couldn’t but think, as he stared at their loot, they may have overdone it. This is going to take forever to build. He hoped everyone stayed long enough to build one thing each. He’s not doing this with just Becca. One of them would always be dealing with Eden. How did their parents do it? How did they care and love them whilst just having a life? Did they have a life? His head hangs as he thinks of his parents. He wishes they were here to help. Or just here in general. Becca reaches out a hand and nudges him. He glances up.

“Are you okay?” She’s got her hands on the pram so can’t sign. Grizz behind her turns his head, hearing the question. The two lock eyes and Grizz could swear for a moment there was a flash of pain behind them. But he smiles and nods, gesturing with his head to the objects in his arms.

“These are heavy.” Becca rolls her eyes and laughs. Gwen pops up and starts chatting to the rest of the group about what would be worse, child labour or being kicked in the balls with a steel boot. Grizz doesn’t join in. He can’t get the pained look out of his mind. It’s the same stare Sam had given him during their fight. It’s a stare that knots his stomach.

They reach Becca’s home and she almost expectantly turns as if to say goodbye to everyone but then they all walk into the house. She sighs. By the time she manages to get the pram inside, unpack the things on the pram, take her jacket off, Eden’s jacket off, her shoes etc.; the living room is covered in boxes. Sam and Grizz had divided their attention to two different piles. Gwen started to drag some stuff to the kitchen. Gordie is making notes.

“Hey, Becca. This pile is for the nursery. Which room is that?” Grizz casually gestures to a pile of large boxes. She opens her mouth to answer but can’t. She doesn’t know. They hadn’t cleared a
room. She had months to plan but she didn’t clear a room. She hadn’t wanted to clear a room. What if her parents came back? What if the changes you make to their rooms, change their rooms back home? She knew that wasn’t true. She’d written a note and left it on her mother’s dresser, no reply. These two places weren’t continually connected. Sam places a hand on her shoulder. She shakes her head.

“Um. We hadn’t decided…a room.” Grizz straightens slightly, suddenly realising he may have stepped into something sensitive. The room becomes unbearably awkward.

“Right.” Everyone focuses on him. “We can build the changing table and keep that in your room for now. You don’t need to build any other bedroom furniture until later on. Eden’s still in the bassinet so we’ve got time. Right, Sam?” He directs the attention back onto Sam who nods understandingly at Becca, signing something.

“Yeah. You’ll need to move my desk.” Eden starts to gurgle, Becca can feel her start to fill her lungs, she’s getting ready to scream. “Eh, I can feel her getting ready to cry. I’ve not fed her in a bit. Gwen? What are you doing in there?” She cranes her neck, trying to see what Gwen is doing to the cupboards. She turns to Grizz and Sam. “You guys sort the changing table. Gordie, stop me from killing her.” And with that, she storms off into the kitchen, Eden starting to cry, and Gordie looking extremely confused.

* 

It took about half an hour to dismantle the desk. They worked in silence. Neither Grizz or Sam said much to each other. It tended to just be for tools or passing something over. They stored the desk pieces in a cupboard in the halls. Grizz sighs, rubbing his eyes as he stares at the instructions. Sam watches. The bag underneath Grizz’s eyes had grown significantly in recent days. Late nights, poor sofa sleeps and the stress is starting to take its toll. Sam taps the box, Grizz raises his head.

“Are you okay?” Sam hadn’t been using his voice that much recently, so it wasn’t the loudest of sounds. Grizz sleepily smiles.

“Yeah, just tired that’s all. Still have to go back and chat to Allie and Will. Not to mention I haven’t even opened a book today so late-night studying for me…” He trails off realising how much work he still had to do today. He didn’t mind building the furniture, it’s quite methodical and calming. Read the instructions, follow the instructions, build a thing. He drifts off into his thoughts. Sam frowns and knocks on the box again. Grizz shakes his head. “Sorry.” Sam’s heart leaps as Grizz produces a lopsided smile. Who knew his weakness is when Grizz is sleepy?

“You could probably leave studying for tomorrow.” Sam offers as he starts cutting open the box. Grizz makes sure Sam can always see his lips for reading whilst he starts taking out the pieces.

“I would but then I’d have even more to study and I wouldn’t be able to come here tomorrow for the party.” His hair falls in front of his face and he grabs a bobble from his wrist and pulls it back. “It’s fine, come Monday I’ll have a couple more people to delegate too. Maybe I’ll get some sleep” He offers another lopsided smile to Sam. Sam nods back but Grizz can still see there is some worry in his eyes.

They start assembling the changing table. It’s quite simple. Becca didn’t want the fancy one that Gwen also dragged out the shop. It’s a wooden shell which you can insert plastic trays into it.
There’s a bin that hooks on the side for the nappies and the change mat goes on the top. Due to the lack of barriers, it’s handy to have everything in one place to prevent Eden from rolling off. Sam felt he’d still change her on the ground. He doesn’t want to risk anything. The tension from before dissipates and the two start joking about. Grizz starts to laugh at a joke of Sam’s. It’s a loud and big laugh. The ease of hanging out together lifting his spirits. Sam is sure the joke wasn’t that funny but Grizz thinks otherwise. Plus, Sam can’t help but enjoy seeing the world be lifted off Grizz’s shoulders for a bit. He’s too busy laughing that it takes him a moment to notice the mistake. Two of the legs have been placed upside down, creating a zig zag piece of furniture. It’s definitely not a changing table. Sam hasn’t noticed either, caught up in the moment with Grizz. Grizz’s face falls. He frowns. Sam cocks his head.

“Fuck.” Sam raises an eyebrow, unable to read Grizz’s mumble. Grizz rests on his knees, hands behind his head. “Fuck.” Sam caught that one.

“What’s wrong?” Grizz is running his fingers through his hair, the bobble falling to the ground. He’s just repeating the word fuck over and over again. He’s not standing and hoping over all the rubbish and parts in the room. He sits on Becca’s bed, rubbing his face with his hands. He lets out a frustrated groan in his hands, and Sam watches as the weight of the world starts weighing down on Grizz once more. His shoulders slumping in defeat, Grizz gestures to the not-change-table-table. Sam laughs. “That’s easily fixed. We just need to… Grizz?” Sam trails off as he stares at Grizz. He’s sitting on the edge of the bed, hand over his mouth, hunches over. He's messy and falling slightly over his face. He seems defeated, stressed but nothing says that more than the tears pricking Grizz’s eyes. He stares up at Sam, who stands just by the mess. He starts shaking his head. Sam makes his way over to him, collapsing at Grizz’s knees, holding his other hand. “What, what is it? Grizz? It’s just a table?” Grizz’s other hand falls onto of Sam’s and he squeezes it.

“But it’s not.” Sam has to really focus on his lips to understand what he’s saying. “If I…If I can’t, Sam, if I can’t.” Tears start falling from his eyes. Sam squeezes his hands. He wants to hug him, but he won’t be able to see what’s wrong without staring at his face.

“It’s okay. It’s okay.” Sam doesn’t really know if it’s okay. He’s still unsure at what’s caused this. Surely it can’t be the changing table? Grizz removes his hands from Sam’s, rubbing at his eyes furiously. Sam brings them back down and stares into the red, tear stained eyes of Grizz. “Talk to me.” He cups Grizz’s face, wiping a tear away with his thumb. Grizz leans into his hand. “Talk to me.”

He takes a moment, eyes shut, just feeling Sam’s presence. His anxious heart starts to settle. He opens his eyes. “If I can’t build a changing table, how am I meant to build…build the things we need? I followed the instructions and I fucked it up! How am I meant to build these tools, machines and bases if I can’t fucking build a changing table!? How are we going to survive if I can’t do these simple things!?” He’s frantically searching the room, not wanting to look into Sam’s eyes. He feels as if he’s disappointing Sam, disappointing Allie, disappointing everyone. Their survival is based on their ability to farm. The food is running out. With Harry trying to push for a take-what-you-want law, they could be out of food sooner. How is he going to help everyone? He can’t do it, he can’t do it and they’re all going to die because of it.

Sam moves his face to face him. “It is just a change table-“

“No, you don’t-“ Sam holds up a hand. Grizz falls silent.

“We have been joking around. We weren’t paying attention. When you and your team, go back, you’ll be focused. But ultimately, you’re not alone in this Grizz. It’s not all down to you. We’re all here. We’ll all help.” Grizz leans his forehead against Sam’s. He breaks down. Sam wraps his hands.
Grizz's waist, leaning into his chest. Grizz hunches over Sam, practically engulfing him. Sam rubs his back soothingly, hoping it's helping calm him down. Sam had never realised quite the responsibility Grizz had placed upon himself, that they'd all placed upon him. They rely on him so often that they forget to remind him that they can help him too.

Grizz feels slightly embarrassed at the state he's in but having Sam's arms wrapped around him, having him be there, is helping. He doesn't know how long they've been like this. The tears have stopped, and he's stopped shaking but neither of them move. At one point, he's gone to shift, and Sam clung tight, not wanting to let go. Grizz's heart swells.

The door creaks open. "Um." They reluctantly pull apart, staring at the confused face peeking around the corner of the room. Sam falls back on the floor, disconnecting completely from Grizz. Grizz feels the emptiness grow inside him. He glares at Gwen. "Are you okay?" She surveys the room and sees the badly constructed change table. With a perplexed expression, she turns her attention back to the visibly upset Grizz, "Are you seriously crying over a changing table? Just take the legs off and turn." Sam stares wide eyes at Gwen. Is she trying to set him off again? However, Grizz cracks a smile, rolling his eyes.

"If it's so easy, you can do it." His voice is raw and still defeated but Sam can see that for whatever reason this exchange between the two is cheering him up.

"I wouldn't have messed it up, that's for sure." She grins cheekily at Grizz and he barks a laugh. She crosses her arms. "Excuse me?"

"I had to help with your tent numerous times. It kept collapsing." Gwen purses her lips.

"Okay but like, tents are tricky." The two share a laugh and when it dies down, Gwen's face becomes serious and she glances between the two. "Are you sure you're okay?"

"Yeah. I am. Tell Becca we're almost done, we'll be down soon. Then I need you to go help Bean and Mickey. I feel like they've been doing more research than you." He deflects from how he's really feeling by sending Gwen back to Bean and Mickey. He's not quite ready to talk about it properly.

"But they're so good at it." She grins at him before disappearing back down the stairs. Sam and Grizz stare at each other.

"I guess we better fix this." Grizz stares at the mess. Sam nods. "Thank you." Sam reaches out and holds Grizz's hand, Grizz kisses it and Sam squeezes back. They stay like this for a moment, holding each other's hand, before getting back to work.
Chapter Summary

Allie stresses and Helena pushes problems away.

Chapter Notes

This is just a short chapter. The next one will be about the small gathering at Becca’s house. I don’t know when that chapter will be up as I’m still working out bits to it. Hope you’re all enjoying the story so far.

Allie’s foot taps impatiently and her fingers drum the kitchen counter. The kettle is bubbling on the stove, whilst Will crunches on some crisps, watching her. She turns around, hands outstretched in front of her, grasping at the air between them. “Where are they? The meeting surely can’t have gone on that long!” She goes back to drumming her fingers on the surface.

“I’m sure Lexie and Harry are just grilling them about-“ The front door swings open, Gordie and Grizz practically collapse into the house, tired from their day. Will mutters to himself, “oh thank god.” When he glances up, he sees Allie has gone, already striding towards the front door. Will sighs and casually follows after. Part of his love for Allie comes from her fiery spirit, but sometimes it’s draining. She’s already loudly questioning the two. Grizz is worse for wear compared to Gordie. His eyes puffy and red, shoulders hunched. He seems drained. He ignores Allie, holding up a hand to her, which aggravates her. He fist bumps Will before leaping onto the sofa, closing his eyes. Allie stands over him, hands on hips.

“Grizz? Grizz what-“

“I need a five-minute nap” He pauses for a second, opening one eye, staring at her. “Please.” Allie’s face softens and she nods. Her need to know what’s going on should not be greater than his health and taking a look at him with fresh eyes, she sees he needs more than five minutes. She gestures to Gordie and Will to follow her and they make their way up the stairs, giving Grizz time to rest.

They enter her and Will’s room. It’s messy. Neither of them has had the energy to really clean stuff. Will starts picking things up whilst Allie kicks it aside. Gordie stands awkwardly, unsure where to sit. He sees a chair. Allie eyes him weirdly, waiting for him to sit as her and Will get comfortable on the bed. He takes the seat. “Okay. From the beginning. Tell me everything.”

Gordie goes through it all, doing his best to explain every single detail. Will and Allie listening quietly. Allie goes to interject a few times but decides against it, not wanting to interrupt the story. She’s happy with the fact that Lexie is being patient about disrupting things. However, she’s still wary over her. She’d known of Grizz’s plans before he went to the meeting. They’re pretty much what they discussed before his expedition.

“So you’re going to be allowed to see Eden for an hour tomorrow! Campbell really tried-“ Allie cuts Gordie off.
“Campbell!? Campbell was there?” Gordie frowns. Had he really not mentioned Campbell yet? He’d been so focused on conveying the information passed during the meeting that he’d forgotten to say who had actually been there. Allie stands and starts to pace. “She’s got Campbell on the council? Campbell.” Gordie just smiles awkwardly and shrugs.

“We can’t do anything until the trial is finished and you two are acquitted! Until then, yes, Campbell is on the council. He doesn’t do much, just sits and listens…”

“Because he’s plotting! He’s a psychopath! He’s dangerous! He’s got Elle! And what? We’re to do nothing?” Gordie frowns at the mention of Elle but doesn’t have time to say anything as Allie starts circling the room, grabbing her phone and messaging. She texts furiously as Will holds out a hand trying to keep her still. She’d been agitated all day; he’d known something was going to set her off. He’d hoped it wouldn’t be a Campbell related issue but…

Allie hasn’t always been a fan of her cousin. He’d been weird and different and not as kind as Sam. The hatred towards him started to develop when he pointed a gun at Cassandra. From then she watched as he manipulated Harry, changed his character before her eyes, and twisted everyone’s words and worlds. He’s cunning and manipulative, always one step ahead of them. She’d taken her eyes off him for a few seconds and he did so much. Elle, this weird revolution, and now he’s sitting in the heart of it all. He’ll pull the strings and they’ll never know he’s doing it. She throws her phone down. Gordie raises his eyebrows. “Where is Helena?”

“Helena? Why do you need Helena?” Gordie and Will exchange a look. Allie is having a conversation in her head, the other two are trying to figure out what that is. She could be awful for not voicing her train of thought. Especially recently, with all the betrayals. Allie is frustrated, she wants to talk to Helena. If she could just leave this bloody house! She needs to talk with Helena. Her and Helena need to come up with a plan. She’s going stir crazy in this house and with Campbell- With Campbell- She can’t think straight.

Please, she thinks, begging to whatever being has put them here, make sure Elle’s okay.

* * *

Helena ignored Allie’s messages. Her and Luke were trying to have dinner. A private dinner. They needed to go through some plans for tomorrow. He and Clark were chaperoning Will and Allie. Anything could set them off. She needed to make sure he has a clear head. If he doesn’t, it’ll only set Clark off, and once you set Clark off, everyone goes off.

It’s the first time in a while she sees him at peace. He’s enjoying the meal. The two of them have laughed about some of the stories about the new recruits in The Guard. They’re trying to fill Grizz’s gap but finding one man to fill that hole was proving difficult, so they’ve settled on two newbies. Their initiations are a little… rough. But Luke has always insisted he sat back from that, making sure that the initiates consented. She knows some of the others wouldn’t do that.

They finish dessert and Luke clears the table. As he comes back, he wraps his arms around Helena, kissing her cheek. “It’s nice. It’s like before.” She smiles in response. He’s happy. She’s… okay. She loves Luke, she really does but it’s off. The whole relationship is off. She’s shoving it aside, for now, giving herself some peace at home. Every time she steps out the door she deals with the world’s problems. Whether it’s Allie and Will’s trial, residents in distress, Harry and Lexie and the situation with Campbell and Elle, she’s got a lot on her shoulders. She needs to discuss Campbell and Elle with Allie tomorrow. It pains her to leave Elle in his house but she’s unsure what they can do right
now. She needs to get Elle out the house and into safety but how…There’s nowhere to run, there’s nowhere where she is safe. They’d need to find a place for her where Campbell couldn’t find her, at least until they could find a way to keep him imprisoned. This is not a problem they’ll be able to solve overnight. If only she could get a message to Elle, tell her they’re trying, they’re going to find a way.

This is one of the reasons why she doesn’t need these issues at home too. When she’s dealing with all of this, she can’t deal with Luke as well. She’ll address them fully after the trial after she’s gotten the truth out of him on the stand. It angers her that he doesn’t trust her enough to say the truth. She thought they’d been so strong, that they could do anything together. They’ll get there again, she knows it. She loves him and she will fight for them for as long as she can. “Helena?”

“How?” She turns her head to see a concerned Luke searching her face, trying to figure out what she’s thinking. “Sorry, drifted off.” He frowns and she gives him a kiss. “Nothing to worry about.” He smiles, unconvinced back at her. No matter how much she tries to hide his distrust, Luke can sense it. It hurts.
Everyone officially meets Eden.

Everyone had dressed up to a certain extent. Grizz had put one of his “nice” shirts on. Gwen had come to meet them, opting to show up with the group rather than by herself. She had the sneaking suspicion that not many people liked her here. Her friendship with Lexie had been non-existent since she came back. Gwen had to admit since arriving in this pocket-universe, she’d grown distant from Lexie. Over the past few days, she hadn’t seen much of her other “friends.” There were a few moments where they had chatted in the street but when she’d mentioned how she felt bad for Allie and Will, they had gotten weird. Maybe she just had a clear head compared to them. It’s been a bubble. This town has been a bubble and when she left with Grizz’s team, they took themselves out of that bubble, they cleared their heads. They saw the bigger picture; they see the bigger picture. Well, maybe not the whole picture. The fact is, she, and the rest of the town, still don’t know how or why they’re here but the matter still stands. They got it, Allie and Will had gotten it, the people she’s with now get it. She doesn’t want to stop seeing it, so she’s not making the effort anymore with these people. She glances at Grizz who buttons and unbuttons his shirt, trying to figure out what looks best. She’s so much happier now that she has a real friend. Now, she just needs to repay the favour and get him happier.

Grizz catches Gwen’s eye. He felt underdressed. Gwen had gone for more of a party look. Grizz hadn’t thought this was a party. It’s just a group get together, celebrating. Okay, that’s a party. He raises an eyebrow as she takes a sip out of a hip flask. She gestures towards the door. A Clark shaped silhouette sways slightly on the other side of the door, checking his watch every now and then. “If he’s coming to this thing, I need something to get me through it.” He nods, understanding. He holds out his hand and she hands the flask to him. He takes a swig and then pockets it. “Hey!”

“We’re not going to be drunk when we meet the baby. We can get drunk afterwards.” He pats the pocket; Gwen rolls her eyes.

“We’ve already met her.” He gives her a look. It’s becoming a signature move of his. Gwen purses her lips. “Fine. But you and I are getting fuuuuuuuuuuuuuucked.” She shakes her hips about. She takes one of Grizz’s hands and spins herself. He laughs. Grizz can’t help it, Gwen knew how to raise his spirits. Allie and Will come down the stairs. Will had followed Grizz’s lead, smart/casual attire, a shirt and jeans. Allie had forced herself out of PJs and sweats to put a dress on. She’d even done her hair and makeup. Both of them raise their eyebrows as they descend the steps. Grizz and Gwen move apart. “Wow Allie, you scrub up good. Almost didn’t recognise you without…” She waves her hands around Allie, “Without the gloom.” Grizz glares at her as Allie forces a smile towards Gwen.

“I apologise for her. She uses insults to mask her jealousy.” Gwen’s mouth drops at Grizz’s words, offended.

“Oh, don’t worry. I know.” Allie flashes a sassy grin at Gwen. Gwen forces a smile back, elbowing Grizz in the ribs. He laughs. She can’t get too annoyed at him. This is the first time they’ve properly relaxed since they’ve gotten back.
Allie glances through the window and sees a couple of figures join Clark. Luke clasps hands with him and they shoulder bump. Allie sighs and rolls her eyes. Helena politely acknowledges Clark but walks past him, opening the front door. She hugs Allie.

“Hey. How are you holding up? Are you both” She glances at Will, “doing well? I know it must be frustrating being stuck in this house.” She hugs Allie again and Grizz swears she whispers something in her ear. In fact, she must have because Allie’s face went from the usual pissed to down-right deadly.

“We’re doing okay. It’ll be nice to have a change of scene.” She’s saying nice things but Grizz can’t help but notice how her tone of voice doesn’t seem to match it. It’s like when you’re listening to a song with an upbeat tempo, but the lyrics are slightly depressing. Outkast’s song Hey Ya comes to mind.

Luke enters the house; Clark is close behind him. The room had been silent before but now it held an awkward silence with a hint of anger. Allie and Will’s faces turn to stone, eyes locking with the two members of The Guard. Gwen smiles with sickly sweetness at Clark smiles with disgust. Helena grits her teeth feeling the tension swirling around the room. Grizz feels the hipflask. Maybe he could use another drink.

*

Kelly watched as Becca fussled around the living room; sorting cushions, moving the nibbles around the table, checking on Eden, sorting the drinks table etc. She couldn’t really sit still. Becca couldn’t help but feel nervous. She’s excited to see Allie and Will and she knows Sam is happy to have his family meet Eden but having a “police” presence is going to be…a little awkward. She also doesn’t want a fight to break out. She glances at the alcohol on the table. Maybe she shouldn’t have gotten alcohol. To be honest, the alcohol is for once Eden has been put down for the night. She won’t be drinking but she felt like everyone needed a little stress release. Lord knows Grizz did. She didn’t know Grizz that well but when he came down the stair yesterday, eye puffy and sniffling, she could tell things are starting to take its toll on him. Plus, maybe she could play matchmaker slightly. She moves the cushions. Kelly grabs her and sits her down.

“Becca. The place looks nice. I don’t know why you’re stressing, we’ve all been here before.” Becca screws up her face slightly. Kelly’s right but this is important, it has to go well.

“I know, I know, I just hope it goes well.” She glances across to Eden. She’s awake and her eyes are staring up at the ceiling, transfixed. Becca wonders what she sees, what she understands. Is it like in snoopy where all the adults just sound like wamp-wamp? Or can she hear certain things? She’d been dreading Eden’s arrival since she found out she was pregnant. Scared and unsure of how she’d be able to care for a baby, how she’d be able to love them knowing the real father… All trouble had left her though, the night she saw her. All the pain and effort left her body and, she guesses unsurprisingly, she was just filled with love. She loves her. She never wants to leave her side. She doesn’t want anything to happen to her.

Sam and Gordie enter from the kitchen carrying more nibbles. Becca’s head snaps to them. “No! We have enough food through here, that’s for in the kitchen.” They turn on their heels in unison, silently agreeing they’ll stay in the kitchen until the others arrive. Kelly giggles watching them all. It reminded her of her mum stressing before events at their house. Becca didn’t realise how much a mum she already is. “Kelly.” Kelly smiles at Becca, cocking her head slightly. “I don’t know how
many times I’ve said it but…” She takes Kelly’s hands. “Thank you.”

“Becca. Honestly, you need to stop thanking me, I didn’t—“ Kelly is cut off by Becca and her serious face. She falls silent.

“You delivered a baby. My baby. You made sure I was fine, and my baby was fine. I will be thanking you for life.” She shakes her hands a little to try and get the message into Kelly’s head. Kelly bashfully glances away, red rising to her cheeks.

“I mean, I guess, that was pretty cool.” Becca rolls her eyes and nudges her. They both laugh slightly. “Regardless of how awesome I was, am, you need to stop saying thank you. I’m not going to listen to you and Sam thanking me all the time when we hang out.” Becca nods.

“Okay, just one more, thank you.” They laugh and Eden stirs slightly. They stop and stare at her, hoping she doesn’t start crying. She’s a content baby but when tired or hungry. They set the time of the gathering quite late purely so they could put Eden down quite quickly. They wanted everyone to meet her, but they didn’t want to overwhelm her for hours. She glances at the clock. They’re running late. She starts sorting the cushions again.

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It’s taking them longer to reach Becca and Sam’s home because the two idiots of The Guard are taking the most convoluted route there. Due to Allie and Will’s enemy status within the community, there was a worry about an attack. Allie had been surprised that Lexie had insisted they take a safe route during this trip. As much as she did not like the girl, she could be smart. She would have been great on the council. Then again, these moves she’s making are small. She’s yet to face a big task or decision.

Gwen storms ahead to where Grizz is walking with Bean and Mickey. They’d picked the others up on the way. Grizz is listening, nodding as they talk through notes they’d made during the day. From about seven in the morning until Gwen showed up and berated him for not being ready for tonight, Grizz had had his nose in books. Allie and Will barely got a word out of him all day. The only thing he really wanted was tea and snacks. Both she and Will had underestimated his commitment to everything. Granted, in this world they don’t have much choice but he really, really, tries and does his best at everything. He’s sticking to it, sticking at it until he makes it work. They also loved his reluctance to lead, it’s one of the qualities that somehow made him a better leader. Allie wouldn’t have trusted this job to anyone else and it’s not just because of Grizz’s outdoor skills, it’s because of the way people will listen to him and the way in which he deals with people. He approaches life with compassion but also with wisdom. He’s not as impulsive as others and wants them all to do better, to be better. And his reluctance helps people humanise him. She sighs cocking her head, watching as Gwen animatedly gesturing to him; he rubs his face exasperated. Allie smiles. Bean and Mickey try to calm Gwen down, but she seems to have wound herself up about something, she turns back to Clark and sticks the middle finger up at him.

“Hey—“ Clark starts and Grizz turns around, batting Gwen’s hand down.

“Clark. Stop winding her up. You know you’re just baiting her into an argument and you, stop falling for it.” Grizz’s tone is slightly exasperated. To be honest, Allie understood. They all knew Gwen and Clark were broken up, this behaviour reinforces it, they just haven’t told anyone yet. It’d matter when couples got private rooms, but Harry had rescinded that rule, so they were all wondering why they were keeping up the pretence. Due to this, everyone is getting fed up of all of this. Clark pushes out his chest, eyebrows furrowing slightly.
“I don’t know what she’s said but she is not.” He tries to make Grizz back down with his stare. Luke rolls his eyes. Grizz always wins. He should know this by now. Grizz stares, deadpan, back.

“She’s said shit. Just stop.” Grizz holds up a hand as if telling off a child. Clark opens his mouth as if to retaliate again but instead stews in silence. They carry on walking. Gwen’s chewing her lip, realising she’s been biting on Clark’s bait. Grizz pats her on the shoulder and immediately she perks up. Bean coughs slightly, gesturing to their notepads. Gwen rolls her eyes and pulls out a bit of paper, launching into something to do with plant schedules.

Becca and Sam’s home appears in front of them. Allie had been too busy watching everyone else to realise how close they were. She straightens slightly, dusting off imaginary dirt from her outfit. Will squeezes her hand.

“You look good.” She smiles. The door opens. Sam embraces her.

*

Becca stands nervously in the living room, Eden in her arms. Everyone else had gone to the door to greet everyone. Some music plays softly in the background. It’s not the best music, some random CDs of her mum’s that she had kept over the years. She’s kind of grateful her mum kept all of that, otherwise, she’d have no music.

She hears everyone start to file in and the butterflies in her stomach start. She’s excited for everyone to meet her. She sways slightly, jiggling Eden a bit. Sam enters the room first, tears at the edge of his eyes. Becca feels emotional too. The last time they saw Allie and Will everything was fine and she had been pregnant and now, well now there’s a baby and Clark and Luke flank Allie and Will as they enter the room. Allie stops dead at the sight of Becca. “Hey.” Becca offers as she smiles at Allie. “Eden has been very excited to meet you.” Allie rushes forward and hugs the side of Becca, awing softly as she gazes down upon Eden.

“Becca. She’s beautiful.” Everyone else starts to rush forward and Becca suddenly feels self-conscious. Everyone had really dressed up. Even Grizz put on a shirt. Nothing really fit her, she’s still recovering from everything, so she had leggings and a tank top on. She doesn’t even have a lick of makeup on. Why didn’t she think to tidy herself up? A shower has not done enough. Wanting to get out of the way, she locks eyes with Allie.

“Would you like to hold her? She has to go to bed soon so it’s now or never.” Allie opens her mouth, but Gwen’s voice comes out. “I’m next!” Becca rolls her eyes and Kelly laughs, nudging Gwen. Allie sits down and Becca carefully gives Eden to her. Becca helps her support the head and glances towards Sam who swiftly moves and sits on the arm of the chair, watching Eden for her. She exits the room, glancing at herself in the mirror and grimacing. She really did not look great. Sighing, she picks up her camera. Entering the room once more, she stops, staring at her friends and Clark. They’d all dispersed slightly, allowing people to greet Eden. She snaps a photo. A couple of people turn but most are still enamoured by Eden. Becca starts taking photos of everyone, recording this moment, recording the memory.

The last person to hold Eden is Gordie. He is the most awkward in holding her, which is funny considering he helped deliver her. Sam has to kneel beside Gordie’s knees so he could catch Eden if
he were to drop her. Much like she’d done after Grizz held her in the hospital. After about five
minutes in his arms and one photograph later, she begins to cry. Or scream. Overwhelmed, tired and
hungry, she’s no longer happy being passed around like a parcel. “Okay, okay, I think it’s time for
her bed.” She scoops Eden up, jiggling her side to side gently to try and calm her. Sam stands up and
places his pinkie by her mouth, she sucks on it. “Yep. Hungry. I think I’ll feed her upstairs then put
her to bed.” Sam kisses Eden’s head and then Becca’s forehead. Gwen watches as Grizz pulls out
her hipflask, taking a swig. Everyone says their goodbyes to Eden. Gwen waits a couple of moments
before jumping up. Everyone stares at her.

“Shots?” Clark raises his hand and Luke hits his arm, glaring at him. He lowers his arm. Grizz nods
eagerly and with his permission, Mickey moves forward to accept a shot too. Will moves forward
too. Allie rolls her eyes. Sam hesitates for a moment but nods. Gwen throws her arms in the air.
“Woo! Party!” Sam puts a finger to his lips, shushing her. Gwen lowers her arms slightly and
whispers, “Woooo…Party…” He smiles and Gwen gets the vodka.

By the time Becca has settled Eden and come down the stairs, almost everyone has a drink or bottle
of beer. She rolls her eyes, she’s away for two seconds. She smiles as Sam, talking to a tipsy Gwen,
nods along not really knowing what she’s saying. She settles next to Will, opting for a glass of water
instead of drink.

“Hey.” Will smiles, and they raise their glasses, clinking them together. “It’s been good to see you
guys.

“Yeah, Eden is adorable Becca. She’s perfect.” He smiles and Becca laughs.

“You would not be saying that at 2am when she’s screaming the house down.” They laugh and Will
glances at the clock on the wall. His face falls. “What’s wrong?”

“We need to leave soon.” He searches the room but can’t find Allie. “Where is Allie?” Becca scans
the room and shrugs, sipping on her water.

“Probably the bathroom.” Will leans back into his seat, unsure, not believing that Allie is at the toilet.


* 

Allie stood, glaring at Helena. Helena plays with her necklace, staring gravely at Allie. They’d taken
this moment to talk with each other in the kitchen. Everyone had their drinks and were chatting next
door. Luke was keeping Clark from annoying everyone and Will was happy just soaking in the
atmosphere. Helena and Allie took this as the perfect opportunity to talk. “You ignored my
messages.” Helena rolls her eyes.

“I may be your “lawyer,” Allie but I’m not available 24/7” Allie purses her lips and Helena sighs.
“I’m sorry. I’m worried about her too. I went to see Campbell-“ Allie’s jaw drops to the ground.

“You went to see Campbell? What did you do?” Her tone lowers. “Helena, what did you do?”
Helena crosses her arms and stares at Allie.

“I just tried to get to her… then I spat in his face.” Allie’s expression is a mixture of pure joy and
fear. Angering Campbell right now will not help anyone, they’re powerless right now. However, she
wished she could have been there to see Campbell’s face as she did it.
“One. Never do that again. Two. I wish I’d seen it.” Helena cracks a small smile and they share a moment of joy at the act. However, the joy doesn’t last long. They both know they’re currently at the bottom of the food chain, Helena slightly higher due to the church’s status amongst the people but generally, they had no solid evidence against Campbell to have him… to have him what? They didn’t know what would happen to him. He’s not killed anyone so Lexie would be unlikely to kill Campbell. Allie suspected Lexie wouldn’t be able to kill Campbell. They didn’t have a prison and they couldn’t keep him in the wine cellar forever, that’s just impractical. Allie and Helena both know the only solution is to kill Campbell but they both know that with Lexie in charge it’d be almost impossible. If they had Elle, they could show Lexie what he’s done to her, explain everything that’s happened. Lexie would probably believe Elle and take her side, especially after what happened to her and The Guard. Allie grimaces at her mistake. She should have listened to her. “So, you’re telling me that unless I can somehow win the trial and win over Lexie, we have no chance of getting Campbell?” Helena bites her lip again, fiddling with the necklace, tangling it slightly. 

“If you can’t do that, I’ll do it but…” She trails off for a second, eyes lost in thought. “You still have authority, Allie. People are angry but they’re not stupid.” Allie huffs. Sure, seems that way. “It’s true. Once this trial is over, people will realise that. Then we’ll work on getting rid of Campbell.” Helena places her hands-on Allie’s shoulders, staring deeply into her eyes. “We will get rid of him. One way or another.” There’s a glint of danger in Helena’s eyes, a glint most would be scared of, but Allie smiled at it. A similar glint appearing in her own eyes.

Something crashes in the living room.

*  

Campbell stares at the glass shattered on the floor. He surveys the room. Not a single person happy to see him. Oh well. Allie and Helena rush from the kitchen. They stop dead. He gives a little wave to Allie. “Cousin.” He smiles. Allie runs at him. Luke and Grizz catch her, separating her from Campbell. He starts to laugh. “I wouldn’t do that Allie. You’re out on good behaviour. Don’t want to go back to the cellar now, do we?” He sneers at her and glares. Luke and Grizz placing her down. She shrugs them off, arms crossed. 

“What are you doing here?” venom swirls in her voice. The tension in the room rises.

“I wanted to see my niece.” He stares around the room. “Is she upstairs? Shall I-“ Sam stand and moves forward. Campbell holds up his hands. 

“I wouldn’t try it fag. There’s already two of you in-” Grizz holds Campbell by the collar. Campbell is rarely shocked, he’s always taken pride in understanding people and their motivations, knowing their next move etc. He knew Grizz as protective and loyal to his friends but not as someone who acts rashly. Campbell sniffs. Alcohol drifts from his mouth. This causes him to smile. So, alcohol loosens him up. He’ll take note of that.

“Don’t you fucking call him that,” Grizz growls at Campbell and he cocks his head, cool and calm, not the least worried about this situation. Everyone else is stunned, stuck to the spot. Grizz lets go of the collar and prods Campbell hard in the shoulder causing him to step backwards. “You’re going to fucking leave and you’re never. EVER. To fucking come here again.” He’s speaking through gritted teeth. It’s hurting his jaw. Campbell still isn’t reacting, he’s studying Grizz, trying to understand. Why such an adverse reaction? Why go from zero to one hundred? He expected Allie’s reaction. Expected Sam’s anger at him showing up but he did not expect Grizz, someone who never seemed
close to Becca or Sam to… Ah. He’s learning so much today. Campbell carries on smiling as Clark pulls Grizz away. He turns his back on Campbell, hands resting on the back of his head. Sam staring at him wide-eyed, Gwen leading him to a seat.

“I guess I’ll go then. Tell Becca and Eden that Elle,” he glances towards Allie and Helena again, taking pleasure in the fear and fury that blazes across their faces, “and I say hello.” Clark leads him out the house.

It’s not until five minutes after the door shuts that anyone breathes. Grizz sits, swigging beer on the sofa. Sam turns and stares at him. Grizz refuses to make eye contact. Becca comes down the stairs. She glances around at everyone, confused at what’s happened in the amount of time she’d been gone. She heard the door go twice but everyone is still inside. Who’s left? She sees Grizz and Sam’s expressions and glances at Gwen who simply mouths *Explain later.* Becca nods and takes a seat next to her. Luke coughs. Everyone else turns their attention to him. Grizz continues to stare at his feet. Sam continues to stare at him.

“I hate to um, make the situation, um…” He’s trying to find a way to explain that Allie and Will have to go. They were an hour late for the curfew Lexie had set. Clark had been sneaking drinks so hadn’t been paying attention to the time and Luke had purposely lost track, wanting Allie and Will to spend as much time as he could let them with their friends. Helena glances at her watch.

“We need to go.” Allie glances at the clock too. Grizz stands but Sam shakes his head, Gwen pulls him back down.

“No, you’re staying. I am not letting you go in that state.” Grizz reluctantly sits again.

Allie and Will gather their things. Becca drags Sam away to say goodbye to those who are leaving. They move out into the hallway, leaving the living room silent except for the music playing in the background. The door opens and closes. Grizz takes a swig of beer.

*

Becca is ready to kill Campbell. She’s pacing the kitchen, Gwen and Kelly trying to calm her down. She has an empty beer bottle in one hand. She’d been clearing up after the others. It’d taken a good ten minutes, but everyone got over the incident and started talking and laughing again. Becca dragged the two girls with her to the kitchen demanding an explanation. Now she wished she hadn’t. She goes to smash the bottle and Gwen strategically takes it off her. How is she going to protect Eden from Campbell in this town? It’s almost impossible not to bump into people here. She can’t just move either. They’re stuck and he’s on the bloody council. He makes the rules. He’s untouchable. How can she protect Eden from him?

“Becca. Becca. Becca!!” Gwen stops and shakes her. She hadn’t realised she wasn’t paying attention to them. “He’s gone. He’s not coming back. You’re fine. Eden is fine.” Kelly nods next to Gwen, the two of them trying to quell the concerns on Becca’s mind even though it was on their too.

“You can’t promise that.” Becca’s voice shakes slightly but she couldn’t tell whether it is out of fear or anger, maybe both.

“No. We can’t.” Kelly says this and straightens up, Gwen gives her the Grizz look of *what-the-fuck-you-doing* but she ignores it. “We can’t promise anything but that doesn’t mean we all won’t do our
best to prevent it. You’re not alone in this. Eden is not alone. She has a big family that will protect her.” Becca stares at Kelly’s confident face.

“I mean Grizz almost beat him up and that was only within two minutes of the guy being here. Also, I’m really sorry about your glass, I didn’t mean to break it.” Becca exasperatedly glances at Gwen, who smiles sheepishly. “I mean, you’re already angry, felt like the right time to fess up.” Becca and Kelly stare at Gwen. They’re all silent for a moment before they laugh, the tension leaving her slightly. “Right. We’re not going to let that slimy toad of a man ruin this night. So, can I go get fucked now?” In unison, Kelly and Becca roll their eyes but smile at her as she dragged them back through to the living room. Maybe Gwen isn’t so bad, and she laughs as both her and Grizz do a very dramatic tango in the living room.
Chapter Summary

He should go.

Chapter Notes

Just a little short chapter. Hope everyone enjoys!

One by one people left. Gordie and Kelly left first, an early start meant they had already stayed up too late. Kelly had to check up on some people around town whilst fulfilling schedules Lexie was still enforcing. Gordie had his usual researching to do. Mickey and Bean were forced to carry a drunk Gwen back to Grizz’s after she threw up in Becca’s bathroom. The next thing Grizz knew, he is the last one there. He’d nipped to the loo as Bean, Mickey and Gwen had left so didn’t notice. As he walks back through, he passes Becca heading up the stairs. “I think I’m going to head Becca, it was honestly a lovely evening, I’m sorry for ruining it for a second-“ She cuts him off laughing.

“Grizz you didn’t ruin anything, bloody Campbell did.” She frowns concerned for a second, noticing Grizz’s slight sway. “You can sleep on the sofa tonight if you want? I don’t know if you should walk back by yourself.” He wafts the air, causing Becca to giggle slightly.

“Nonsense. I’m fine.” And he Grins at her, spreading his arms out as if to show her how fine he is. She rolls her eyes, hops down the steps and hugs him. He hugs her back.

“Thank you for sticking up for Sam earlier. I know he’d have appreciated it.” Grizz stomach tightens. He’d stick up for anyone but yeah, Sam felt different.

“No problem” he murmurs into her hair. She grins up at him and dances up the stairs, avoiding creaking floorboards.

Grizz clumsily walks through to the living room where Sam sits, reading something on his phone. He glances up and immediately puts it away, focusing all his attention on Grizz. He awkwardly moves his hands, not sure where to put them. He pats his body a bit. Sam stares at him bemused. “Eh. I’m gonna head.” He points to the door, his slightly (maybe a bit more than slightly) intoxicated self makes him over pronounce his words. Sam rolls his eyes. He holds out a beer.

“One more drink?” Grizz hesitates. He should go. He takes the beer. They open it and clink it together. Grizz collapses next to Sam, a bit closer than he intended. They shift so they’re staring at each other. “You didn’t have to stick up for me you know. I could have handled Campbell. I’ve been handling him my whole life.” Sam stares straight at Grizz and he can’t help but feel like he’s being told off. He frowns, holding up his beer.

“I’m not going to apologise. I know you can handle yourself, doesn’t mean you have too. I’d do it again. In fact, I’d do more. I’d punch him.” He takes a swig out of his beer. He should go.
“You don’t need—“ Sam doesn’t get to finish his sentence. Grizz cuts him off, his eyes are bold and serious. Sam’s breath catches.

“I want too.” Grizz desperately wants Sam to understand that no matter what, no matter when he is there for him. He’s not sure whether it’s the alcohol causing him to be bolder or it’s just himself, but he wants Sam to understand. Sam nods and they fall into silence. *He should go.*

Sam moves his arm, so it rests on the back of the sofa. Grizz mimics him. Their hands are close enough that if Grizz were to straighten his wrist, he’d be touching Sam’s. He stares at the hands, they’re so close. *He should go.* Sam touches Grizz’s fingers, playing with them. Grizz stares at it. *He should go.* He takes it a step further and entwines his hand in Sam’s. They lock eyes. *He should go.* Neither of them is speaking. Grizz is barely breathing. His heart is racing. Sam rubs his thumb across the back of Grizz’s hand, gentle circular movements. It’s electrifying. *He should go.* Sam squeezes his hand as Grizz places his bottle on the table. *He should go.* Grizz signs something that Sam once taught him. *He should go.* Sam lets go of his hand and for a moment his heart comes crashing down, his gut twists and embarrassment floods through him. *He should go.* He’s being stupid. *He should go.* But then Sam’s lips are on his and those feelings are swept away. His heart has stopped now, killing him, he’s already in heaven, feeling Sam’s lips on his was all he needed. Sam moves slightly closer; Grizz opens his mouth, accepting the kiss. *He should go.* Grizz pulls Sam close, moving his body so he sit’s on top of him, allowing Grizz to hold him as they kiss. He can feel Sam’s heartbeat against him, going just as fast, slamming against his chest. *He should go.* Then something inside them snaps. The kiss becomes hungrier, greedier, he’s pulling Sam as close as possible, but it doesn’t feel close enough. Grizz is fumbling at Sam’s top, desperately trying to work the buttons but it’s not coming off. He’s tempted to just rip it off, he just wants to be close to Sam. *He should go.* The shirts are on the floor and he’s kissing Sam’s body as well are his lips, drinking in Sam as much as possible. *He should go.* He can feel it pressing against his jeans, they’re removing the belts and buttons, everything. *He should go.* As they undress, they’re kissing each other, emptiness filling the milliseconds they’re apart. *He should go.* Each kiss a moment of pure pleasure coursing through his blood. *He should go.* They’re naked now, clothes flung across the place. *He should go.* Sam slows, working his way down Grizz’s body savouring every moment. Not leaving a single inch untouched. Grizz grips Sam’s hair as his mouth reaches his dick, moaning slightly, already unable to hold back the pleasure. *He should go. He should go. He should go. He should go. He should go.*

“What. The. Fuck.”

Grizz freezes.
Pain

Chapter Summary

He should have gone.

“What. The. Fuck.”

Grizz freezes. Sam doesn’t notice, he can’t hear. Grizz pulls him off. Sam stares, confused, unsure at why there’s pure horror on Grizz’s face. Grizz can’t move, he doesn’t want to look. He can’t even gesture to Sam. Sam moves up towards his face, moving a hand to cup it. Grizz is trying to plead with his eyes that Sam needs to stop, Sam needs to see who’s there. He needs someone to move. Why hasn’t the person spoken again? Are they just as in shock as he is? He should have gone.

What seems to be a pair of gloves flies across the room.

This causes Sam to look up, perplexed at what the hell just happened. He scrambles off Grizz, grabbing a pillow, hiding his privates. He frantically signs, Grizz can only pick up the word sorry, over and over again. His stomach drop. He knows who’s there. Who else could it have been? His eyes shut. He should have gone.

Becca still hasn’t moved. She’s still standing in the doorway, hand hovering over the next object by her side. It’s a bottle. They’d been lucky the first thing she’d found was a pair of gloves. She’s angry. She’s furious. She’s hurt. Sam promised. Sam made a commitment. This, what is this? Her mind is racing, flipping through snapshots of the past few months, things clicking into place. His absence at Thanksgiving, he bizarre commitment to the gardens, the reaction he gave when Grizz visited them at the hospital, every linger stare they’ve shared, yesterday and buying the stupid baby furniture. It’s all making sense. It’s all making fucking sense and she’s hurt.

Sam’s signing at her. She’s not even paying attention to what he’s saying really. Her eyes are stinging. What the fuck was he playing at? She glances at Grizz, his eyes shut, pain across his face. Another stab hits her gut. Why Grizz? Why did he do it? He’d been so kind to her, no, it was for Sam. How could she have been so stupid? She thought he fancied Gwen. Oh, did Gwen know? Did everyone? Is she the last? Is she really this stupid?

Grizz opens his eyes, grabbing his boxers and throwing Sam’s at him. Sam still signing, fumbles as he tries to put them on. Grizz starts gathering his clothes. Trying his best to keep his voice calm and steady, hoping to make Becca understand that he didn’t mean, he really didn’t mean to do this. Or was it simply, he didn’t mean to get caught? He shakes his head. He can’t think of that right now. He needs to make sure she’s okay. Why did he do this? He should have gone. “Becca, I’m sorry. I’m really sorry. I’m going to go. I need to go. I should have gone. Becca, I’m really sorry. Please, I never meant to hurt.” Grizz reaches out to her. He’s pretty sure that Sam is signing pretty much the same thing as him. Becca jerks away, tensing up, not wanting to be touched, not wanting them to comfort her. There’s a moment of agonizing silence as tears stream down Becca’s, he doesn’t think she’s noticed. Anguish blanket’s Sam’s face, just repeating the sign sorry over and over. Grizz glances between them. What has he done? He should have gone.

“Get out.” It’s barely audible. Becca doesn’t glance at Grizz, refusing to face him. She keeps her eyes trained on Sam’s. “Get Out.” Grizz starts to gather his things, mumbling apologies, guilt
soaring through his body. “GET OUT.” She yells, throwing open the door, trying to push Grizz out. He’s stumbling, apologising as she pushes. Sam reaches out to her, following as she assaults Grizz. There’s not real strength in it, she just wants him out.

“Becca, I’m sorry.” His voice breaks. He didn’t want to hurt her; he didn’t want to hurt them. He’d been selfish. “Becca, I’m really sorry.” She continues to push him, yelling for him to leave. Sam is pained watching Grizz being pushed and shoved. He tries to pull Becca off, not wanting her to do something she’ll regret and not wanting Grizz to be injured. His hearts being pulled in every direction. However, Becca shoves him away too. Grizz stands in the doorway, his clothes bundled in his arms. They hear Eden begin to cry. Becca places her hands against her head, overwhelmed by everything. She glances up to the stairs, knowing she needs to go to her child. Sam understands that means Eden’s awake. He instinctively starts to move towards the steps, but Becca pushes him away.

“NO.” Sam stops. Becca holds a trembling hand up at Sam. “You… You do not get to touch her. You… I can’t… I can’t look at you.” She turns and see’s Grizz is still there. “Why are you still here!? Have you not done enough? Fucking leave!” And she whisks herself up the stairs, going to try and calm a screaming Eden.

Sam and Grizz stare at where Becca had been.

The cold drifts into the house and Grizz shifts slightly. Sam moves his stare to him. Grizz is crying too. Both wrecked with guilt. Both slightly drunk. Both tired. Both know what will happen next.

“I…” Grizz can’t form words. Eden’s still crying but he can also hear the soft whimpers of Becca, trying desperately to shush her child whilst her heart is breaking. She’s not the only one.

Sam places a hand on the door. Grizz shakes his head slightly, unsure whether he’s asking him not to shut him out or apologising. Maybe it’s both. Sam shuts the door. He stands, staring at the door for a moment, before turning on his heels and running in his underwear, in the cold, out into the night.

Once Sam shuts the door, he slowly moves up the stairs and into the bedroom. Becca sits, rocking back and forth on her bed, crying, holding an equally upset Eden. She notices him hovering in the doorway. “No. Go away. Fuck off, Sam.” She doesn’t want to look at him, doesn’t want to see his pain. He doesn’t get her sympathy. He doesn’t get to feel like shit. He moves forward and she shakes her head, turning away from him. Sam sits on the bed next to her. He holds her. She struggles to move away to begin with, before turning in slightly, accepting the hug, sobbing into him. “Fuck you. Seriously, fuck you. Fuck you” “I’m sorry.” He murmurs into her head. They repeat themselves over and over again. Their voice growing hoarser as time passes, the words becoming barely audible whispers. Sam continues to hold Becca and she continues to hold Eden. He can’t let go of her and she doesn’t want him too. He made a promise. He made a commitment. He made a promise to both of them. He broke it all. He’s broken everything.

* 

Grizz runs practically naked through the town. He’s not sure where to go. He doesn’t want to go home and face Gwen, Bean and Mickey. He can’t bear to deal with Allie and Will. He goes where he’s always felt the most at home. The gardens. He slows as he reaches the gate, glances at the plant beds, where he and Sam have shared some moments, his stomach tightens. He swiftly moves through the beds towards the greenhouse. It’s cold. It’s fucking freezing actually. There’s some
residual heat built up from throughout the day in there. A heat lamp is over certain empty pots. There were no plants in here at the moment. He really should start turning over pots. He turns the heat lamps on. He knows he’s wasting valuable resources, but he needs to keep warm.

He dresses once more and slides down the door. His face screws up and he punches the ground numerous times, bruising his knuckles and cutting them slightly on the concrete floor. He yelps in pain. He hangs his head, weeping into his hands. *He should have gone; he should have gone.*

Why hadn’t he gone? Why had he been selfish? He said he was going to stay away and then didn’t. Said he was going to keep a distance between them and then didn’t. Said he’d never be left alone with them and then didn’t. He literally didn’t do anything right.

He knocks his head back, staring at the clouded night sky through the glass roof of the greenhouse. He’ll do the right thing now. He’ll focus on his job, on Allie and Will’s trial. He’s going to do it right now. He will. He has no choice. He’s not putting Becca through tonight again. Her broken expression swirls round in his head. He shakes his head, trying to shake it away. He’s not going to do this again to her. Or Eden. The needs of the many, outweigh the needs of the few. He is the few. His needs no longer matter.

His fist throbs and he pulls at his scarf. There’s some blood over his fist and it's already a deep purple. He hadn't realised how hard he'd punched the floor. He'll need Kelly to check it out tomorrow. What if Becca has told everyone? What if she won't help him? Has this stupid selfish decision ruined it all for him? He curses to himself. That's just as selfish as what he's done. If people want to punish him, they should. He'll let them. Grizz shuts his eyes, tears still falling down his face, and wraps his jacket around him. He’ll stay here for a bit, then go home. He wants to go home.
Gwen goes searching.

The bright light blinds Gwen even though her eyes are shut. She groans, rolling over and off the sofa. She’s still wearing her dress, there’s a bucket on the table and a blanket tangled around her legs. She groans as the pounding starts at the back of her head and marches its way forward. She sits up, rubbing her eyes, squinting open, the light still hurting her. She holds out her hands, feeling a sensation rise from her stomach. Being as still as possible, making sure not to move or focus on the pounding, she manages not to puke. Maybe the shot competition last night had been a bad idea. She chuckles to herself. No, she’s lying, it wasn’t a bad idea, she kicked everyone's asses.

She struggles to her feet, grabbing her head as she watches the room spin. She needs coffee. Oh, and a bacon roll! God, she’d love a bacon roll. Times like this she wishes the rationing didn’t exist. She sighs. No, the rationing stops everyone from starving. She grabs her phone and heads to the kitchen.

The place is a mess. Grizz would not like it. Bean is terrible at leaving books and bits of paper all about the place and Mickey was one to kick off shoes and dump jackets wherever. Gwen had to admit she could be a little messy. Just a little though. Bean and Mickey disagree but she doesn’t care. She gathers some of the papers placing them in a pile on the edge of one of the kitchen counters. Best not to through anything away, there might be something important on these. Due to the fact, Grizz didn’t drink coffee but still accepted his rations on it, they had a nice stash. No bacon though. Her stomach gurgles but not in a hungry way. Maybe bacon wouldn’t go down well. Dry toast it is.

She clumsily makes a breakfast fit for a hungover queen, leaving a trail of crumbs and mess behind her. She’ll blame it on Mickey. She sits back in the living room, flicking through the photos on her phone. She laughs as she watches the drunk videos. How did Eden sleep through all of that? Her mood sours as she gets to the end of one video where she breaks a glass and Campbell appears at the end before the recording quickly finishes. She really did not like Campbell. There was something off about him too. She shivers thinking about him. He phone buzzes. It’s a message from Allie.

Did Grizz go home with you guys last night? A.

Gwen frowns. She doesn’t really remember coming home last night. Gwen remembers winning the shot contest, dancing and then BAM, rolling off the sofa this morning. She is slightly annoyed she was put on the sofa; she does sleep in a room here. Maybe Grizz was here. She heaves herself up, the sick feeling has lessened but the pounding headache hasn’t. She grabs Grizz’s sunglasses from the pot by the front door. This house is really too bright. She searches the first floor to begin with, but no sign of Grizz and then makes her way through the rooms upstairs. She doesn’t bother where Bean and Mickey are sleeping, he wouldn’t bunk with them. Gwen honestly believes he’s not here as he probably would have drawn something on her face before passing out in his bed. Her face is… covered in makeup but nonetheless, drawingless. Grizz ain’t here.

Not here. I thought he had to stay at yours? G.

Did Grizz pass out at Becca’s? She hadn’t thought he’d drank that much. Her phone buzzes.
He’s not here. Is he at Becca’s? She’s not answering my messages. Can you go check? A.

Gwen groans. Why does she have to go check? Sleeping helps get rid of hangovers not going on search and rescue missions. Especially if he’s just passed out at theirs. If that’s the case, she will go mental at him.

Gwen changes into the comfiest, cosiest clothes she had at Grizz’s. She still needed to finish moving everything into here. She’s happy she has her hat, scarf and gloves. It takes her longer than usual to shove everything on because every time she leans over the sick feeling intensified. She’s keeping the sunglasses on.

The cold fresh air does make her feel better but only slightly. She knows she looks as awful as she feels so she decides a brisk walk is the best way forward. Fast enough to get there quicker, slow enough not to make her spew. She hadn’t noted the time, but the town is dead. There are a few stray people making their way to the canteen but the usual noise the town has during the day is not there. Like most Sunday mornings, there is significantly more trash along the streets and roads. Although they didn’t have to stick to the whole day and week system as before for jobs. The shifts generally worked a Monday to Friday with a few jobs on Saturdays and Sundays. This meant a lot of people party on a Friday or Saturday night. Not quite the ragers from the first few days when they got here.

Not having to stop to spew or talk to people, Gwen reaches Becca and Sam’s relatively quickly. Allie keeps messaging her, clearly worried about Grizz. She rolls her eyes at the messages, it’s Grizz, they all know he’ll be fine. He’s most likely here.

She knocks on the door. No one answers. Probably hungover too. If she’s suffering, they can suffer. She knocks slightly louder. Sam answers the door. “Did you hear-?”

“Becca.” Gwen grimaces. Of course, he didn’t hear the door, stupid.

“Right. I’ve come to collect Grizz.” She swears he tenses up at the sound of his name. She cocks her head. Sam shakes his head.

“He’s not here.” Gwen laughs. She didn’t have another response. Of course, he’s here. Where else would he be? He just doesn’t want to study with a hangover. Well, she’s going to make him.

“Okay. Ha. Ha. Tell him to hurry up, I’m dying.” Sam frowns and shakes his head again, causing Gwen’s smile to falter. “He’s not here?” Sam’s face grows concerned; a little bit fearful. Becca appears, Eden nestles in a sling around Becca’s body, she’s holding some bin bags.

“Gwen?” She pulls a perplexed expression, glancing between Sam and her. “Did you forget something?” She starts glancing around the hallway to see if there’s something lying about. Gwen shakes her head. Her expression has lost all trace of joking. She’s worried now.

“He’s not here?” Sam shakes his head again and Becca’s face hardens. “You’re sure he’s not passed out in the garden or something? He’s not at ours or Allie’s, I passed the church and it’s locked, he wouldn’t have been able to get in there.” Becca doesn’t react. Her expression is calm and collected. Sam just looks guilty. Gwen couldn’t understand their reactions. “Are you guys not worried? He’s been missing all night?”

“No.” And with that Becca leaves them. Gwen’s mouth hangs open. Sam closes the door slightly so it’s only his head poking out.

“It’s a really bad time, Gwen. I’m sure he’ll have gone to Allie’s and he’s just passed out in a weird place.” He glances back the way, checking to see if Becca is listening. “Message me when you find
him?” Gwen nods as he shuts the door in her face. What the fuck happened last night? How much did she have to drink? How much did Grizz have to drink? This town is massive, where did he pass out!?

*  

Tap. Tap. Tap. Grizz shifts slightly, grunting in annoyance at the sound of tapping. Tap. Tap Tap. Is that a bird? Will it shut up!? He pulls his jacket closer around him. He winces as he uses his bruised knuckle. The events of last night flood his mind. Fuck.

“GRIZZ.” He jumps, hearing his name screamed into the back of his head. The tapping has become urgent banging. He blinks open his eyes and is greeted with the inside of a greenhouse. Did he forget to go home last night? He stretches and the person behind him sighs exasperated. There’s a kick at the door which moves it slightly, causing him to fall a little. He turns to glare at the individual and is greeted with the worried eyes of Gwen. His annoyance subsides. He crawls out the way, not ready to stand yet. Gwen shuffles into the greenhouse, taken aback by the heat. She glances at the heat lamp. “At least I know you won’t have hypothermia.” She collapses next to him. He notices his sunglasses in one of her hands. She sees him staring. “It’s bright out.” He smiles slightly. They sit in silence for a few moments. Gwen notices his fist. “What the fuck Grizz.” He raises an eyebrow in surprise, and she gestures to his fist. He shuffles down slightly so he can rest his head on Gwen’s shoulder. She’s slightly surprised by the action and takes his hand.

“I fucked up Gwen.” She squeezes his hand. “I really fucked up.”

*  

Gwen’s expression grew stonier and stonier throughout Grizz’s explanation of the night before. He believed this was directed at him, but it is actually directed at Becca. She kept trying to interject, spout her opinion on the matter but Grizz had insisted on complete silence until he’d finished. Once done, she waited until he gave his nod of approval before she could start. Grizz had expected a telling off, and he’s not quite wrong, but she’s not telling off him.

“BUT IF SAM IS GAY WHY IS BECCA ANGRY!?” Grizz flinches at the volume of Gwen’s voice. She turns to him, arms extended in an exaggerated, exasperated motion. “Like surely, SURELY, she’d be like lol yeah cool, happy Sam, Happy Daddy?” Grizz shoots her a peculiar look. “I don’t know how else to put it. Like has she never met a child of divorce? Did she never watch the Kardashian!? Scott and Kourtney raise their kids together.” Grizz’s withered expression, suggests to Gwen that she should stop ranting but she’s annoyed at Becca. Grizz is so wound up in, what he is calling, his own selfishness that he can’t blatantly see Becca’s! Yes, she has a child to look out for and keeping a parental unit together may be better for Eden if they were in their old world! But in this new world, in New Ham, Eden didn’t just have one parent, she had a whole town! Maybe not Campbell, Lexie and Harry, but everyone else would do anything for Eden. Gwen just couldn’t understand it.

She jumps up. Grizz falls to the side and stares up at her. “I’m going to talk to her.” He jumps up and grabs her arm as she goes to leave. “Grizz. I am going to talk to her, get her to see sense. These baby
hormones have got her all confused.”

“Gwen. No. I’m leaving it. This isn’t worth it. My feelings aren’t worth it. It’s about their family.”
He’s pleading with her which makes her angrier. Why isn’t he sticking up for himself, why isn’t he
fighting for Sam!? “Gwen. Please.”

“Why aren’t you fighting? Why aren’t you fighting for him?” Grizz stares at her in pain. It’s a
complicated answer but in reality, it’s easier to back down and walk away. Fewer people will get
hurt and he won’t get hurt if Sam says no.

“Gwen. Please. I am asking this of you. Please do not go talk to Becca. Promise me you won’t?” He
stares straight in the eye. She shrinks slightly under the gaze.

“Fine.”

“I need you to say it. I need you to promise.” She shoves her hands in her pockets, stomping a foot
slightly.

“I promise.” She mumbles but Grizz catches it. His face softens and he can’t help but smile at her
childlike tantrum. He straightens, picking up his jacket.

“Thank you.”

“Whatever.” She glances at his hand. “We really need to get that sorted out.” He flexes it slightly and
wincses at the pain, black and blue with cuts to match, not the best injury for someone who needs to
use their hands. Gwen opens the door allowing Grizz to walk out first. He takes the lead, feeling a
little lighter now that he knew Gwen wouldn’t try anything. However, what Grizz didn’t know is
that Gwen had her fingers crossed in her pockets. He may think he’s doing the right thing, but Gwen
knew Becca is acting irrational and she needed to know why. She needed to help make things right.
Isn’t that what friends do?
Allie senses something’s wrong and Becca should be happy.

When Grizz and Becca enter the house. Allie is there ready to yell, ready to lecture about how he can’t just fuck off like that! But then she remembers the night where she lay by her sister’s grave, how everyone had lectured her about leaving by herself, how all she’d wanted was a moment of quiet, a moment alone. Maybe that’s what Grizz had wanted. So instead of yelling, instead of the lecturing, she hugs him. Will raises out a fist, Grizz bumps it whilst holding Allie. Will notices his badly bruised knuckles, “Grizz, where have you been? What happened to your hand man?” Allie pulls back and yanks at Grizz’s hand trying to get a better look at it. He winces and pulls it back.

“It’s fine. And I’m sorry if I worried any of you… I passed out in the greenhouse.” He felt guilty that not only did he fuck things up with Becca and Sam, he worried everyone else. He really needed to get a grip. Just do the job and survive. He literally said it to Jason and Clark a few weeks ago. Yet, here he is, not focusing on his job.

“You passed out in the greenhouse?” Grizz nods and Allie glances at Gwen, who nods along too. Allie narrows her eyes. They’re hiding something, she just couldn’t figure out what. She won’t get into it now. “Honestly, only you would want to garden in the middle of the night drunk. Come on, the first aid kit is in the kitchen. Kelly and Gordie made everyone restock it a month ago.”

As they walk into the kitchen, Gwen starts to fill everyone in with the drama of last night, i.e. the shots competition. Allie smirked as she could practically hear the eye roll Grizz gave as she recounted in a little too much detail of every shot she took. However, she appreciated that she is just trying to keep the awkwardness from growing.

Grizz is, unsurprisingly, a good patient. Wincing every now and then but generally keeping still and allowing Allie to clean the cuts. She bandages him up. He stares disapprovingly at his hand. Ideally, he’d have it unbandaged. It’s just a few cuts and a deep bruise, no need to waste resources but the expression Allie held as she worked suggested he wouldn’t have won that battle. “I think you should still get Kelly to have a look at it.” Grizz shakes his head, smiling slightly.

“It’s all good. You did all that needed to be done. Now if you don’t mind me, I’m going to take a power nap on the sofa and then get on with the day.” He salutes them all and exits towards the living room. Gwen frowns and purses her lips, deep in thought.

“What happened Gwen?” She glances up at Allie. Before she’s even spoken, she knows that Gwen won’t tell her. The loyalty that’s developed between the two of them prevents her from doing that. Allie can see it. It’s a similar loyalty she had with Cassandra. You can argue with them, you can dislike them at times, but you’ll always be there for them, always keep their secrets for them. Gwen and Grizz had that loyalty. She’s impressed. She didn’t think Gwen had that depth in her.

“He was doing some drunk gardening and fell, hurting his fist. He’s an idiot drunk.” Lies. Allie knows it’s all lies. Gwen knows Allie knows. Neither says anything. Maybe it’s better they stay out of the way on this one. Allie has greater things to worry about.
It’d been a few days since the incident. Becca had barely said a word to Sam. They both haven’t left the house. They go to the garden but that’s about it. Eden needs fresh air; they all need fresh air. She thought it’d have cleared her head by now, but no. She’s still stewing in anger.

The morning after, Becca had awoken, thinking it’d been a dream but when greeted with the mess downstairs she knew it’d all been real. It felt like a nightmare to her right now. She knew she was perhaps being slightly unreasonable but Sam… Sam had said that he was all in. Being with Grizz wouldn’t be all in. Having a secret relationship isn’t all in. Leaving her throughout Thanksgiving isn’t all in. Lying to her isn’t all in. He’d never been all in. She stares across at him, changing Eden on the mat on the floor. He’s trying now, but only because he got caught.

Why did he lie to her? That’s what hurt the most, all of his lies. If back during Thanksgiving he’d just said “Hey. I met a guy. I lost track of time with him. I’m sorry. Are you okay? I’m here now and I won’t leave you again until you’re fine!” She probably would have…she probably would have what? Accepted that and been fine with it? No. She would have been angry. She feels a pang of guilt in the pit of her gut, surround by her anger. She pushes it down. Why should she feel guilty? She’s not the liar here.

Sam glances up and smiles. It fades as Becca just continues to glare at him. His head falls back down, and he finishes changing Eden. He gently scoops her up and places her in the bassinet. She watches as he moves cautiously towards her and kneels at her feet. He takes her hands. She tries to pull them away, but he stops her, staring her straight in the eye. He waits for a second, making sure she’s not just going to storm off again before releasing her hands.

“I am sorry for the way you…” He stops signing for a second, glancing away. Becca’s eyes narrow. He continues, “but you cannot freeze me out.” She purses her lips. “I don’t regret the things I’ve done with Grizz. I don’t regret Grizz. I regret not telling you, I regret lying to you. There are things I wish I could change but I can’t. I want us to move forward but I understand the trust between us is broken but know that I never wanted to hurt you. I’d do anything for you and Eden. You’re my family-“ She holds up her hands and Grizz stops signing.

“I gave you an out. I gave you a chance to leave Sam. If you’re with Grizz, you’re not with us, you’re not being there for me, for Eden.” Sam frowns. Becca can see that he doesn’t quite understand her. He’s still confused at how angry she is. He doesn’t get her reasoning. In the back of her mind, a quiet voice points out maybe it’s because she doesn’t know why she’s angry. She silences it. She knows why she’s angry. Sam lied and betrayed her trust, there’s no other reason for the anger. Frustrated Becca goes to get up, Sam pushes her back down. “Sam, You have to choose. Us,” she gestures to Eden. “Or him.” Something in the pit of her stomach tightens. She’s doing the right thing, right? Sam can’t be hopping between them; he has to choose. He has to. He’s silent for a moment.

Sam can’t quite believe Becca. He thought maybe over the past few days she’d become a bit more understanding but the lack of communication between them seemed to solidify her stance on the matter. Sam on one level understood, understood her anger and fears. He betrayed her trust and therefore she's struggling to see how even when he did sneak around with Grizz a couple of times, he was in, he is all in. He’ll always be there for Becca and Eden, he loves them both with all his heart. But that doesn't mean he can't have some for someone else. However, even though he's conflicted over Becca's reasoning, he understands that right now she needs just him. She needs
certainty that he won't disappear again. She needs him to choose so she can be sure, so she can feel certain about things again. For as long as he's known Becca, he knows that she has never dealt well with uncertainty. She needs answers and clear plans. This pregnancy, this world, has been a challenge for her. Sam had promised her certainty and then pulled the rug from under her feet. He needs to give her certainty. She's his best friend, his family, the least he can do is give her certainty. Even if this means he's slightly unhappy for now.

“I choose you; I choose Eden.” Becca nods.

“Okay then.” She should be happy. She should be over the moon that Sam has decided to stay with them, not abandon them. She’s getting to keep her friend, her family. Eden will have a father and Becca won’t be doing this alone. She should be happy. Why doesn’t she feel happy? Why does this feel slightly wrong?
Helena is worried. She’s worried for Elle but the only way to help Elle is to help Allie and Will and helping Allie and Will is proving difficult. She’d thought the trial of Dewey had been difficult. This trial, this situation, seems to be so much more complicated. No one had seen Luke the day of Allie and Will’s supposed treachery. Now, most would assume that meant he is unreliable, but Helena understood that from the people’s perspective Luke holds authority. He’s part of The Guard, the police of this world. Will Allie and Will being the accused, their creditability is zero and no matter at how sketchy Luke’s testimony is, it’ll always be higher than theirs. The only way to get around this is to find where Luke was and show the jury his lies. She had to hang and quarter her fiancé. Boyfriend. She’s unsure what they are now. He said he was confused and didn’t know what he wanted and yet the other day was crying in her arms fearful he’ll lose her.

There are only a few days until the trial. She needed to work on Allie and Will’s faces. Allie is not the best at disguising her disdain and Will, quite frankly, will lose it when provoked. They need to be likeable enough for the jury to at least consider a non-guilty verdict.

Helena rubs her face, running a hand through her hair as she studies a couple of law theory textbooks she could find in the library. She felt like she needed more theory with this case. With Dewey, she’d been thrown into it reluctantly. With this, she’s had time to prepare.

She jots down a few more notes and highlights a couple of sentences. Helena reaches for her mug, only to be greeted by emptiness. She’s already had it? She glances at the clock. 01:23. Wow. She had to be up in five hours to open the church.

Helena packs up the books, binders and notepads, struggling to carry it all back to her bedroom. The house had been quiet since Harry rescinded the shared house rule. She missed the hum of people throughout the house; the quiet chatter from each room, the booming laughter throughout the day. It’d been nice. She didn’t mind having privacy again but just two people in this empty house is starting to make her feel lonely. Not to mention the fact that during the nights it made it feel even creepier. When the house had creaked and groaned before, she could put it down to someone moving in the house. Now she assumes it’s an intruder. Especially with the town's attitude towards her.

It’s weird. When she’s in the church, people treat her like they always have but as soon as her footsteps out the church, it’s like the world has flipped. This is the second time she’s defended an accused to the town. This time she had also been investigating the claims. It made people uneasy, guarded and not a massive fan of Helena. They couldn’t understand why she wasn’t hurt by the “lies.” If only they knew, she was, just not by Allie and Will’s digressions. As she walked past people, she’d hear their whispers, their insults, their curses. It hurt Helena as she’d wanted to be an individual who they came to for comfort. She guesses they still did but it’s a bit two-faced. Gwen had opened up to her, albeit drunkenly and probably doesn’t remember, the comments Clark had
specifically aimed at her. It’s now no longer a secret they’re split. How could it be? Gwen and Clark weren’t really making it a secret. She didn’t like Clark and she worries about his impact on Luke. Luke is smart but insecure, he wants to fit in, and he likes to be loyal. It takes a lot to push him away from his friends. So why on earth did he turn on Allie? Had they really pushed him away so much over the past few months? Is Clark smarter and more manipulative than she thought? No. He’s an arse. He’s a prick. He’s a bastard. But he is pretty thick.

Helena had wished Allie had handled what happened to Lexie better. However, Lexie had taken it too far. Allie should have punished Clark and Jason. If Allie becomes Mayor again, she’ll need to rejig them, add some restrictions. As they stand right now, they’re quite corrupt.

Helena slides into the room. Luke fast asleep, slightly sprawled across his half of the bed, an arm hanging off. She loves him. She’ll always love him. She’ll always protect him. However, sometimes protecting him means forcing him to face the ugliness, even if it hurt him. She slips into her nightgown before crawling into bed. As much as she tries, Luke stirs, blinking sleepily towards her. She smiles and gentles brushes her fingers against his face. “Sorry, I didn’t mean to wake you.” He doesn’t respond but instead holds an arm out, inviting her in for a cuddle. Helena scoots down and lets his arm swamp her, embracing her tightly. It’s comforting. It reminds her of the nights before all of this. She leans into it, into sleep. Enjoying her little moment of peace and comfort before the storm comes in.

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Grizz hadn’t let Gwen out of his sight for days. She knew he was doing this on purpose, not trusting her not to go full bitch on Becca. She probably didn’t help by ranting to him numerous times a day about it. It also probably wasn’t helping Grizz. He’d not heard from either of them, not that he’d expected too but he still checked his phone regularly for any sign of life. Gwen knew he rants were probably just helping him stew in sadness, but she couldn’t help it. He won’t let her go talk to anyone else about it and she really needed to get all her anger out now before she went to see Becca. As much as she wants to chew her out, she knows when she gets to speak to Becca, she will need a cool, calm, collected head and she’ll need to make sure there are no sarcastic or bitchy comments. However, she needed to actually be able to leave to go meet her.

Gwen stares at Grizz as she sketches in his notepad. Bean sits on the sofa nose deep into a book about crop rotations or something. She had headphones on, Gwen could still hear the music, she’s not going to be eavesdropping any time soon. She glances at Mickey. He’s on a laptop, some spreadsheet is displayed. Gwen didn’t quite understand the numbers on it. They’ve yet to have their group meeting to catch everyone up on their individual tasks. Grizz had sent the new guys to go gather materials and tools from as many places as possible, whilst researching harvesting methods of trees. Something like that, Gwen literally only paid attention when she had too, especially since she had some things on her mind at the moment.

She continues to stare purposefully at Grizz, tapping her pen loudly against her book. Grizz’s jaw tightens. He’s paying attention to her, purposefully trying to ignore her. Who will win this standoff? Grizz may have a lot of patience but Gwen never loses. She starts to hum out of tune to the tapping. Grizz’s head twitches slightly as if in pain. She taps her foot against the chair leg. She does this for ten seconds before Grizz raises his head, meeting her smug gaze with heavy, annoyed eyes. “Gwen.”

“Uh-huh, something wrong?” His eyes narrow as she continues to smugly smile at him, fluttering her eyes.
“Gwen. What’s up?” She dramatically sighs flopping her head onto her hand, trying to look as innocent as possible, trying to make it seem she has no ulterior motive.

“I don’t know what you mean?” her eyes flutter once more. Grizz puts down all his notepad and pencil. He stares blankly at her. “Well, I guess now that you’ve asked. Could I possibly have an extended lunch break tomorrow?” He frowns then eyes her suspiciously.

“You’re not going to do what I think you’re going to do right? You promised me you-“ Gwen waves her hand.

“If you must know, I’m meeting Kelly. If we’re going to be travelling and building in this land, we’ll need proper first aid training. I know she’s not like a real doctor but she’s the best we’ve got, and I wanted to have it all sorted before I came to you to show initiative.” She smiles at the end hoping her lie is reliable and believable. She’s completely panicking in her head though. Grizz studies her and she can feel her palms start to sweat. “Look, you have meetings tomorrow with Bean and Mickey, trying to figure math stuff. I don’t want to bother you by giving you more to do. Let me do this for you.” That might have been a bit of a push. She may have gone too far with the sweet. He’s definitely suspicious. He makes her wait for a few minutes before leaning back in his seat and nodding.

“Okay.”

“I mean it’d just be- Okay?” Her eyebrows shoot up and Grizz starts to laugh. “Just like that?” Grizz leans forward again and sighs.

“I trust you. I trust you’re not going to do anything stupid.” Gwen grimaces. He knows she’s up to something. He knew that would make her second guess her plan. Well fuck. Should she get involved? Is she being stupid? No. None of the parties involved are going to make a go at it. The radio silence from everyone has proven that. Sometimes you need a… negotiator…Yes. She’s a negotiator. Sometimes you need a negotiator to sort things out.

“Cool. Let me just go tell Kelly where and when we’ll meet.” She smiles a little too big. Grizz once again raises an eyebrow before shaking his head slightly and resumes with his work.

Gwen goes to the other end of the house, making sure it’s far enough away no one can hear her. She dials Kelly’s number. She doesn’t answer. She curses under her breath slightly. She dials again. She picks up. “Did you really let me ring out?”

“I mean, I wasn’t expecting a phone call. I wanted to know if it was urgent.” Gwen’s face becomes blank. She wishes that Kelly could see it. “What’s up? Is everyone okay? How’s Grizz’s hand? Is he making sure he’s not using it too much?”

“Yeah, yeah, yeah. I need a massive favour and I need you to not ask questions and just trust me it’s going to be for the best.” There’s a long pause. She can’t even hear Kelly breathe. “Kelly?”

“What are you up to Gwen?” She can hear her eyes narrowing. Gwen’s eyes roll.

“What did I just say, Kelly? Please. Honestly, I wouldn’t be asking if it weren’t important.” Silence again. She didn’t have time for this.

“Okay.” Gwen audible woops. “Gwen?” She can hear Kelly laugh nervously, majorly confused by what Gwen is about to ask her and why she’s so excited about it.

She waits to hear Kelly’s confirmation.

“So, let me just make sure I’ve got this. You want me to bring Becca to you at the café for 12?” Gwen bites her lip annoyed at the slightly mocking tone Kelly has taken. She may have babbled but only because she needed to make sure Kelly knew exactly what she had to do.

Gwen speaks through slightly gritted teeth, “Yes.”

“Okay, I can do that.” Gwen smiles and then remembers something as Kelly starts to say her goodbyes.

“Oh! Also, I need diagrams for survival first aid training and a time for when you can train us, thank you, bye!” And she hangs up on a very confused Kelly. Kelly rings her back. She switches her phone off. Oops, ran out of battery. She pockets her phone and returns to Grizz and the others. Grizz glances up and then returns to his work.

Without looking at her he asks, “What time you two meeting?”

“About one, but I’ll probably head about 12 to get my plans and ideas in order for her, you know Doctor Kelly likes organization!” She smiles and Grizz nods. Best to tell him a later time in case he decides to pop along. It’d be disastrous if he were there. Gwen thinks a moment; it might still be disastrous with her. No. She’s the negotiator. She’s going to negotiate. She’s going to make sure all parties walk away equally happy. Because that’s what negotiators do.

Chapter End Notes

Hi guys! So just to prewarn everyone, the trial with Allie and Will will most likely have information that deviates from what happened in the show just because it's easier for me to write. I really hope this doesn't put anyone off. It's still going to be a couple of chapters away however, I just wanted to let people know now.
Cafe

Chapter Summary

Gwen and Becca talk.

Chapter Notes

This chapter might be a little dialogue heavy! Sorry guys! I'd also just like to say thank you for all the lovely comments, I really appreciate it. I never thought anyone would really take the time out to read this let alone enjoy it! So thank you xx

Gwen sat nervously in the café. It’s pretty empty these days. After Cassandra introduced food rationing, they collected the food from here to add to the supplies. You’re allowed to take some out with your rations to have some fancy coffee, but most don’t. Gwen had brought some tea bags from home. She knows from numerous tv shows she used to watch that caffeine is bad when it comes to a pregnant woman but she’s unsure about when it comes to just-given-birth women. She thought she’d bring green tea just in case. She’d also brought some brownies. They were made from a box but still tasted nice. She’s kinda glad she has spare rations to be able to use for this, otherwise, it’d just be a really awkward meeting. At least with snacks, it’s like a peace offering, an olive branch.

Grizz had slept in this morning so she knew she wouldn’t have to worry about him randomly showing up. He’s been having some restless nights recently. Gwen sometimes gets told but he’s not the lightest on his feet and when he goes to get a glass of water in the middle of the night, he wakes up most of the house. The team had been staying at Allie’s due to how close the trial was. It’s all-hands-on-deck. The fact that Gwen carved this amount of time out to create this meeting surprised her. She’s been questioning individuals, learning about crops and the theory behind cutting down a tree without killing yourself. Which she was surprised to learn is a lot more difficult than chop, chop done. Grizz had found himself using all of his patience abilities that day as he explained it over and over to her. She is smart, it’s just, like anyone, when you are just bombarded with information for six hours straight, having spent half the night reading books, you just stop taking stuff in. She got it eventually. She could have sworn Grizz had been close to weeping. But all of this, plus this personal drama, was the cause of the insomnia. His head’s always on at the moment. Gwen bets Sam would help turn it off.

She shifts the tea pot slightly, checking it’s still hot. It is. Gwen glances at her phone. 12:10. Ten minutes late. Her foot starts to tap, and she stares out the window. She hopes Clark doesn’t see her here. It looks like she’s being stood up.

As Gwen stands, preparing to pack up and leave, Kelly and Becca turn the corner. Both wrapped up warm with thick jackets. Becca pushes Eden in the pram. She stops, locking eyes with Gwen. Gwen waves enthusiastically. Gwen can’t help but laugh to herself as she watches Kelly try and coax Becca inside. Becca is not impressed. She’s assuming that Becca figured out that Gwen knew what happened. Eventually, Kelly manages to get her inside.
“Hi, Becca. Kelly. What a surprise to see you guys here? Tea? Brownie?” She pushes the brownie across the table. Becca’s stony face is unchanged. Kelly happily takes a brownie. “Please. Sit.” Gwen sits, a smile plastered on her face. She’s hoping it’s coming across as gentle and serene.

It was not. Becca quite frankly thought Gwen looked slightly psychotic. She hadn’t blinked in a while. She glances towards Kelly, who nods. With a hand on her hip, she raises an eyebrow at Kelly. “So, you knew too?” Kelly’s genuine confusion suggests she didn’t. So why was she helping Gwen? “You didn’t know? Then why…” She sits and eyes Gwen, pursing her lips. “You’re very manipulative.” Gwen smiles widely, shrugging.

“No really. People just know when I’m serious. I really needed to talk to you. I’d figure you’d guess Grizz would tell me,” Kelly glances between Becca and Gwen. Entirely at a loss at what was happening right now. She’s hoping she can pick up on the story as she listens. Hastily, she sits next to Gwen, who glances sideways at her, unsure how to proceed without spilling everyone’s secrets. “So I recruited Kelly to get you to meet me. She literally knows nothing. Like zilch.” She starts pouring the tea. Kelly doesn’t get a cup. A frown is shot in Gwen’s direction. Gwen puts on a guilty expression. “So, there’s a lot of sensitive information that I really don’t want to say in front of you so do you-”

“I want her here.” Gwen glares at Becca. She takes a deep breath as she stares at the cold expression of Becca. “I feel like I’m about to be bombarded. I’d like some back up.” Gwen’s pleasant smile returns to her face. “Keep calm Gwen. You’re here for Grizz. You’re here for Sam. And whether she realises it or not, you’re here for Becca too.” Gwen’s pleasant smile returns to her face.

“I can understand that but, um, do you really want to, um, spill someone’s secret when they haven’t told anyone other than like two people? Technically three but I think we can all agree that the third person only found out because of walking in on some… you know.” Gwen had never seen Kelly so confused. Quite frankly, Gwen knows that in the middle of the night Kelly’s brain will put two and two together. As much as Gwen is trying to be secretive, it’s bloody hard. How does she talk to Becca without outing Grizz? That’s not her place. If Grizz wants to tell her he can. Becca chews on the inside of her cheek, staring at Eden as she sleeps. Her pinkie dances over her tiny hand. Gwen’s right. If she was going to stay for this conversation, she can’t out Grizz and she doesn’t want Kelly to question everything. “Fine.” Gwen straightens, pleased with Becca’s understanding. Becca holds Kelly’s hand, squeezing it. “I’m sorry, it’s… Gwen’s right. Unfortunately. This secret isn’t mine to tell.” Kelly nods.

“I’ll be at the Church helping Helena then. Come see me after.” She turns to Gwen, dropping a massive folder on the table. She purses her lips. “The only free time I have are Sundays 5am, so if you want to learn…” Gwen groans. “That’s what you get for using me.”

“I’ll take it. I’ll get this to Grizz.” She flicks through the book for a moment, shocked at how much there is. This better be worth it. There better be a good outcome to this conversation. Those Sundays are going to be painful though.

Becca places her cup down, snapping Gwen back to the situation at hand. They’re silent for a moment, staring at one another, measuring the other up. Becca believes that Gwen will just apologise on Grizz’s behalf. Gwen’s trying to judge what way to tackle this. “Well?” Gwen blinks as Becca sighs, rolling her eyes. “You wanted to talk to me. I’m waiting. But let me just say this; I never want to see Grizz’s face again.” She sips her tea. Okay. Gwen knows how to play it now.

“You know, I just don’t understand your anger towards Sam and Grizz. To me, you’re the one with the problem.” Becca stops sipping on her tea, but she doesn’t lower the cup. Gwen has gotten rid of the fake smiles and instead had an expression mixed with annoyance and a little sadness. “I get
you’re hurt. I mean, what a way to find out, dick in his mouth and…” Gwen trails off as she sees Becca lowering her cup, her hand shaking a little. “Anyway, I don’t know why you want to keep them apart? What good does it do you? Or Sam? He must be miserable and in turn, you must be miserable! I can’t understand your logic in this.” Becca doesn’t move. Gwen sits back, arms folded. Her move now. Let’s see how she explains herself out of this.

“I…” Gwen raises an eyebrow. Becca glances at Eden and touches her hand. “He made me a promise Gwen. He broke that promise. He needed to choose, and he’s chosen.” Gwen frowns in response. What did she mean, he needed to choose? There’s not even a choice! Wait, no, there is, there’s a choice between yes; I want my family to be happy and let everyone feel love and expand my family or no; I want to make everyone miserable and get rid of all the love. That’s the only choice Gwen can see and if that’s the choice she gave Sam well then, fuck her, what’s she doing here trying to make love for everyone if he’s just going to say no.

“And what choice is that?” Gwen throws her arms in the air, Becca raises her eyebrows, “What choice did you give him Becca? Was it really a choice?” Gwen just can’t wrap her head around Becca’s rational. “Are you in love with Sam?” Becca barks a laugh. “No, seriously. I’m trying to understand here, Becca. I know we’re not close but enlighten me! Why are you doing this?”

“Because I’m scared! I’m scared Gwen! I’m petrified every second of every day we’re here. Everything is so fucked. All I have is Sam and Eden and I feel like Grizz is taking him away. I can’t do it alone, Gwen. I can’t. Sam is my best friend, my family, I can’t lose him.” Gwen sits silent as Becca scrambles for tissues in her back. She’s searching frantically when she drops it on the floor and the contents go flying. As she tries to pick everything back up again, Gwen watches as one of the strongest people in this town crumbles to the floor in tears, hands running through her hair, face screwed up. Becca hadn’t really admitted it out loud. She hadn’t wanted to. She didn’t want to be scared; she didn’t want to think she relied this heavily on Sam, but she did. Her world constantly feels like it’s falling apart. Everything is uncertain, it makes it hard for her to breathe. She’s always gasping for air, always trying to stay afloat but Sam was like a float, if she clung to him, she could stay up in the air. If Sam were to leave her, she’d drown. She can’t drown on Eden, she can’t.

Becca feels an arm wrap around her. Gwen holds Becca as she cries. She doesn’t say anything. She’s just there. Becca can’t help but cling to her. “Becca. I had no idea you… You’re not alone.” Becca just shakes her head, opening her mouth to speak but she can’t. If only Gwen could sign. “No. Listen to me. Like really listen. You are not alone. Letting Grizz in is not separating your family, it’s extending it. But here’s the thing, your family is already massive.” Becca pulls back, eyes puffy and red, tears still falling down her face. Gwen smiles sincerely for the first time during this whole meeting. “You really don’t get it? Becca. This whole town is your family. Ignore, Clark, Campbell Lexie and Harry.” Becca lets out a small laugh, rolling her eyes. Obviously, she never thinks about them anyway. “But everyone else, everyone else would do anything for you and Eden. Trust me.” Gwen stares at the objects scattered on the floor around them, she sees the tissues and hands them to Becca.

“Thanks.” She gives a small smile and Gwen takes it as a win. The walls are down.

Gwen sighs, “Sam is never going to abandon you. Grizz wouldn’t let him. I mean, Sam wouldn’t anyway but Grizz, he understands Sam’s commitments. Plus, Grizz would happily help out, as would I. Seriously, I love Eden.” Becca picks apart the tissue in her hand. Gwen can’t read her expression. There’s a little bit of guilt in the bottom of her stomach. She’d been so angry at Becca for Sam and Grizz and she’d said some nasty things without even thinking for a second why Becca was doing it. Fear is a powerful emotion and it can cause people to do irrational things. Becca’s scared like the rest of them and she’s clinging onto the last thing that makes her feel safe. Sam.
“I know you’re right, it’s just really hard to believe it. What if I’m pushed aside? What if Eden loves them more?” She picks at the tissue, creating a neat pile on her knee. Her voice is soft and quiet as if she’s talking to herself.

“T...
Grizz sat listening to Bean and Gordie go over the progress they’d made. Helena had church duties to do so couldn’t make today's briefing. She’d sent Bean over with all her papers and notes. It’s not a lot of progress. With no alibi for Luke, Allie or Will, verifying who’s telling the truth is proving to be difficult. Everyone in this room seems as tired as Grizz. All have bags under their eyes and a constant expression that is a mixture between anxious and exhaustion.

Their main problem at the moment is Luke. He isn’t opening up to anyone. The Guard’s sticking with their own and no one has dared to approach Campbell since the party. The best way to win the case is to crack Luke. Everyone has tried. Well, not everyone. Grizz is waiting for them to ask him. He’s been expecting it for a while now. He doesn’t think he’ll be able to get him to confess. If Helena can’t do it, why would he be able to? It’s still worth a try, he guesses. He’s avoided most of his old friends for the past few days, dealing with his own shit and quite frankly, not really wanting to talk to them. He’d known for a while now that he wanted to distance himself from them all.

Before the trip, Clark and Jason’s chats had become increasingly grating on him. Luke had been the last one he was close with and then, he came back to that scene. Luke standing there, in the middle of it, helping, not questioning anything. He told Grizz to stop talking. Had that been for his own protection or his? Out of everyone, seeing Luke fall from grace is the last he expected. Honestly, Grizz is sadder and more disappointed than he is angry at Luke. He’s hoping he’ll see sense soon.

Will holds Ali’s hands as she goes over statements and strategies with Bean, highlighting anything she doesn’t think will work. Grizz can’t help but feel a little jealous when he stares at the little bit of affection. He’s never been able to do anything as simple as that with Sam. Now he never will. He shakes his head, stretching as well so as not to draw that much attention to himself. He needn’t worry about Sam anymore. There is nothing there. There can be nothing there. Not even little sneaking affections between the two. Not since the other day. Grizz pushes the thoughts and feelings bubbling within him down as far as he can. Now isn’t the time. There’s too much going on. A pity party is not helpful.

He checks the time. It’s about half twelve. Gwen will half way through her meeting with Kelly. Lord help Kelly. She’d been so eager to leave this morning, Grizz hardly saw her go. It was just a flash of hair and a coat as she whizzed through the house and out the door. He won’t lie, he’s a bit suspicious of this meeting. Don’t get him wrong, Gwen has been super helpful the last few days, the last few months but there is just something about her mood today that put him on edge. Gwen didn’t seem to
have any plans or papers with her. She’d even left her notepad. He’s assuming she was so eager to
go to this meeting that she forgot everything but... It just doesn’t sit right with him.

He’s waiting for a text from either her or Kelly, ranting about how disastrous the meeting was. It’s
more a text from Kelly he’s expecting. Gwen and Kelly were close but not as close as they had been.
They’d grown apart as they fell into different roles in this new world. With Gwen curiosity for their
new world, lead her towards exploration and Kelly’s need to help others, lead her to the hospital.
The two hadn’t had much time to sit and chat. Maybe this meeting won’t be disastrous and will help
them reconnect. Grizz can’t help but laugh quietly under his breath. They’re not the same people
they were before. Gwen and Kelly have both became fiercer, stronger. The meeting won’t be
disastrous. He’s an idiot for thinking that. His phone buzzes. The others turn to him. Grizz grimaces,
mumbling his aplogises as he glances at the text lighting up his screen.

_Disaster. Help. She’ll only listen to you x G_

Grizz places the phone down, rubbing his face with his other hand. Everyone is staring at him. He
slaps his knees with his hands, staring back at everyone. “Well.” He stands, everyone raises an
eyebrow, “Apparently I can’t leave Gwen alone for more than three seconds. I’m going to have to
head. Fill me in later?” Allie nods towards Grizz. He’s allowed to go.

After gathering up his things and shoving them next to his makeshift sofa bed, he grabs a coat,
grumbling as he leaves at the responsibilities he seems to hold. Gone are the days where he can just
sit and read a book. Now, he has to sort out the problems of New Ham.

* 

Sam stood, staring at the grey skies and swaying trees, in the kitchen. The kettle had been whistling
for two minutes. His phone is blaring music and the washing machine was spinning. The only thing
he can feel is the hum of vibrations from the washing machine. He hadn’t noticed he’d accidentally
started playing his music. Most hadn’t understood why he had music on his phone but if he puts
headphones on, turns the music to full volume, he can feel the soft vibrations, feel the beat. It may
not be satisfying to others, but it meant everything to him. The kettle is just an issue he’s learnt to
deal with. Most of the time when he’s making tea, he’s watching the kettle, waiting for the steam to
come out of the spout, but today he wasn’t. He thought he’d seen something out the window. Once
at the window he discovered nothing was there, nothing at all. The realisation of nothing had caused
his feet to glue themselves to the ground.

He loves Becca but he can’t help but dislike her right now. He feels trapped here. He knows he’s
broken her trust and that will take time to rebuild but it’s not like he’s going to go running to Grizz
after what happened. It doesn’t matter how much he wants too; he won’t do it. Family first, he’s
always going to put his family first. Minus Campbell. Campbell can go fuck himself.

Thinking of Campbell made Sam’s skin crawl. Part of him still holds some anger they were never
able to deal with him during Cassandra’s trial. It’s unsettling to think he’ll be around Eden. He won’t
be involved in her life in any way, Sam will make sure of that but the idea that he’s just in the town,
that they could cross paths, that he could be in the canteen when they are just... well, it unsettles him.
Locking the windows and doors didn’t make him feel any safer. It helped put Becca’s mind at peace,
but it still kept him up. Campbell is smart, if he wanted to do anything, he could easily break in here.
Sam knew he wouldn’t do anything, not really. Then again, he’s practically untouchable right now.
He shakes his head, trying to physically shake the thoughts in his mind. He shouldn’t worry about
these things; he shouldn’t worry about the things he can’t control. Yet, he does.
It’s just endless grey clouds in the sky. A dull day. He misses the sunshine warming his cheeks. Sam misses the carefree life they all had before everything. He needed to fill this home with laughter again. Eden will not be brought up with misery and pain, she will be given love and happiness. He can’t wait to see her touch the grass for the first time, watch her marvel at their new world. The first child. She is their hope.

He finally turns to see his phone flashing, alerting him to some text messages on his phone. However, instead of running to it straight away, he deals with the kettle first, taking it off the hob. He’s unsure how much water is left in there, he imagines most of it will have evaporated. Sighing he turns to his phone.

*Come to the café, we need to talk x B.*

Sam’s stomach drops. What’s happened? What did she and Kelly discuss? He thought they’d worked things out, or at least agreed to move on. Two steps forward, one step back. Without thinking, he grabs his phone and coat, almost running out the door.

*Grizz could see the café in the distance. He stops suddenly. There were two blob shapes sitting in the window seats. He’s assuming it’s Kelly and Gwen. However, it’s not the sight of them that causes him to stop. Coming from the other direction, heading towards the café also, is Sam. He’s not spotted Grizz yet. It’s the first time he’s seen him since what happened. Even after everything he still catches his breath when he sees him. He can’t help it, his heart races and his palms get sweaty. The air has turned hot and thick even though it’s the middle of November. God when he looks at Sam everything seems brighter, lighter. Then he remembers and it all comes crashing down.

Sam’s stopped now too. He’s frozen as he watches a multitude of expressions form on Grizz’s face. A small smile appears on his face, Grizz is not good at hiding his emotions, how did he manage to stay hidden for so long?

Wait. Why is he here? Sam turns towards the café, squinting to see who’s sitting with Becca in the window. *Gwen.* A very unlikely combo. He turns back to Grizz. He seems just as confused, not his plan then.

Sam is the first to move, taking surprisingly confident strides towards the café. Gwen sticks her head out waving urgently to a now panicked looking Grizz. Grizz hastily follows.

Becca seems remarkably calm. Sam eyes her suspiciously. She signs to him that it’s okay and offers him a seat. She sits cautiously. Becca is surprised at how calm Sam is, but she knows that he won’t want to make a scene. He’ll watch and see how things unfold before judging what he wants to do. However, he does say hello to Eden enthusiastically, which warms Becca’s heart and more importantly helps reassure her of everything Gwen had said.

Grizz doesn’t enter as calmly as Sam.

“*Gwen, Becca! Sam!*” He’s spinning about turning to face each person as he names them. Everyone raises their eyebrows at him. “*Gwen, I-you-I’ll discuss this with you when we get back home.*” Gwen leans back a little. She felt like a child being told off. All she did was go behind his back and ignore his specific instructions and save the day, the least he could do is thank you. Mind you, he
doesn't know about saving the day part yet. Grizz turns to Becca, “I am so sorry, Becca. We’re just
going to go, and-“ He turns back to Gwen, “I cannot believe you!”

“Wait, Grizz, Gwen has just-“ Grizz turns back around to Becca cutting her off causing her to purse
her lips together.

“No, Becca, don’t say anything. We’ll get out your hair, I am so sorry for anything Gwen has said.
She shouldn’t have gotten involved in the first place.” He spins back around to tell Gwen off some
more when he smacks his sore hand off the table. “Fuck!” Gwen moves forward but it’s Sam that
swiftly makes his way out his seat and is examining the bandaged hand, unravelling the bandages
revealing the bruised, blackened hand. Grizz tries to pull it away but Sam pulls it back. Becca stands,
coming to examine it too. “It’s nothing. Just a bad bruise. The cuts don’t even hurt. Why don’t we
just-“

“What happened?” Sam stares up at Grizz, eyes wide with concern.

Grizz looks away purposefully so Sam can’t read his lips. “I may have had a night gardening
accident.” It’s then Grizz remembers Becca is here as he watches her sign, slightly confused to Sam
what he just said. Damn it.

“Oh for goodness sake. It wasn’t a night gardening accident. He punched concrete numerous times.”
Grizz’s head slowly turns to Gwen. He glares furiously at her. Gwen awkwardly smiles back at him.
Sam stares up at Grizz.

“You punched concrete?” Grizz finally gets his hand out of Sam’s, turning around for a second,
trying to gather his thoughts. What the fuck is happening right now? He flexes his hand slightly,
staring at it for a moment. He turns. Why isn’t Becca screaming at him to leave? “Grizz?” Sam
slightly nods, as if prompting him to speak.

“Eh, right. Yeah. I did.” He sees the worried expression intensively so quickly waves his hands
panicked. “Don’t worry about it though. I’m fine. It’s all good. Kelly said it wasn’t that bad. The
bandage was just because the cuts kept reopening because they’re on joints. I probably don’t even
need to wear it anymore. I’m all good.” He shoots a glare at Gwen. If she hadn’t come here, if she
hadn’t called him here, then Sam and Becca wouldn’t be so worried right now. There’s nothing for
them to worry about, he’s fine. He calms slightly. “I’m fine.” Becca nods in response but Sam still
doesn’t seem pleased. Gwen opens her mouth. Grizz glares. She closes her mouth.

“Well.” Becca signs as she talks, addressing the whole room. Gwen smiles gleefully whilst Sam and
Grizz stare in confusion. “Yeah, there’s a lot we need to discuss.” And she takes a seat, waiting for
everyone else to sit too. Gwen jumps into the closest seat to her. Sam and Grizz glance between
everyone before staring at each other. Sam shrugs slightly before sitting next between Becca and
Eden. Gwen pats the seat next to her, eyebrows wiggling. What the hell has she done?
“Right. So. Right.” Grizz sat, his head resting on top of his hands, staring at the half-eaten brownie on the table. He had been repeating the same two words for a good thirty seconds now. Sam hadn’t moved either, staring straight at Grizz. That wasn’t helping. Grizz couldn’t quite process the information he was hearing. One. Sam isn’t the real father. Gwen hadn’t known that either and boy did she go off on one for a second. Immediately chastising the two for putting Grizz through that pain and then claiming she knew it; she’d known all along. Two. Becca refuses to say who the father is and for the rest of Eden’s life it will be Sam. No matter what, Sam is the father. Three. Becca apologised for her reaction and doesn’t want to get in the way of Sam and Grizz. However, she’s not quite sure how to manage this. She’s also not promising she won’t have other freakouts, it’s a big thing to trust everyone to be there and not forget about her.

This brings them to where they are now. Grizz talking like a broken computer, staring at a half-eaten brownie whilst Sam intensely watches him. Gwen’s making another pot of tea, whilst Becca’s not wandering about the café, trying to calm a restless Eden. Grizz isn’t sure what he’s feeling. He’s not quite sure what he’s meant to do now. He’s slightly annoyed with Sam but also sorta ecstatic that he could hold him again, feel his touch against his skin again without the shame or guilt that shrouded it before. He shifts uncomfortably as something twitches in his crotch. Maybe it’s best not to focus on that right now.

“I’m sorry.” Sam’s whisper echoes across everyone to Grizz. He glances up. He’s fed up of seeing the pain in those eyes. “I’m sorry I have to keep apologising.” Grizz scoffs slightly.

“Yeah, starting to sound like a broken record.” He offers Sam his lopsided smile which fades for a second as Gwen scoffs in his direction. “What?”

“This coming from the guy who literally just spent like two minutes saying Right, so, Right, over and over again.” She rolls her eyes as she tops up everyone’s drinks. Grizz continues to stare exasperated at her but nods a thank you for the tea. She smiles.

“Look, you are Eden’s father. I think we all know that it’s not just about blood when it comes to parenting. I mean I wish you’d told me, but I get why you didn’t.” He reaches out to hold Sam’s hand and hesitates. Sam grabs it and squeezes gently. They both smile, warmth floods through Grizz. Gwen coughs and Grizz turns to Becca. “I, I honestly don’t know what to say. I want to say sorry and thank you and… Becca I don’t want to take Sam away from you and Eden, I’d never want that.”

“No, I know that deep down. Just with everything that’s happened and been happening, it’s hard not to get a bit selfish sometimes.” She glances towards Grizz and Sam’s hand intertwined. She expected to feel nervous, scared for what this meant for her family but instead, she felt relieved. The joy sparkling behind Sam’s eyes as he stares at Grizz talking away is heart-warming. How could she be so selfish? At least Gwen brought some sense to her. Here’s hoping that sense lasts.

“So am I going to get a thank you?” Becca and Grizz turn to face a smug looking Gwen. Sam glances at Becca, who clumsily, one-handed, signs what she said. Sam stares at Gwen deadpan.
“Oh, come on! If it hadn’t been for me, you three would all be leading miserable lives. Gwen saved the day!” Their expressions don’t change at all.

“So humble, Gwen.” Becca’s dry tone causes Gwen’s eyes to narrow. Grizz smiles.

“Thank you, Gwen.” Grizz rolls his eyes as he says it, but he means it. She did do good, even if she went behind his back. “However, you aren’t completely off the hook. You did go behind my back; did you even have a meeting with Kelly?” The mention of Kelly causes Gwen to jump to her feet, diving behind the counter and pulling out a thick binder and notepad. She dumps it onto the table, Grizz and Sam only just managing to move their hands before it landed. The loud bang it makes causes Eden to cry again. Becca glares once more towards Gwen, before circling and shushing around the café floor once more. Gwen smiles an apology towards her, before turning her attention back to Grizz. “Five am’s on Sunday, it’s the only time she can do.” Grizz rubs his face as Gwen pats him on the back. Becca reappears, coat on, Gwen’s coat in her other hand. Sam stands.

“No, no, it’s fine. I can’t get her down here, I’m going to go to a loop of town. Gwen can accompany me since she’s the one that startled her. You guys stay.” She smiles at them both. It feels weird. Everyone admits to themselves it feels weird but not wrong. Sam signs something and Becca signs something back to him. Grizz really needs to start taking lessons off Sam again.

Sam helps with getting Becca and Eden outside. Gwen gives one cheeky wink before they start to walk away. Sam turns and stares at Grizz. Grizz doesn’t have a moment to think as Sam strides towards him with all the confidence he had the day he left on the expedition. He cups Grizz’s head and kisses him. With Grizz still sitting he has to tilt his head back; he can’t help but love being the smaller one for a change. However, the want bubbling inside him causes him to rise, picking Sam up as he does so. Sam laughs for a second, the giddiness causing him to feel a little light headed. They rest their foreheads on each other’s, Grizz setting Sam on the café’s counter. His eyes are shut. For a moment it feels surreal, it’s a dream. The person he’s holding isn’t real. This café isn’t real. Today hasn’t been real. When he opens his eyes again, he’ll wake to the lonely silent house. Sam kisses him again and Grizz can feel the smile he has.

“Is this real?” Sam can’t hear him. He knows he can’t, but he needed to say it. However, he felt it, felt Grizz move slightly. Sam goes to pull back so he can see his lips, figure out what was just said but Grizz pulls him back in. No. He’s not going anywhere. He shakes his head slightly and Sam melts into Grizz, their heads sliding to rest on each other’s shoulders for a moment, enjoying the embrace.

Sam is the first to pull back and Grizz finally opens his eyes. The dazzling smile of Sam is still in front of him. It’s definitely not a dream. “This is a bit weird.” Sam laughs and Grizz just continues to smile, in awe of the man in front of him. His heart swells and aches as it just grows too big for his chest. He didn’t think he’d be this happy right now.

“Yeah. But also, happy.” Sam laughs, Grizz can’t help but follow suit. It’s the giddiness, joy, and everything just rolled into one coming out in booming laughter. They don’t realise they’re crying until the tears fall from their faces, dampening their clothes. Grizz rubs his face and for once wipes a tear away from Sam. “Well damn. I thought I was all cried out.”

Grizz strokes Sam’s cheek and slowly leans in to kiss him. This kiss is a softer one, an intimate one. Everything Grizz has ever wanted to say to Sam is being told in this kiss. He doesn’t understand how that is possible but the way Sam grips him lets him know he feels it. This isn’t a hungry kiss, it’s not a celebratory one, it’s so much more. It’s freedom and joy bursting through him, it’s the electricity dancing between them. Nothing matters anymore, time doesn’t matter anymore, it’s just them and this kiss.
Grizz leans forward slightly, placing his hands on the counter. Or at least he tried. The bruised hand smacks against the counter sending Grizz backwards, jumping up and down in pain. Sam is confused for a moment, slightly disorientated from the intensity of the kiss before laughing at the jumping Grizz. “Fuck. God. Fuck.” Sam slips off the counter and takes the hand. Grizz had reopened a few of the cuts. He sighs.

“This better not be a usual occurrence.” Grizz shoots a glare towards Sam. However, it just comes across as a sad puppy stare. Sam smiles, lifting the hand to his mouth, his lips lightly brushing his fingers, avoiding the cuts. “No more punching concrete.”

“I mean if I have too, it’ll be tough, but I guess.” Sam raises an eyebrow, feeling the sarcasm dripping off Grizz’s words. “You’re hanging out with Gwen too much.” They smile at each other once more, before sitting back down again reaching for a brownie. Grizz bats his hand away.

“I wouldn’t. Gwen made them.” Sam grimaces, reaching for his tea instead. It’s gone slightly cold, but he doesn’t mind. Grizz’s arm rests around him. This may be one of the last moments of genuine peace and quiet they can have. Allie and Will’s trial is in two days. Whatever is to come of that, they both know peace and quiet will not be a part of it.
Helena and Kelly sat in Allie’s living room, finalising the questions for the trial. They have two days to try and finalise their plans, making their case as airtight as possible. Kelly had spent the day helping at the church, hearing from the individuals there what their opinions are. It’s not looking good. Kelly had listened to four of the jury members rant about how much of a dictator Allie was and therefore it wouldn’t surprise them if she’d done this. That’s what they’re up against, a jury full of predetermined bias. It’s not about planting a seed of doubt in their minds; it’s about planting a whole forest. It’s going to be hard. Allie and Will had retreated to their room, the weight of everything finally taking its toll. Kelly hadn’t seen Allie cry but the weeping from her room could be heard as she went to the bathroom. She sits back, “I just don’t understand, I don’t understand how they turned on her.”

Helena doesn’t even glance up; she continues to highlight a passage in a textbook. “It was always going to happen. You have a group of people who were unhappy, to begin with, forced to do labour for food to keep them alive in conditions that are continuing to get worse with the winter coming. They’ve dealt with a multitude of things that have had, in their eyes, no positive outcomes causing morale to be at an all-time low. They want to place the blame somewhere. Lexie pointed the finger and much like sheep, they followed.” She closes the book, picking up her coffee leaning back in her chair. She studies Kelly’s defeated posture. “Heavy is the head that wears the crown.”

“But Allie has had to do so much for everyone, she’s made it possible for us to survive, we should thank her. Without her who knows how fast we’d have gone through all the food and water supplies. Under Harry and Lexie, we might not even survive the winter.” Helena offers a small smile toward Kelly. She understands the frustrations. Everyone that has been helping Allie and Will do, but they’re merely a small group in a mob.

“The only reason we understand and know this is because we’ve been working behind the scenes with her. The majority haven’t. The unknown unsettles everyone. We’re already unsettled in this world, this just made it worse.” Kelly sighs, resting her head on her hand, doodling on the edge of her paper. It felt illogical to even consider Lexie’s arguments as rational, but the rest of the community did.

“That doesn’t explain why The Guard turned on her.” Helena freezes for a moment. The Guard had turned on her but it’s Luke betrayal that gave it power. The Guard would have stayed in line with Allie, with everyone here, if it hadn’t been for Luke siding with them. Their betrayal of Allie and Will came from a misguided place. For starters they’re a corrupt police force, so their want of power was for self-gain rather than the survival of the community. Their anger mainly comes from the way Allie had handled kicking them off the ballot. Instead of recognising an unhappy, powerful, group of people and helping them rationalise and rewarding them in some other way i.e. such as allowing a representative on the council, she just shut them down. She shut Luke down. He’d already felt undervalued and this had pushed him over the edge. Simple mistakes had led to the downfall of Allie, but they were mistakes that anyone would have made in her position. They were naive mistakes that could only be seen in hindsight. In the moment, it’d been hard to see it all.
“She denied them what they wanted.” Kelly frowns, unsure what Helena means. “They wanted power, Kelly. They wanted to make the rules and enforce them.”

“But that’s blatantly unfair! Why would they have thought Allie would let them do that?” You can’t make and enforce the rules, that’s just too much power. Lexie accused Allie of running a police state but quite frankly she’d helped prevent that. Although, Allie had admitted to everyone she hadn’t realised the extent of the truth of Lexie’s words. She’s never have allowed them to hold her in the dark for hours without care. Kelly agrees Allie was blind, but she could have easily rectified that. The Guard needs to be reformed. Laws need to be made in the town. The way they’re arresting over certain things etc. They need to stop being called rules and people need to accept that they’re here for a while. It’s not giving up; it’s just accepting that it’s not going to happen straight away. Kelly can’t help her anger towards everyone, they’re all still acting like 12-year olds, hurt and upset at the work they have to put in to live. Yeah, it’s not as cosy as it was before but when they all went off to college, they’d have to start doing stuff for themselves anyway. “Bloody idiots.”

Helena smirks into her mug, watching Kelly have an argument in her head. “It’ll be fine though. We’re going to win this; we’re going to make everyone see the truth.”

“You really believe that?” Helena bit her lip before smiling at Kelly. It’s warm and genuine.

“I have too.” Kelly nods, unimpressed with the answer but knowing it’s the best Helena can offer. “Come on, let’s make dinner. I got a message from Grizz saying it’s going to be a full house tonight, so we better get started.” She stands, stretching before making her way to the kitchen. Kelly frowns trying to figure out who else would be coming tonight. Bean and Mickey had decided to head to the canteen, try and salvage some reputation for Will and Allie so it’s not a complete lost cause. Even though Dewey had murdered Cassandra, there were still people who would rather have seen him alive and stuck in the cellar than killed. At the moment, the hatred Lexie has incited in everyone against Allie and Will seems to be worse than Dewey’s situation. She’s gone too far, and Kelly hoped she knew it. Gordie had decided to spend the rest of the night hauled up in the study. He’d locked himself away with piles of rations. Kelly worried about him sometimes. He’d lost one Pressman sister and seemed determined not to lose another. He’s determined to make sure Allie’s safe. So, he’s locked himself away with a bunch of psychology books trying to find the best manipulative strategy to get the jury on their side. Helena isn’t the happiest about manipulation, but desperate times call for desperate measures. “I think I’ll just make everyone a simple Pasta Pomodoro.”

Kelly cocks her head slightly at Helena, “In other words, tomato pasta?”

“Well, when you put it like that it’s not as impressive.” Kelly giggles as Helena nudges her and the two set about preparing the ingredients. Grizz hadn’t mentioned who he’d invited over but Kelly imagined at most it’d only be a couple of people. Grizz had been quite secluded recently, throwing himself into his work. She worries about him, as do the others. Especially after he disappeared the other night only to come home with a badly injured hand. Everyone knows it wasn’t a night gardening incident, but Gwen won’t tell anyone what’s happened. When it comes to the two of them it’s like getting water out a stone. However, if Gwen was particularly worried, she’s sure she’d come to one of them. Maybe he’s just a little bit extra worried about Allie and Will.

“Uh, is anyone home?” Grizz’s confused voice drifts from the front door. The noise of shuffling feet and coats being shrugged off, boots being kicked to the side, start filling the house. The hum of quiet chatter buzz around the bottom floor and Kelly pokes her head around the corner. “Um, hey.” Grizz smiles as Gwen, Kelly, Sam and baby Eden emerge from behind him. “I brought guests.” Kelly beams at them all, embracing Becca first.
“I take it your talk with Gwen went okay?” She glances at Gwen who rolls her eyes in response.
Becca nods but before she can get a word out, Eden begins to cry. “Oh I’m sorry, did I wake her?”

“No, no, she just needs to be fed. Honestly, all I am is a food machine at the moment. Sam.” Sam
picks up an upset Eden trying, as smoothly as possible, to take some of her outdoor layers off. It’s
quite successful but she does kick up a hell of a fuss. Once Eden is safely in Becca’s arms, she
swiftly moves towards the living room finding a seat. Gwen has disappeared, skipping towards the
kitchen to see what is being made for tea. Kelly smiles towards Sam who awkwardly smiles back,
unsure what to do. Grizz pats his legs slightly and Kelly glances between the two of them.
Something’s changed. Grizz stood taller than he had for the past few days. He’s lighter on his feet.
Sam seemed to be shy, but also giddy, a laugh bubbling behind his awkward stance.

“Well, shall we leave the hallway? Kells, where is Allie and Will? Hauled up in their room?” Kelly
nods as they make their way through. Helena pops her head around the corner smiling. Sam leans
over the sofa cooing at Eden. Becca bats him away as he’s distracting her. Gwen decides to keep her
company, a slice of bread in her mouth.

“Yeah, it’s been a long day… Hey, Gwen, we’re literally making tea, are you sure you want to be
snacking?” Kelly ends up following Gwen, hands on hips. Becca smirks as Gwen takes a big bite
out of the slice. She sighs, moving back towards the kitchen to help Helena. Grizz has already seated
himself at the breakfast bar area. Helena has slid him her notes over, the things he had missed from
throughout the day. When Kelly and Helena had returned to the house earlier today, Gordie had
bombarded them with the decisions and discussions that they’d missed. Now it was Grizz’s turn.

Kelly watches as Sam slid into the seat next to him, hand cautiously resting on his knee. One of
Grizz’s hands slips under the table and holds it, thumb circling the back of it. Huh. Helena has
noticed too but neither Sam nor Grizz says anything. The move wasn’t secretive, Grizz hadn’t tried
to covertly move his hand underneath. They all know that everyone could see them. Kelly follows
Helena’s lead and decides not to say anything now, but she makes a mental note to talk to Becca
later.

“So, I’m to talk to Luke tomorrow?” Helena nods as she chops some tomatoes. “Right. Can you
message me about,” He glances up to the ceiling as if mentally picturing a schedule in front of him,
“two where he is? I can get Bean to take the construction meeting for me and I’ll get Gwen and
Mickey to check the gardens.” Helena nods and Sam pulls the notebook towards him, pointing at
certain questions. He and Grizz become engrossed in a conversation, that they don’t pay attention to
Kelly as she slips in next to Helena. She begins stirring the pot as Helena plops things in there.

In a hushed tone Kelly questions, “Did you see them…” she nods her head towards Grizz, and Sam.
Sam had moved again, this time getting something from the first aid kit. Grizz is rolling his eyes.
Kelly turns back to Helena who stares expectantly at her. “Come on, like, don’t you-?”

“I’ve learnt it best not to gossip, Kelly.” She pauses and leans a little closer, “But yeah, I noticed.”
Kelly leans against the counter watching them. “Don’t make it too obvious.” Helena sniggers as she
continues to throw stuff into the pot. Kelly can’t help it. A small smile grows on her face as she
watches the two just be with each other. There’s nothing particularly romantic about it but there’s a
special feel to it all. Grizz is just explaining, with the odd sign he knows thrown in, about the trial
prep and farming projects. Sam’s engrossed in it all, not just because he’s reading his lips but because
he’s genuinely interest in Grizz and the things he’s doing. There’s an ease between the two of them.
It’s an ease she once had with Harry, ease she once had with Will. Loneliness swells within her for a
moment before Helena nudges her to get the past. Kelly misses the romantic connection she’s had
with others, but she’s not lonely, not really. The house is filled with people she cares about and
people who care about her. Maybe one day she’ll fall in love once more but, quite frankly, she’s
happy with this right now.

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Allie and Will did not expect to be greeted by a house full of people. They didn’t expect to be greeted by the warm smiles and plates full of pasta. After a tough day of realising they may not win the trial and their futures are uncertain, they’d hidden away in their room, determined to spend as much time together as possible. They wanted to just be together. When Helena called them down for dinner, they’d been surprised by the happy faces that greeted them. Allie often forgets what it’s like to be happy these days. She often forgets that there are people other than Will that still believe and care about her. Sometimes it’s nice to be reminded. She was even happy to see Luke enter the house. He had switched with the other guard. Helena invited him in. The air of happiness seemed to cancel out the actions Luke had taken out on everyone and for once they all sat, on chairs, on the floor, on top of each other, in the living room, laughing. Even Gordie had been coaxed out of the study to join them.

No one spoke about their jobs, no one spoke about the trial, no one spoke about Lexie, Harry or Campbell. Everyone just relaxed; enjoying the evening.

Eden had surprisingly fallen asleep on top of Becca, meaning she couldn’t reach her bowl and fork. Sam tried to feed her but he, and everyone else kept falling into fits of laughter at the sight. Eventually, he managed to feed her a few bites before they both strategically lifted her and placed her back in her pram. Gwen told some embarrassing stories of Grizz’s sleep talking whilst they’d gone on their expedition and Grizz in return told the group how loud Gwen pees. Grizz leant back into the knees of Sam who sat, one arm around the back of the sofa where Becca sat and his other stroking Grizz’s hair. Everyone, bar Gwen and Becca, glance at this situation but no one says anything. The ease in the room suggests it’s exactly how it’s meant to be.

Allie surveys the room, falling silent as the roaring laughter throughout the group continues. Everything slows down for a moment. It’s like when you’re in the movies and music plays as you are watching a group of friends laugh and muck about. It’s usually the scene before things go to shit. The pit of worry in her gut grows. If this were her movie, they’d be heading into her final act around about now. This is the ending of act two. The high before the fall. She’s ready for it. Allie may not trust the current Mayors in charge, but she trusts the individuals in this room to kick up enough of a fuss when things start to go wrong. Whatever the outcome in a couple of days, she knows this community is in good hands.

She slips out into the hallway. Grizz comes bounding out backwards, saying something to the people behind him. He turns almost running into Allie. “Oh shit, sorry. You okay?” She stares up at her friend, glancing behind him towards the happy room. “Allie?”

“I need to talk to you.” She watches the sparkle of joy disappear from his eyes as the crushing reality of this world returns to Grizz. She feels guilty but only for a moment, there’s something she needs to ask him, something important.
Arguments

Chapter Summary

Grizz finally talks to Luke before getting some alone time with Sam.

Grizz hands his binder over to Bean. She takes one glance at it and tries to give it back. He sighs. “If you have time, you can reorganize it, but it has all the information you need for the construction meeting. You ideally just need to focus on the cutting and processing of wood. On the counter behind you are two books that have a chapter or two on how people did it back in the golden olden days.” He smiles, Bean doesn’t return it. “I know, it’s last minute but I’ve got to go chat to Luke.”

“Fine. But can you please start organizing your stuff?” He laughs and Bean gathers up his things, struggling slightly. He helps her out the house. The temperature had dropped recently and with everyone in separate houses, Grizz couldn’t help but think they were going through electricity at an alarming rate. However, no one bar Lexie, Harry and Campbell are allowed to study the supplies. Due to his worries, he’d forced his team to not use the heating unless it’s an emergency. Instead, they focused on warm layers, blankets, hot water bottles and the fireplace. It was a bit dark age but if the electricity does go, they’ll be doing it this way anyway.

Gwen sits on the countertop, sitting with about three layers on, drinking some tea. Grizz sits back in his seat, sighing whilst staring at the clock. In ten minutes, he’ll get a message from Helena on the location of Luke and then in another ten minutes he’ll be questioning one of his oldest friends about why he betrayed them all. His life had decided to go well for a couple of hours and then BAM. Reality kicked back in. Allie’s words weighed heavy on his mind. That’s another issue that he has no choice in facing. He rubs his face and stares up at a sympathetic Gwen. “It’s going to be fine.” He grunts in return. “Okay, it probably won’t be but you’re the last person to try with him so… you just gotta get through it.” He gently bangs his head on the counter. Gwen doesn’t bother stopping him. He disappeared for about half an hour last night with Allie and came back in a stressed mood. Whatever happened during that half hour was the main issue of today. He wouldn’t be this stressed about Luke. It’s just a conversation, Gwen knew Grizz could handle a conversation. Whatever Allie and he had discussed, that was the real issue. Sam and Gwen had spent most of the night whispering with him but Grizz just kept saying he couldn’t say yet. Gwen had been annoyed but Sam seemed to accept it. That annoyed Gwen more, made her look like she was making a fuss.

Grizz’s phone buzzes. Both he and Gwen stare at it. Grizz hastily picks it up and Gwen watches as his tense posture relaxes. That’ll be a message from Sam then. Grizz couldn’t help but smile whenever he saw Sam’s name pop up on his phone. They’d spent most of last night messaging.

Come round after Luke. Becca’s out with Kelly this afternoon and won’t be back until dinner x S.

Before he has time to respond there’s another message.

She wants you to stay for dinner. Gwen is invited. Kelly will also be there for dinner x S.

He smiles and glances up at Gwen. “Dinner at Becca’s tonight?” She has a mouth full of toast so can only enthusiastically nod. Gwen hates cooking and the canteen food is always bland. Her favourite thing is when people use their rations for making their own meals. It’s always tastier. Maybe she should learn to cook. The brownies she made the other day tasted awful and they’d been from a pre-
made mix. She hastily swallows the toast, speaking quickly as Grizz texts.

“Ask if Becca can message when she’s about to start cooking. I want to learn.” Grizz pauses and eyes her suspiciously. “What? I mean it’ll be a handy skill to have.” He shakes his head slightly sending the message off. He starts to laugh when his phone buzzes again. Gwen’s face turns to stone. “Tell him to fuck off.”

“No, no, it’s fine. Becca’s going to message you.” Gwen narrows her eyes and gives him the middle finger as he tries to disguise his sniggers. He chucks a balled-up bit of paper at her. They start chucking it between the two of them when his phone buzzes once more. Forgetting that the time had literally just turned two, he expects it to be Sam. Rather, Helena’s name shines on his screen. Dread soars through him as the paper ball hits him. Gwen slides off the counter, peering over Grizz’s shoulder. He’s at the football field. He sighs.

“Good luck.” Grizz scrunches up his nose slightly and accepts the hug Gwen gives him before disappearing into the house.

It doesn’t take him long to lace up his boots and shove a couple of jumpers on. Yet, it does take him five minutes before leaving the house. He doesn’t want to do this. The trial is tomorrow, however, so this is their last chance to talk to him. He has to try. Shoving some gloves on, he trudges through the cold towards the football field.

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Luke watches as the ball flies down towards the other end of the field. Months since they came here, and he still can throw a ball. What good does that do? It bounces and comes to a stop. He lightly jogs towards it. He’s in a surprisingly good mood today, considering what tomorrow brings. Last night there were no arguments, no quiet words behind doors or behind his back. It felt like before when they’d be hanging out after school. It’s just this time the room was filled with different people. Before it had been his team, Harry and the girls. Now it is a bunch of people he hadn’t usually paid much attention too. He regrets that. The ball goes flying back to where he’d been. It curls slightly, a bit too much spin in it. He waits for it to land but instead, Grizz catches it with ease. The happiness from his face last night seems to have faded. Alternatively, an ominous and dark look lurk in his eyes. For the past week, each of his friends had tried to talk to him about Allie and Will’s allegations. Grizz is the last one. He’d been expecting this.

Since the day he arrived back, Grizz hadn’t spent much time with Luke. He’s purposefully avoided him, unhappy with everything that’s happened. Luke had sensed it. He’d sensed, and heard it from everyone. The thing is, Allie and Will had brought it upon themselves. So what if he’s telling a lie. The power was starting to get to their heads. This will be better in the long run. It had to be, otherwise what had he done? He shoves that thought down into depths of his mind. Luke jogs up to Grizz and the claps hands, bumping shoulders. Grizz drops the ball. “Hey.”

“Hey.” Grizz avoids Luke’s eyes. He clearly doesn’t want to have this conversation, Luke can’t exactly say he doesn’t feel the same way. “So…”

“What’s going on with you and Sam?” For a moment Luke can’t help but smile as Grizz’s brain fries like water on a computer. He hadn’t expected that question. Hadn’t expected it to be put so bluntly. Luke won’t deny it but there are two reasons he’s asking this. 1. He’s trying to avoid the Allie and Will accusation conversations and 2. He’s a little hurt. Last night had been obvious to everyone that
clearly there is something with him and Sam. Although Sam is the father of Becca’s baby and is clearly present in her life, they all knew he is gay. Sam had literally been the gay kid in school. Everyone knew. No one cared. Luke didn’t care, he’s cool with it. So discovering that Grizz might be gay or bi or whatever he is, through dinner last night is kind of hurtful. He’s spent years with Grizz, had sleepovers together, had parties together, set him up with girls! He’s been his friend, a damn close friend at that and he never once thought to tell him, to open up. His mind flashes back to the fake prom they’d held here. A drunk Grizz had revealed he was never going to talk to them ever again when he left. They all thought he was just drunk and talking shit. Instead, he was drunk and telling the truth. Did he not think he’d be accepted? The only person who’d have been weird about it was Clark. Even then the most he’d do is ask if he was attractive and whether Grizz had ever wanted to fuck him. Clark may be insensitive but only because no one tells him any different. Clark clearly can’t be the only reason Grizz never told them, never told him.

“Uh.” Clark stares as Grizz tries to figure out what he wants to say. He shoves his hands in his pockets, staring off towards the buildings.

“Nah, it’s cool Grizz. Just, you know, wish you’d felt comfortable to tell me. Wouldn’t have treated you any different.” Grizz stares at his feet, he scrunches his face slightly, a little bit guilty. Luke picks the ball up again, chucking it between his hands. Grizz eventually glances up and sighs. He runs a finger through his hair.


“No shit. You and Sam all over each other last night.” Grizz smiles and his eyes mist over slightly. Luke can tell he’s thinking of Sam, picture every detail of his face. It’s the same thing he does with Helena. He pictures her smile, the blush rising to her cheeks when she’s shy, the way she bites her lip when nervous. How she plays with her necklace when she’s unsure how to address the community. She’ll play with her hands to give herself something to do so she doesn’t feel like a plank up there. Even if she’s preaching about things, he doesn’t quite believe in, he’s always in awe of her, always proud. He knows she’s not been proud of him recently. With the trial looming over him, he’s unsure of where they’ll stand come tomorrow night.

“Luke.” Luke zones back in. Grizz had pulled himself together now, he can’t let himself get distracted. Luke stares intensely back. “What are you doing?” The crack in Grizz voice takes him by surprise. He thought he’d be yelled at. Helena has been the only one not to yell at him. He thought she’d be the only one. “Luke. This isn’t you. You’re not a liar.”

“You’d know about lying.” Grizz flinches as if his words had physically slashed him. Luke immediately regrets it. “I didn’t, that’s, I… I’m not lying.”

“Bullshit. You’re right, I know about lying, so I can spot a liar. Why are you lying? Why are you doing this man? Has it all been worth it? Destroying your friends, dividing the town, letting Helena down.” He crosses his arms, chest puffed out slightly. Luke rounds on him, but he doesn’t flinch. They stare intensely into each other’s eyes. Luke’s eyes widen.

“Don’t you dare bring her into this.” He points a finger at Grizz, and he swears he’s going to prod him. The thought makes him laugh internally. Is this really what this is coming too? “You know, you know, how about we talk about why you trust Allie and Will so much anyway? You barely acknowledged their existence before! When did you start trusting them more than me? More than Clark? More than Jason? We’re your team Grizz. Where did that all go?” Grizz raises his eyebrows at the absurdity of Luke’s words. Teams? He’s really trying to pull teams into this. What world did he think they lived in?

One of his hands flies out as he tries, desperately to explain to one of his oldest friends the reality of
their situation. “It went the minute we ended up here. It went the minute Emily died. It went the minute someone shot a bullet into Casandra. The minute we all sentenced Dewey to death. The idea of what was before went, Luke.” He slaps his hand into his other hand's palm to try and emphasise each point, to try and drive everything home into the deluded Luke. The stony expression doesn’t seem receptive, however. “This isn’t high school. We shouldn’t be focusing on who or what we were before.” He snorts a laugh, “Like for god’s sake man, are you telling me you’re doing all this because you feel like you’re owed something? Have you seriously got that rich dude complex Harry carries around? Is this all because someone said no to you?”

“Oh, fuck you Grizz. Fuck you.” Luke shakes his head and steps forward to Grizz, completely pissed off being compared to Harry. He’s not Harry. He’s not a selfish, self-centred brat that’s never had to work a day in his life. He’s nothing like that bastard. “Do not fucking compare me to Harry. I am nothing like him. I know this place is different. I know I’m not owed any—“

“Then why are you doing it?” He flings his arms up in the air, “Just felt like destroying your friends? Felt like destroying your family? You promised her you’d be there for her, we all did! What made you do it!” They square up to each other now, Grizz is right in his face. He can see the fire building behind Luke’s eyes. His nostrils flare and his hands grasp at the air, trying to keep himself in control. Grizz lowers his voice for a moment, but it still echoes across the playing field, “What’s made you lie?”


“YOU want to fight? You want to punch the anger out? Fucking do it! Hit me! Hit me again!” Grizz yells through the scrap, each of them grabbing and pushing each other. Luke grows more and more frustrated, the tension inside him building once more. Eventually, Luke pins him to the ground and stops himself, fist in the air. Grizz stares him in the eye. Luke could punch him, right now he really wants too. “Punch me. If you’re angry, punch me, hit me, scream at me. But stop taking it out on our town. Stop the lying Luke. Stop it.” Luke gets off Grizz, turning his back to him. Grizz helps himself up, rubbing his face. The pain is starting to set in now.

“I’m not the one destroying this town.” Luke turns back to Grizz. “I think you should go.”

“I’ll see you tomorrow then.” He picks up his scarf that had fallen off in the scuffle. Grizz turns to go when he stops, locking eyes with Luke. “Oh. I meant to say. I’m Helena’s co-council. I’ll be the one questioning you. Helena felt she’s too close to you and no one else holds the same status in the community as her. Apparently, I was the best they could do. Lexie approved it this morning.” He bows slightly, leaving a stunned Luke, mouth slightly open, staring after him. Once out of sight, he touches his eye once more, praying it doesn’t swell too much. Deep down he knows it’s already bruising, it’s tender to touch. Sam is not going to be happy about that.
Sam eagerly opens his front door, excited to finally be spending some time with Grizz without any secrecy or drama. That idea fades when he sees the swollen black eye on Grizz’s face and the dirt all over his clothes. Grizz smiles nervously at him, hand behind his head. Sam’s face falls. The nervousness on his face intensifies. He holds his hands out in front of him in defence as Sam’s posture and attitude go from elated to concerned. His arms fold.

“I swear it looks worse than it is.” He laughs nervously, trying to defuse the tension, “Is it really that bad?”

“I’m still trying to decide if it’s worse than your hand or not.” Grizz bites his lip. Sam steps aside and Grizz enters the house. Not the exact way he wanted to start this afternoon. Grizz starts taking off his boots and jacket. He takes Grizz’s hand and leads him towards the bathroom, rummaging through the cabinet. Grizz sits silently, without Sam’s attention he can’t talk to him anyway. He’s still not great at signing so without Sam reading his lips, it’s pretty difficult to communicate with him when he’s not looking. It’ll work in his favour during arguments, but not in this moment. He wants to reassure him he’s fine. He is fine, he provoked Luke, so it’s his fault really. The pain he’s feeling is his fault. Sam pulls out the first aid kit. Gordie and Kelly had really pushed the whole first aid kit thing on everyone. Every household with inhabitants had to have one, which got restocked (if needed) every month. Most had done what Becca and Sam did, shove them to the back of a cabinet or cupboard, not really caring about it. They didn’t think they’d need to use it. Grizz imagines people will be using them more throughout the winter. Especially when the ice comes.

Sam rummages around the kit, reading labels and instructions before settling on a few ointments and creams. He grabs one of the surprisingly many hand towels in the bathroom and dips a bit of it into some blue liquid. “How many hand towels do you have?” Sam hadn’t been looking at him properly so stares blankly at him, cocking his head slightly. “Eh, I said, how many towels do you have?” He cracks a smile at the question, rolling his eyes.

“Too many. Some are for guests apparently.” He sighs as he starts dabbing the bruise, Grizz notices some blood on the towel. Was he bleeding!? Did he bleed? How hard did Luke hit him? Was he wearing a ring? He wouldn’t have picked a fight if he’d know he’d bleed! “And this one is for black eyes.” Grizz flinches as the cut burns. He screws up his face, trying to move away from the towel. Sam holds his head still. “What happened?” Sam pauses to watch Grizz’s lips.

“It doesn’t ma-“ Grizz stops as Sam’s face turns into stone. “I went to go speak to Luke.” Sam’s eyes widen and he seems to rise from his seat as if to go head to Luke himself. Grizz pulls him back down, shaking his head. “No, no. I’m fine. He’s fine. I sorta provoked him” The expression falls back into stone. “I was trying to get to the reason why he was lying. Don’t worry, when I question him in front of everyone tomorrow, I won’t get into a fistfight.” Sam presses his lips together. He leans in, putting a plaster in place. Grizz glances at his concentrating face, smiling. He kisses him. Sam jumps back, Grizz laughs. “Did I give you a fright?” A goofy smile finally appears on Sam’s face as he rolls his eyes, heat rising to his cheeks. Grizz pulls him in close again. “No?” Sam shakes his head. “I’ll try harder again next time.” He kisses him again, but Sam’s prepared this time, accepting the kiss leaning into it.

The swelling of his heart takes his breath away every time. Grizz can never get enough of that feeling, feeling so happy his heart could burst. He’d read so many books that described it, he’d read poems and listening to songs, he never thought he’d experience it. At least, he didn’t think they had
been so on the money about it.

Sam goes to sit on Grizz, but he stops him. He pulls back. “I think we should probably do this somewhere that isn’t on the toilet.” Sam laughs as Grizz gives him that lopsided smile he loves so much. They make their way towards the spare room. Sam spent most of his nights in the same room as Becca to help during the night. This room is technically his now. All his clothes have been moved into here and the pictures and objects he managed to save from Campbell had been moved into here too.

Grizz practically throws Sam onto the bed, landing gently on top of him. Sam pushes back Grizz’s hair slightly, his thumb grazing over the edge of the black eye that just keeps getting worse. Grizz flinches, but his smile doesn’t fade. Sam tuts. “Idiot.” Grizz nods as Sam rolls his eyes. They kiss but this kiss isn’t as gentle as they have been. It’s reminiscent of the night Becca found them. A hunger inside them clawing it’s way out, trying to grasp hold of the other. There’s a need to be close to each other. Grizz presses against Sam, trying hard not to squash him. Sam’s hands wander down and Grizz doesn’t even notice until he feels a tug at his jeans. He needs to stop wearing belts. Sam fumbles at the clasp, Grizz tries to help without breaking the kisses. He doesn’t want to stop, he can’t stop. Sam starts to smile through the kiss, laughing at their efforts to get the belt off. Eventually, Grizz sits up, frustrated as he stares down at the belt. There’s a bulge where his dick is pressing against his jeans. Heat rises to his cheeks. This is just embarrassing now. He fumbles at the belt and his jeans, eventually being able to kick them off. He yanks Sam’s off with such force, it pulls him towards Grizz. Sam raises an eyebrow. He pulls Grizz down for a long kiss, reassuring him that all the fumbles are fine. Grizz leans into the kiss. He’s been wanting this so much. Sam had been wanting this so much. This felt so much different from the last time, from the first time. Both times previously there’d been an uncertainty. The first time had been full of nerves and awkward bumps and knocks. Then the last time had been shrouded in guilt and shame, especially as Becca had interrupted them. This time, however, this time, was completely different. Even with the fumbles and slightly pain from his head, it felt secure. This felt right. It felt safe. And most importantly it felt good. He didn’t want this moment to end. He didn’t want tonight to end. He didn’t want to face tomorrow. He just wanted to be here, loving Sam and Sam loving him. A moan escapes his lips. God, he’s glad Sam can’t fucking hear him.
Talking

Chapter Summary

Grizz has some things to discuss with Gwen.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Becca returns home slightly nervous. She had messaged them a ten-minute warning and a five-minute warning but no reply. She didn’t want to walk in on them... At least this time she’s not alone. Kelly struggled with the shopping. They’d stopped at the baby shop once more to pick up a few accessories. Becca had finally given in to taking one of the baby slings. Gwen is more eager than her to try it on. Whilst there she picked up more bottles and things, a few nursing tops etc. The only problem is most of the clothing is from the summer range since that’s round about the time they came here. There’s no winter stock so most of the time she can’t wear the nursing tops anyway. It’s fine when they’re at home but if she wanted to go anywhere in town, she’d pretty much have to undress to feed Eden. She reaches out into the pram at the peaceful baby. She’s awake and for once not fussing.

Gwen opens the door, helping carry the pram inside. Kelly follows closely behind them. They don’t hear anything suspicious, doesn’t mean they aren’t naked dancing throughout the house, however. Gwen starts to chuckle slightly; the others eye her oddly. She holds a finger to her lips and the other hand cupped around her ear. Listen. The two of them try to hear what she’s sniggering about. At first, Becca can’t hear anything but then a slightly snoring sound comes from the living room. They peak around the corner to find Sam lying on top of Grizz, both of them fully dressed and napping. Some crisps lie on the coffee table alone with half-drunk cups of tea. A crisp sits neatly on the floor, underneath Grizz’s hand. It’s a very sweet picture.

“WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR EYE?” Chaos erupts as Gwen storms into the living room, disrupting all the calm and serenity. Her loud vocals frighten both Grizz and Eden causing Eden to begin crying and Grizz to throw a very shocked Sam off him and scramble to a standing position. Sam sleepily sits from the floor, staring up slightly confused at Grizz. Grizz disorientated at first glares at the small but bubbling with fury Gwen as she continues to rant at Grizz, pointing at his eye. Becca rubs her temples. Kelly has wandered over to Gwen and Grizz, inspecting his eyes, he’s trying to peel them off him. Sam casually walks towards Becca and Eden, the sleepy expression still sitting upon his face. Becca, unimpressed points to Eden. Sam gives her shoulder a quick squeeze before scooping Eden up, kissing her forehead and bouncing her gently. She calms almost immediately. Thank god. “What do you mean Luke and you go into a fight?”

“Gwen. Volume.” Gwen glances back at Becca who’s peeling off her outdoor wear. The fireplace is on and has built up a lot of heat. She inspects it as Gwen waves her hands about confused at how everyone is calm at the situation. Adding another log to the fire, she turns on her heels, arms crossed and an exasperated face, “I mean, this seems to be Grizz’s MO lately. Injuring himself.”

“Two things. I’ve injured two things.” Grizz points out, a little offended that not only is there a Grizz look people associate with him but people are starting to associate him getting hurt all the time. Again though, only twice. Physically anyway, he notes in his head that emotionally he has been through the
wringer recently. That’s beside the point.

“Regardless, screaming at him isn’t going to magically heal his eyes, it’s just going to upset the baby.” Gwen’s face melts into a puppy dog stare as she whirls around to see Sam still hushing Eden. Cowering slightly, Gwen makes her way over to Eden mumbling apologies to her. Sam eyes her oddly whilst Becca and Kelly laugh. Grizz slumps back down into the seat.

Everyone eventually settles. Becca takes Eden for some cuddles, whilst Gwen and Kelly unpack. Grizz curls up against Sam which is slightly amusing due to the height difference. A part of Becca can’t help but swirl with anxiety watching them together. The monster in the back of her mind reminds her how alone she is, how Sam will never be there for her. She tries to squash it down. “So, um, are you staying tonight?” Her voice is a little more strained than she’d like it to be, but no one seems to notice.

“No. I’d love to but, I have to be at the church early tomorrow.” Sam gazes down at Grizz but is unable to read his lips from this angle. He watches Becca instead, hoping to pick up on parts of the conversation. Becca, knowing Sam so well, starts to sign whilst Eden rests on her chest.

“You could always stay afterwards. I don’t imagine there will be a lot to do after the trial apart from celebrating.” Both her and Sam smile towards Grizz but the gesture isn’t returned. Instead, Grizz stares into the crackling flames of the fire, something dancing across his mind. Sam nudges him slightly; the concern now being mimicked on both his and Becca’s faces. Sam signs something and Becca translates, “Is this to do with what Allie and you were discussing last night?” Grizz doesn’t answer, Becca feels even more confused. When did Grizz and Allie discuss stuff? “Grizz?” Becca’s anxiety had switched to worrying about Grizz. He’d just gotten some happiness, what the hell has Allie asked of him now?

“It’s fine. I’ll see if I can. It just depends…” He trails off and Becca gets the feeling he doesn’t, or can’t, talk about it. Sam shakes him slightly, his brow furrowed. Grizz cups his face, reassuring him it’s fine. Becca shifts slightly, the awkwardness settle once again in the room.

“So Gwen’s helping me cook tonight.” Sam’s face falls slightly disgusted at the thought.

“Do we have to eat it? There’s still time to go to the canteen.” Grizz chuckles as Sam pulls a face. Gwen pops her head around the corner.

“I can hear you. I’m only doing the mashed potato, what could go wrong with that?” She sticks her tongue out at Sam who returns the gesture. Becca rolls her eyes. Gwen will manage mash. Who could mess up mash?

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After dinner, everyone sat through in the living room. The food had gone down relatively well. Grizz had to admit the mash potatoes were particularly delicious. However, he’d watched Gwen’s head grow as Sam told Gwen the exact same thing. He knows he’ll never hear the end of it. Kelly and Becca were engrossed in a conversation about the flu. With winter fast approaching, keeping Eden from catching any dangerous bugs is their top priority. Kelly pulls out three large tubs of sanitizer as well as a few little bottles fit for handbags. Any visitors needed to use this before touching Eden. If anyone has a tickle in their throat they aren’t allowed anyway near Eden. It felt a bit drastic but without vaccinations, there wasn’t much else they could do for Eden. Kelly still didn’t know the
extent of the bugs they could catch here. What if the plague is a thing here? How are they going to handle that? They don’t exactly have any smallpox around for a rudimentary vaccine! Once the full swing of colds and coughs come into effect Eden is pretty much banned from everyone bar family and close friends. The less exposure the better for now. At least until her body is better at handling things. Sam lies Eden in his knees, knowing Kelly will fill him in later with the issues. She stares up at him as he holds her little hands. Grizz cautiously leans over, her head moves towards the motion. Grizz instinctively moves back. Gwen rolls her eyes. “It’s a baby Grizz, not a bomb. She can’t really see you yet anyway, so don’t worry she won’t be scared of that monster of a haircut yet.” Gwen half expects his usual deadpan glare as she laughs at her own joke but instead, she catches him staring intently at her, concern in the back of his eyes. His stare is unfocused, no longer paying attention to Gwen. She wavers her hand a little, trying to see what’s up. He shakes his head slightly and just smiles at her, turning his attention back to Sam and Eden. She watches as he leans back into the sofa, arm falling around Sam. He gingerly reaches out a finger towards Eden. Sam guides it to her hand. She grabs it and Gwen’s heart melts for a second as she watches Grizz’s eyes widen and a smile burst across his face. Becca coughs, waving her hands wildly. Sam glances up and she starts signing. The rest of the room watch confused as converse silently.

“I caught the sign bed.” Grizz murmurs out the side of his mouth towards Kelly and Gwen. They both mimic a look of intrigue.

“How do you know the sign for bed? How exactly did that come up in conversation?” Kelly giggles as Gwen wiggles her eyebrows. Grizz finally gives her his deadpan stare. She smiles triumphantly.

“Bed can come up casually in conversation. How was your nap eh, that’s a nice bed?” Gwen and Kelly glance at each other unimpressed by his attempts of a defence. He’s going to make an excellent lawyer tomorrow. Becca and Sam turn to the others, waiting for their hushed conversation to end. Kelly slaps Gwen on the arm to get her attention, Gwen slaps Grizz, who had already been paying attention due to watching Kelly slap Gwen. He glares at her. “I really don’t think I need to add any more injuries.”

“I mean, everyone else gets to hit you, I thought I should get a shot too.”

“It’s literally only been, Luke.” Becca rolls her eyes and sighs exasperatedly at the two of them. The sheepishly grin back at her. Gwen mouths sorry.

“Sam’s going to give Eden a bath and put her to bed. I’m going to sort the kitchen out, you guys are welcome to stay a little longer-“ She starts to stand up but Grizz jumps up ahead of her. She stops, sitting on the edge of her seat.

“Gwen and I will do the dishes. You relax, enjoy some time to just chat with Kelly without having to worry about Eden.” He pulls Gwen up who pulls a face at having to clean but she sees that concern from before starting to fill his eyes. This isn’t just about cleaning the dishes. Becca finishes signing to Sam who signs thank you to him. Grizz clumsily replies with you’re welcome.

Becca bites her lip, “We need to work on your signing.” He grimaces.

Sam scoops Eden, bopping over to everyone, Becca last. She gives Eden loads of kisses before sending Sam and her off up the stairs. Kelly begins talking once more to Becca. Grizz pulls Gwen with him to the kitchen.

As she enters the kitchen, she opens her mouth to say some quip but notices Grizz’s surprisingly dark expression. She waits for him to say what he needs to say but instead he hands her a towel and he starts the tap. Usually she questions him but clearly, he needed to work through it in his head first. Whatever he needs to say has clearly been playing in the back of his head for a few hours now.
She’ll let him work it through in his head first

They clean the kitchen for the next hour in silence. Grizz heard Sam join Becca and Kelly. From the sounds of it, Kelly is literally going through the survive winter plan for Eden with him. That’ll buy him some time.

Once they finish cleaning the dishes and surfaces, Grizz makes a couple of cups of tea. Gwen finally fed up of silence goes to make some sort of smart remark when she catches his eye. She falters and leans against the counter. “What’s up?” Grizz grins slightly. People don’t give Gwen enough credit. She’s smart and intuitive. She may not have always been but since coming here, since dealing with everything, she’s grown a hell of a lot. He knows he can rely on her, trust her. She may have gone behind his back with the whole Sam thing, but she did it for the right reasons. She knows when to act. He leans against the counter, folding his arms and staring down at her. She doesn’t cower away; she holds her own under his gaze. Gwen may know he’s a teddy bear inside but Grizz is an intimidating guy. He’s tall, muscly and when he looks through his hair, he seems like some crazed demon. He hal scrunches his face, contemplating how to go about this. Gwen straightens a little, feeling the seriousness of the conversation. He’s had a whole hour to sort it through in his head and he is still struggling. What is he about to say? They’d been joking about all night; this is the complete opposite. She’s seen Grizz in many different ways, but this is a different level. He’s been serious before but this time it felt different, slightly unsettling. It’s as if what he’s about to say is going to change something, going to flip the world upside down.

“There’s something I need to talk to you about.” Gwen tries to raise her eyebrows in a jokey no-shit way, but it comes across more concerned. “I’m not meant to be talking to anyone about this, but I need to have a plan in place in case…” He trails off, unfolding his arms, rubbing his hands together nervously. He stares at his feet for a moment, questioning whether he should be doing this. However, he’s already started, might as well continue, “I can rely on you, Gwen. That’s not a question, it’s a statement.” Gwen softly smiles, damn right you can. “You’ll call me out on my bullshit, you’ll call others out too. So, I need to talk to you but you have to promise me,” and he laughs shakily, nerves running through his body, “and actually keep this promise,” Gwen rolls her eyes at his comments, “that you will always call me out, even if everyone seems to be on my side. I need you to always be Gwen. I need you to be a voice of reason. I need you to promise me that.”

“I… I promise. Grizz what’s going on?” Her voice is coated with worry as she searches Grizz’s face trying to figure out what had him so… so… wound up. “Is this about Luke? Is this about the trial? Allie? Will?”

“Yes and no.” Gwen eyes him suspiciously as he pushes an already made cup of tea in her direction. “Think we’re going to need this.” He lifts it in the air slightly, taking a sip. Gwen doesn’t copy. What’s going on?

Chapter End Notes

Hi. So this chapter... Not the best one. However, it is setting up the story for the next couple of chapters. Although I’ve been really busy, I’ve managed to find time to write but I have a feeling the next couple of chapters will take longer to get out. This is due to many factors but the main two are due to my schedule and the idea I have in my head. It might take a while for me to write the ideas I’ve imagined into words. I’m a very visual thinker so scenes tend to play out in my head when I’m writing which can make it difficult for me to convey on paper.
I hope you all can be patient with me and I'm sorry that this chapter wasn't the best. Thank you for enjoying the story so far and sticking with it. I'm grateful for all the lovely words everyone has said!
Let's Begin

Chapter Summary

As the trial begins, events from previous night weigh heavy on everyone's minds.

Chapter Notes

Hi. Hello. Just a quick note, the next few chapters are going to be flitting between events that happened before the trial that weren't written and the trial itself. This will hopefully provide information about where each of the characters are during the trial. This chapter focuses on Allie and Harry. The story has been very Grizz/Sam heavy and I did start out writing about different characters so, with the main problem between Sam and Grizz sorted, the other characters will be coming back into it. Don't fret! Grizz and Sam are still the main guys and there is still more to come for them.

OKay well, this note turned out longer than expected! Hope you enjoy this chapter even though it might feel a little like a left turn.

8:50am. Day of The Trial.

The noise in the church is not a saintly hum. It echoes off the walls as individuals grow louder, calling across to their friends, arguing about what the outcome will be. Member of The Guard line the back walls, surveying the crowd, trying to keep it calm. There’s more of excitement in the air compared to the last trial. For some reason, this one seems more fun. However, deep down the individuals within this room understand it’s not fun. This isn’t pretend. And yet, what will the outcome be, if not a fake sentence? People murmur about grounding or garbage duty but is that really a real sentence. What else could they do? They can’t kill them, can they? No. The crime doesn’t fit that punishment. So, what’s going to happen? How will they decide? The room is abuzz.

Two Guard members stand either side of the top table, two glasses and a jug of water sitting by a notepad, waiting for the judges. A microphone sits exactly in the middle. The jury has been placed in the back to keep them separate from the gossip. It’s a futile effort. They’ve been gossiping for well over a week now. The jury’s bias is already leaning.

The only commotion that has nothing to do with any of this is happening about one third away from the front. Becca and Sam sit, Eden tucked away in the sling. Those who had no idea Becca was even pregnant whispered on the edges of the crowd as numerous other flocked to them, to get a glance at the towns first child. Sam shifts uncomfortable, unable to keep up with the multitude of conversations around him. He sits slightly guarded, his body shifting as if to shield Becca and the baby slightly. Becca, although proud of her child, keeps a hand firmly around her baby. She moves the sling slightly so the audience can see her face but that’s all. The girls aww and coo, complimenting both mother and child on how beautiful they all are. Becca had bothered to have a shower and put some
of her nicer clothes on. With that said, not many of her actual nice clothes fit her, so she did her best.

The others are scattered throughout the room. Each sitting apprehensively. Kelly sits, tension in her shoulders, staring intently at the judge's table. Almost a statue, she doesn’t move. In contrast, Gordie nervously fidgets with his sleeve, glancing at every individual in the room.

Luke sat in the front pew, staring into his hands. Clark and Jason, surprisingly relaxed, sit on either side. Clark glances at Gwen every now and then smiling. She can’t tell whether it’s meant to provoke her or whether he’s actually trying to be nice. She can no longer tell with him. Gwen doesn’t have time to worry about Clark, however. She stares directly in front of her at Grizz. He taps his pen against a notepad, rehearsing the questions over and over again. She’d tried to speak to him before they had gotten here but both had never found the time. People whispered behind her, his name popping up a few times. She tries to hear what they’re saying but there’s too much static coming from everyone else to make sense of it. She slumps back against the hard-wooden bench. She really wished there was a comfier place to hold these trials.

The doors open. Silence sweeps the hall. They all turn as Lexie, Harry, Campbell, Allie, Helena and Will enter the church. Lexie leads them. Gwen’s eyebrows raise as she looks her up and down. All black, all moody. Her stern face sets the tone for how merciful she is willing to be. She strides with the most confidence, always staying ahead of everyone. Campbell’s cocky grin is flashed at everyone as he walks as close as he can get to Lexie. He sits in front of Luke. The prosecution. Well fuck. Helena swiftly walks down the aisle, glancing back towards Allie and Will, making sure they’re both okay. Will keeps his head forward but up, never looking down, not showing shame. He’s got nothing to be ashamed of right now. He has committed no crime. Allie, however, is slightly hunched. She doesn’t exude the same confidence as the others do. She instead glances back towards the last to enter the room. Harry. Hair slightly dishevelled, as is the rest of his appearance. Five o’clock shadow carving out his bone structure, shirt tucked in but unbuttoned with no tie. He seems as if he’s had no sleep. In fact, it’s like he’s hadn’t slept in ages. Gwen’s brow furrows as she watches everyone take their seats. Harry’s eyes linger on Allie who avoids his gaze.

Lexie coughs, pulling the mic towards her and away from Harry. He doesn’t seem to notice, eyes and mind elsewhere. She leans slightly into the mic, glancing around the room for a moment, enjoying the power in holding the crowd’s attention. She smiles a little too gleefully, “Well. Shall we begin?”

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11:08pm. Night Before The Trial.

The house is oddly silent. There isn’t even a tap dripping or a hum of electricity. Grizz’s snores aren’t drifting up through the house. Everyone had gone to bed early. Tomorrow is judgement day and you can’t face judgement day without a good night’s sleep. She doubted Helena would be sleeping. Helena will be studying and prepping, making sure everything is in place. However, all the others were particularly tired. Allie had tried but failed to sleep. Forever wondering what the time was. It could be one in the morning or only half ten. Her phone lay on the dresser across the room and with Will lying on her, she can’t exactly go get up and check it. It’s just her and the ceiling, her and the silence. There is only silence.
A buzz comes from her phone. At first, she thinks she’s imagining it. Before everything happened, she remembered Cassandra talking about something to do with scientists doing a study to find something and found that we hear our names being called and our phones buzzing even when they’re not. To be honest, Allie doesn’t remember what she’d said. She wished she listened. It’s funny the things you miss and remember about someone once they’re gone. Her eyes sting a little and she blinks away the sadness. She hadn’t cried about Cassandra in a long time, now isn’t the time to start again. Her phone buzzes again, confirming she had heard it before. She peels Will off her carefully, trying not to wake him. She slips out the bed and slinks across the room to her phone. Unlocking it, she sees numerous messages from… Harry?

I’m in the back garden. H.

With one glance at Will, checking he’s fast asleep Allie sneaks out the room. As she slinks her way through the house, she grabs a coat, pulling it tightly around her and shoves some slippers on. Grizz stirs as she reaches the back door. Freezing for a moment she waits for the snores to return once more, before slipping outside.

At first, she can’t see out into the darkness. The porch light only lights up the garden so far but then Harry sulks into the frame. His eyes red, hair a mess and a dressing gown on. Allie jumps back, his sudden appearance gives her a fright. “Jesus, Harry. Have you come here to murder me? What’s with the creepy sulking?” He just stares at the ground. She realises that he’s literally in his pyjamas and a dressing gown. He’s not wearing much else. It’s freezing out here, how is he not cold? She steps down to his level, grabbing his arm and yanking him inside. He resists before giving in, allowing himself to be pulled into the warmth.

Allie holds up a finger to her mouth, insisting on quiet. It’d be a disaster if everyone woke up to find him in the house. Why is she trying to hide the fact he’s here? Shaking her head slightly, she pulls him silently through the house into the study. It’s a mess. Not that Harry would be able to tell. He lives in a mess, this must feel like home.

She closes the door behind them, when she turns back around, Harry has slumped into the chair. He glances around all the bits of papers and books flicking through them. Allie crosses her arms, snatching the paper out his hands. “Can you not? Gordie will never let me hear the end of it if his system gets messed up.”

Harry chuckles to himself, surveying the room, “There’s a system?”

“Oh, don’t be such a dick. I could say the same about your room.” She tries to place things back to where they had been, but Harry continues to go through stuff.

“I think you’ll find it’s clean now.” Allie straightens, eyeing him suspiciously. Harry holds out his hands, leaning back in the chair, his feet resting on the desk, “No, really, it is. Once I kicked everyone out, I went on a spring clean.” Allie rolls her eyes half tutting as she bats his feet off. She sits on the edge of the desk, staring at him.

“What are you doing here?” Harry picks at the side of his hand, before sniffing and rubbing his nose. Allie’s dubious at whether this conversation is happening with a sober Harry. She wonders whether it’s alcohol or drugs influencing him right now. Maybe it is just Harry. Maybe this is Harry and the other Harry’s are the drugs and alcohol. Doubtful. “You want me to confess? Is that why you’re here? Have a confession so the trial can be done before it even starts?” She puts on a fake pout and he glares up at her. “Can you not be bothered to put in the work?”

“Fuck you, Allie.” She falls silent as she realises there’s no malice behind it. He didn’t come here for a confession. He knows there won’t be a confession. He knows Allie wouldn’t rig the election. As
much as she’d never admitted it, she’s an awful lot like Cassandra. “I came to see how you’re doing.” The baffled expression appearing on Harry’s face causes a slight smile. “Oh what, I can’t care about someone? Am I incapable of caring?”

“No. I think you have feelings, Harry.” Harry’s smile falters. Allie stares at the ground. “It’s just, you’re the one who started all of this. I didn’t think you cared about me.” Harry chew the inside of his lip. “I gave you an out before,” She waves her hands in the air. Harry gazes at her, his eyes slightly misty as he watches her every movement. Allie stutters a bit under his eyes, “before all of this. You know it could have been me and you against Lexie instead of you and her against me.” She rests her hand down. It’s on top of Harry’s. She didn’t mean to put it there. She wasn’t paying attention. She doesn’t move it, however. Harry stares at it for a second before pulling it out from underneath, standing, facing Allie straight on. She straightens a little.

“It wasn’t an out. It was another attempt to control everything.” Allie frowns. Harry goes to turn away from her, but she pulls him back around.

“I wasn’t trying to control anything. You weren’t in a good place to lead, you aren’t ready for the responsibility, you and Lexie have faced nothing yet—“ She’s babbling, trying to explain her reasoning but Harry cuts her off.

“Allie. Allie! Listen, to yourself! If you had it your way, none of us would get the chance to try! You don’t know what Lexie and I are capable of. No one knows what I’m capable of. No one has given me the chance. Everyone has dismissed me. You know when I needed you, you walked away.” His voice quietens down towards the end of the sentence, aware of how vulnerable he is making himself. He starts to fidget with his hands again, avoiding Allie’s gaze.

“I didn’t mean to abandon you, Harry. I had a fucking town to run. I’m sorry if you weren’t my top priority.” She pauses. Her face softening, “I didn’t, I… I’m sorry. I really am. I just did to do what everyone else did to me. Get up and get on. I should have realised it wouldn’t work with everyone. I should have been there for you.” She reaches out and squeezes Harry’s had, trying desperately to show him she meant it. They jab at each other; they argue with each other, but she genuinely didn’t mean to abandon him. Whilst focusing on the bigger picture she has time and time again let individuals fall through the cracks. Now those individuals were determined to watch her fall. Well, Lexie was, she’s unsure about Harry. She kind of misses the beginning of when all this happened, they had been so jokey together. Granted it was brought about by jealousy, but they did genuinely get on. High school had been a different story but, in this place, in the beginning, they were good. Or, at least, as good as you can get.

“No, it’s fine, there was one person that was there for me. Campbell.” Allie scoffs and Harry glares at her. He knew she’d react this way.

“You can’t trust Campbell, Harry! If anyone is a manipulator it’s him! He’s using you like he uses anyone he has an interest in. He’s a danger and you shouldn’t be so happy to associate yourself with him. If you knew about the things—“ She has to stop herself from revealing everything Campbell has done. It’d put more people at risk if it got back to him everything Elle had told her. She’d be unsure Elle would survive that betrayal. Campbell seemed fine with the poisoning but for some reason, Allie knows he’d treat this differently.

“About what? From my perspective you’ve targeted him” Allie laughs again, taking herself off the desk she steps up to Harry.

“Oh really?” She leans back a little, eager to hear his reasoning on this.

“Yeah. You arrest him, keep him captive, then you arrest his girlfriend for no reason. If anything in
“I arrested Elle for her own safety.” Harry watches as her face hardens. He knows Campbell is a horrible person, but he has helped Harry in ways no one else did. He has been abandoned time and time again by everyone here. Campbell always comes back. Silence falls over them. Allie crosses her arms, staring down at the floor, “Well. If you were here for an argument, you got one. You can go now.”

“I told you, I came here to see if you were okay. I know how nervous it is to stand up in front of everyone and be interrogated. Whether you’re the accused or a witness, it’s not fun. It’s never fun being micro-analysed and picked apart. That’s what will happen tomorrow, and I just wanted to make sure you were okay.” Allie hadn’t realised how close they’d gotten until this moment. His voice cracked on the last okay, his tone falling from annoyed to something much softer. She can see him gulp, a thought passing through his mind. She bites her lip, his eyes glance down at them then away. Her heart is beating fast, she can’t stop it, she doesn’t know why it’s behaving this way, but it is. He pushes a strand of hair behind her ear.

“Harry…” He leans in and to her surprise, she follows his lead. Her arms unfold and his fingers brush up against hers. The heat and tension from their argument rings around the room making her feel slightly dizzy. Before either of them really realise, their lips press together. Allie forgets about everything. She forgets the argument. She forgets the trial. She forgets about Lexie, Campbell, everyone. All she knows is this moment. He pulls her in closer and she melts into him, sparks dancing across her skin. The heat builds through their bodies as they kiss. He picks her up with ease, shoving the books away. Allie wraps her legs around him; he runs his fingers through her hair. She wants this, she needs this. She’s lost in the moment and then… They stop. Both frozen for a moment, unsure of what came over them. She unwraps her legs. He takes a step back. “That didn’t happen.”

“What?” He forces a grin.

“I’m serious, Harry. Whatever,” She waves her hands at her, he seems offended, “whatever that was, whatever reason, just whatever, it never happened. None of it happened. Our conversation, that, it didn’t happen.” Harry smirks a little at her loss for words. Did he really kiss that well? He stomach tightens. Don’t be an idiot Harry. She’s panicking.

“I know, don’t worry about it. I know how to keep a secret.” He watches as the tension leaves Allie’s shoulder. She straightens herself out and shakily tries to stride over towards the door.

“Okay. I’ll see you tomorrow.” She holds open the door.

“Tomorrow.” He gives a slight bow of the head before sneaking out the room. She watches from the back until she can’t see him anymore.

As she shuts the door, Grizz stirs once more but still doesn’t wake. She grabs herself water and slips back into the bed. Will is still asleep. There’s guilt swirling in the pit of her stomach. That wasn’t real, that had to be a dream. What the hell had gotten into her? It’s the stress. It was the tension between them. There had been tension and the only way Harry knows how to relieve tension is through sex. That’s why he kissed her. But she kissed him back. Why did she kiss him back? Stress reliever. She is stressed and she wanted to relax. Bullshit. She turns over in the bed, screwing her eyes shut. She needs to sleep. She needs to get some sleep. The trials tomorrow.
9:04am. Day of The Trial.

“Harry?” The room is silent, eyes staring up at him as he blinks everything into focus. His eyes had been trained on Allie this whole time he hadn’t been paying attention. Lexie had done her opening speech and is waiting for Harry to officially start the trial. She grits her teeth as she grins at him, digger her elbow deep into him. He’s such a fucking embarrassment. He sits up, sorting his jacket. Allie stares down at the table.

“Right. So, Campbell will be prosecuting. Helena is the defence. Due to personal conflict with a witness, Grizz will be delivering the questions to the key witness under Helena’s guidance.” He directly addresses the jury. “Listen to everything, don’t let the gossip and the rumours sway you. This isn’t for show. You have to base your decision on what you hear today, and the evidence provided to you.” He glances at Lexie, unsure if he’s forgotten anything. She doesn’t make any attempted to add information. He nods and holds out a hand towards Campbell. “Your opening statement, please.” Campbell gather’s his things and smiles up at the jury. Allie finally meets Harry’s gaze. Pain is mirrored in each other’s eyes.
Easy

Chapter Summary

Campbell gives his opening statement.

Chapter Notes

Hi! So just to warn all of you, the information and things that happen in the trial will more than likely not fit in with what happened in the show. I have said before that my fic is not one hundred per cent a continuation from the show, there are things that are different. I hope this doesn't put people off too much and I hope you can still enjoy it!

9:08am. Day of The Trial.

Campbell stands in front of the jury. He smiles. This audience does not like him. They never have. The rooms quiet. Once Harry had finished speaking, there were murmurs rippling through people. They all eyed him with curious caution. Most were on the edge of their seats, keen to hear the details of the case.

It’s a strange case. With Dewey, he was a nobody who killed a somebody. It had a shock factor coated in fear. People were afraid. This case is somewhat different. There’s still the shock factor but instead of being coated in fear, it’s coated with anger. Think of Allie as Lucifer, an angel fallen from grace. Now has to spend the rest of her life as the personified devil. Or a witch, if he were to go with Lexie’s play. That might be a bit much but it’s how they’re viewing her now. Whatever hatred they held for Campbell has been put on hold, anger is a short and powerful emotion that often leads to hatred. Right now, everyone is still burning with fury, with betrayal. If he plays it right, the hatred will soon take root.

Campbell clasps his hands, rubbing them together. The noise echoes across the church. A few people flinch in the seats, then disguise their fear by shifting as if trying to get comfortable. Becca holds Eden a little tighter.

“I know none of you trusts me, you all don’t like me. So, you’re probably sitting there thinking why should we listen to him? Why should we trust him?” He watches as a few of the jury members unconsciously nod along with what he’s saying. His grin widens. “Well, that’s the exact reason you should trust me.” Grizz glances along at Helena whose mouth has tightened. She knows what he’s doing. She knows where he’s going with this and it’s not good news for them. “I have nothing left to lose. I could not give a shit at whether you all like me or not. I mean, I’m going against my family. I’m breaking bonds with someone I’ve known since they were a baby.” Becca tries to sign along with what’s happening but she’s trying not to wake Eden. Sam’s face just seems to be hardening with each word Campbell spews. “Why else would I be doing this if I didn’t believe the allegations were true?” He pauses for dramatic effect. He points towards Allie and Will “The two stand accused
of fraud.” Will shakes his head slightly. Allie glares towards Campbell, he can feel her eyes boring into the back of his skull. He loves this. “Now, that may not seem like a big bad crime on paper” He shrugs his shoulders, mimicking a nonchalant attitude, then he stops and turns on his heels, addressing the whole room as well as the jury now, “but, just think, if they had gotten away with it, if they had managed to do it; Allie would be the Mayor, Will would be the first chair on the council. They’d be making the laws, they’d be doling out punishments, they’d be in charge. When you think of it like that, it’s suddenly a lot more serious.” Another pause to let the words sink in. He glances towards the defence. Helena’s posture had already deflated. Grizz has almost snapped the pen he’s holding. Allie had been despondent since she arrived, and Will is ready to jump out his seat and murder him. Such an easy team. This is just the opening statement. He’d been hoping for a challenge. Allie used to be so much more. He turns back to the jury, approaching them, they don’t lean away. He smiles, they’re on his side already. “Today, I will dispose of any doubt you have in your mind. Today, we will right a wrong.” He smiles at the jury before turning to Helena. He outstretches his arms, inviting her to the floor. As he takes his seat, he watches the faces in the crowd. There are waves of agreement in the crowds. It makes it easy to see who supports Allie. According to the faces before him, not many. This really is going to be easy.

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**1:26pm. Day Before The Trial.**

Maybe it’s a Sunday. No, it’s not Sunday yet. Saturday? Friday? Maybe it’s Thursday? What day did Helena show up? She’s unsure.

She’s been a prisoner at Allie’s. She’d been a prisoner all her life. He said he was saving her, protecting her, keeping her safe. Safe felt a lot like prison.

Surprisingly though, he’s been kind to her that night. There were no physical punishments. He said he’d never really hurt her. She should have paid attention to the really.

She kept the house clean. The doors and windows are locked during the times she’s left alone. Don’t want someone coming to get her. What if someone came and took her again? What if they hurt her? She didn’t think he was right but… Maybe it’s safer to stay. Would anger him if she left. Staying, that’s a safe option. Then again, he doesn’t need anger too…

Elle almost drops a plate on the floor. She manages to catch it. She lets go. It smashes to the ground. Elle can’t move, instead, she stares at the shattered pieces of pottery. It didn’t feel good, but it didn’t feel bad either. She carefully cleans up the mess. She didn’t think he’d enjoy the mess. It doesn’t take long. She boils a cup of tea and sits down with a book. The house was surprisingly filled with them. Campbell said their parents liked to read, he and his brother didn’t bother. She imagines Sam dabbled but Campbell certainly didn’t. He didn’t mind her reading. It kept her mind busy, she agreed. There’s not much else to do anymore. She’d already read a couple of books. She scanned the shelves earlier and landed upon one that she believed would be good. It’d been turned into a film, after all, they tend to be good books. *Room by Emma Donoghue*. She’s a chapter in now. She carries on reading when a thought pops into her head.

*Friday.* She decides it must be Friday.
Campbell sits back behind his desk. Lexie smiles at him. She can already taste the victory. Maybe she should start thinking up punishments? Is she getting ahead of herself? Possibly but the people here already hated Allie before Campbell's speech and now, it was cementing in their minds.

Luke leans forward towards Campbell. No one is paying attention to him. “Do you not think that was a bit much? I don’t-“ He stops whispering as Campbell turns to face him. The dead look in his eyes catches him off guard. The lack of feeling or care leaves him so empty. However, as he begins to speak, a spark of joy flits across his eyes.

“No.” His mouth cracks into a wide, malevolent smile. It causes him to sit back a bit. The hairs on his skin stand to attention. There’s a slight laugh as he continues, “We’re going to destroy them.”
Strategic Changes

Chapter Summary

With Helena's opening statement, her team notice a change in strategy.

9:14am. Day of The Trial.

As Helena stands to begin her statement, she catches Campbell turning back around, grinning like the Cheshire cat having spoken to Luke. She falters, dropping the pen she’d been holding. It rolls across the floor and she scrambles to pick it up. Once standing straight again, she faces the jury. Their unimpressed faces and grimaces greet her. She bites her lip, staring down at her feet for a moment.

“The prosecution wants you to believe that Allie and Will have fallen from their pedestals, that they’ve betrayed your trust and hurt you.” She can feel everyone start nodding their heads. At least she knows where everyone’s thoughts are at. The jury manages to keep their cool. Poker faces on them all. They had been much more responsive for Campbell. She folds her hands together, smiling at them all, “I am here to tell you they’re wrong. We all know Allie and Will. We’ve watched them create this society from virtually nothing. When her sister was murdered, she stepped up and made this place safe, made this society stable.” She watches as they retreat slightly into themselves at the mention of Cassandra’s name. Harry stares down at his hands, shame painted all over him. Allie too has to look away from the jury. She wishes this topic would stop being brought up. Helena continues, “We’ve eaten with them, shared stories with them and worked with them. They’ve put their heart and soul into everything, into us. And how have you all repaid them?” She pauses, making sure to make eye contact with a few of the jury members. She watches as they all shrink again, the guilt building up within themselves. There’s one who doesn’t, she walks towards where they sit. She still addresses the whole jury but makes more frequent eye contact with this person. Their jaw tight, their eyes narrow, there’s a stubbornness here she has to break. Otherwise, they’ll convince the whole jury to vote the way they are. “Campbell is hardly a trustworthy source of information. He acts like he’s doing this even though it pains his heart.” She places a hand to her heart, the other on her forehead and leans back, playing up the dramatics, “How could I betray family? How could I do this if it weren’t unequivocally true? How could I be this evil of a man to condemn my own family?” A few people smirk, even Gwen can’t help but smile. Campbell’s face stiffens. He glares up through his brows towards Helena. First, she kidnaps Elle, second, she spits on him and now mocking. He’s sure God won’t appreciate any of these sins. “Well, if you all remember, he pointed a gun at Cassandra, right here. Allie even stood in front of the gun to protect her sister. He would have happily shot them.” She stops. There are no murmurs in the room now. It’s silent. “Now, you must be thinking, what does this have to do with the trial Helena? I know, I know. I’m just trying to get you to realise that whatever Campbell says, needs to be taken with a grain of salt.” She turns to Campbell, pointing at him waving her finger slightly as if she’s getting an idea. “I will give Campbell one thing, he is correct in saying today we will right a wrong,” She turns back to the jury, a knowing smile upon her face, “but it’s not convicting Allie and Will. It’s setting them free.” Helena straightens, glancing at Lexie as she addresses the whole room as well as the jury. Steam could be coming out of Lexie’s ears. She’s glancing at Campbell, his face trained on Helena. She sits back a little, angry at how captivated the town is being with Helena. Helena gestures as she
paces around the church floor, “Today, we will prove to you how this has been a constructed situation to turn you against the people who have cared about you for months. We will prove how you have all been lied to, manipulated, not by Allie and Will but the very people who you look to now.” There’s a break as she lets that sit in everyone’s minds, “By the end of today, you will finally know the truth. By the end of today, you will do the right thing.”

She takes her seat next to Grizz and the room starts buzzing again. She glances at Campbell. A smile flashes across his face, once that ordinarily show confidence, but his eyes have narrowed, nostrils flared. She’s proven she’s a worthy fighter. She’s not just some church girl. Campbell would do wrong to underestimate her. People have made that mistake before. Helena doesn’t go down without a fight.

*

3:30pm. Day Before The Trial.

A bang echoes through the otherwise peaceful house. Helena straightens, eyes wide with fear as Luke comes hurtling through the front door. For a split second, she thought it’d be Campbell, finally getting his revenge. However, Campbell is too smart for that. He’s not one to just kill in a fit of passion. No, he’d make it seem like an accident.

Luke slams his fist down on the table in front of her. She jumps, staring, incredulous, up at him. “Grizz is co-council? He’s questioning me?” His voice roars through the house. Helena stares into his wild eyes, alarmed by this reaction. She hadn’t expected such a fit of intense anger. Helena gapes at him, words failing her, as she struggles to string sentences together to explain what had happened. He turns away, clenching his fists, breathing deeply to try to get his anger under control. This won’t go anywhere if he’s this angry at her. Normally he’d go work out when he’s this angry but that’s literally where the angry started. Plus, he wanted an explanation from Helena. He knew they were on different sides right now, but she could have warned him. That’s the minimum courtesy he’d expect from her. He’d have done for her. He’s fed up of this. “Why didn’t you tell me? Where’s the warning? Were you just going to keep it quiet and hope the shock of it all caused me to confess? Have you become that manipulative?” Helena stands, throwing down her pencil. Eyes narrowing at the suggestion that she’s the manipulative one.

“I am not manipulative. I was planning on telling you once we got Lexie’s approval but by the time, I got it, you were already out and Grizz was planning on meeting you anyway, so I thought he should tell you. This isn’t some scheme. I’m not like your friends.”

Frustrated he rubs his face. This argument is one they’ve been having nightly. “OH, for god’s sake Helena, they don’t scheme Helena. There is no scheming.”

Helena scoffs, “Then explain how Allie and Will ended up arrested? Explain why you’re lying to keep them imprisoned? Sounds like a scheme.” He glares at her.

“There is no scheme there. We are doing what’s right.” He chops his hand, emphasising the end of each sentence, trying for the millionth time to explain to her that this is the right thing. He’s doing the right thing. She scoffs, shaking her head, pushing past him towards the kitchen, mug in hand. He follows.
“I just,” She slams the mug down, staring at the counter. There’s a moment of silence and the tension between her shoulders melts away as she hunches slightly. The weight of everything crushing her lungs. Her voice quietens, “I just don’t know who you are right now, Luke. I don’t know who you’ve become.” She turns to him, tears in her eyes. “I don’t know why you’ve shut me out? You say you hate me the way I’ve been freezing you out but you’re doing the same to me. If you have just let me in then-“

Luke interrupts, frustration bubbling away inside him, “Then what? You’d have convinced me to lie on Allie’s behalf?”

She turns around, hurt coating her words, “YOU ARE ALREADY LYING LUKE.” He takes a step back, shocked by her outburst. Helena rarely loses her cool. He’s never seen her like this. She gestures angrily at him. “I would never ask you to lie for anyone. I would never ask you to sacrifice your self-respect. I would never ask you to do all this. These people you’re siding with are destroying every single part of you.” She grips the counter for support, her legs turning to jelly. Her voice strained, she continues, hoping this will finally get through to him, “I know this place has forced us to change, I’ve always accepted change Luke, but these changes in you are not for the good. One day you’re going to look in the mirror and not recognise the man standing there.” She wipes the tears off her face. “I don’t know if I can be here to watch that happen.” Luke feels his heart tighten. He steps forward, but Helena turns away. She doesn’t notice him breaking. “Now, if you’ll excuse me, I have to finish prepping for tomorrow.” She fills her mug with water. Luke catches her arm as she scurries past.

“Helena.” She stares up at him, a broken version of the man she loved. The man is still in there, he just trapped, trapped behind all of this bullshit. “I love you.”

“I know.” She stares down at their feet, unable to make eye contact with him. He lets go of her and she walks out.

Luke stands there, unsure what to do with himself. The anger dissipates leaving only the pain. Something which he has been desperate not to feel but right now, it’s everything he feels. A few weeks ago, the excitement of the wedding, the joy of hanging out with friends, had been at the forefront of his mind. It’d been all he cared about. Now it all seems so long ago.

He had been sure this was the right thing. Yet seeing the hurt in Helena’s eyes… One of his favourite things about Helena was how she saw the best in him and brought out the best in him. Yet, right now, it was the opposite. It stung. Everything outside and in hurts in a way he’s never felt before. He had thought Helena would see that in the long term this is better. After a few days of anger, she would have come around, seen that what he’s doing, what they’re doing, will be better for everyone. Once they’ve won the trial, once the dust settles maybe she will. It hurt right now because Helena couldn’t see the bigger picture, that’s it, that’s the only reason. He has to believe that. He had too. Otherwise… what’s he done?

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9:22am. Day of The Trial.

As she sits back in her seat, Grizz grabs her arm. Lexie is addressing the room about the next stage.
Campbell has gathered his notes, glancing at Harry, gesturing to the witness’s seat. No one is paying attention to them. “What?” Helena whispers, slightly annoyed at being manhandled.

“What the hell was that? That wasn’t the plan. You isolated everyone!??” His eyebrows shoot up, a what-the-fuck expression on his face. Gwen leans forward listening into the conversation. Helena glances back at her and notices a few people stare in Grizz’s direction, the urgent tones of his words were just louder than a whisper. She doubts anyone heard what he said but they certainly know he’s talking. She glares at him.

“What’s wrong?” Gwen’s concern is wafted away by Helena. Deadpan, Gwen purses her lips.

“It’s fine.” She sighs, murmuring to the two of them, “After Campbell’s speech, guilt was the only way to go. No one is going to listen to reason. This isn’t a logic-based trial. No one is going to listen to facts. They’re listening to their emotions. Guilt is a powerful emotion.” Grizz frowns at her, unsettled by this sudden approach. Gwen chews on her lip, just as troubled by the strategic move. Helena softens, “Look, I don’t want to use it. But if we can’t get Luke to crack up there, then guilt is all we have.” She turns back to the proceedings, leaving a worried Grizz to glance around at the miserable faces of everyone. It feels like it’s going to turn into a blood bath. Gwen watches the conflicted faces of her peers refuse to meet Allie and Will’s gaze, guilt growing through their bodies, taking root in their guts. It’s already being effective. Gwen’s not sure it’ll actually work. She hopes it doesn’t. Who wants to win with guilt? Making someone feel bad to win doesn’t dispose of their apprehensions towards the person. They’ll still be there, they’ll just set them free to make themselves feel better. That’s not a victory. She prays that Luke comes to his senses and reveals the truth. Gwen didn’t want them to win this way.
The First Witness.

Chapter Summary

Campbell throws Allie's character into question.

Chapter Notes

Hey! So a super busy few weeks for me, but I'm hoping to pop out a couple of chapters the next few days. Fingers crossed I get one out tomorrow. If not, Monday definitely! Hope you guys enjoy! :)

9:32am. Day of The Trial.

He can only imagine how it feels to be the one accused. Sitting here, for the second time, with unblinking eyes of disdain watching everything he does. The jury analyses his movements, watching how he’ll react to certain statements, to certain questions. The thing is with this town is everyone knows everything, every rumour and every fact. There is no hiding, but it’s amplified when on the stand. You can watch their judgements pass through their faces. He shifts, uncomfortable in the seat. A few eyes narrow. This is so much fun.

“Harry.” He turns to Campbell. “Is it true that Allie met with you to convince you to drop out of the race for Mayor?” Harry nods. “Words please.”

“Eh, yeah, yes, it’s true.” He reaches for the water and takes a sip. Campbell turns on his heels, facing the jury once more. Normally, or back home, the court doesn’t work like this. You’re not allowed to make statements between questions. Harry had listened enough times to his family’s set of lawyers. Growing up, he’d hear his parents on the phone with lawyers. He caught bits and bobs of jargon every now and then. However, whenever he asked about what was happening, he’d just be shooed away, shushed. The only time he father ever trusted him was showing him the gold. What good that does now.

“Would you say Allie is controlling?” Campbell smiles, expectantly towards Harry. What would happen if he lies right now? This isn’t a real court of law. What would happen? What would they do? They don’t have a rule here that says you can’t lie.

“I’d say she’s become more controlling, but I wouldn’t say-“ Campbell cuts him off and he bites his lip. There’s no point in lying. Nothing good comes from lying.

“Do you believe Allie will do whatever it takes to get her way?” There’s a hint of annoyance in Campbell's eye. Harry knows what he’s trying to do. Discredit the character of the witness. He’s making Allie seem like a cold, controlling dictator. She is a bit of a dictator. She does struggle to relinquish control, for good reason, however. Every time she’s relaxed, taken her foot off the pedal something horrible has happened. She’s controlling because it turns out, we can’t be trusted without
a firm hand. Harry plays with his hands a bit. Not wanting to give his answer. He glances at Allie. She doesn’t seem angry. Her face is more pained if anything. She chews the inside of her cheek, playing with her cardigan sleeve. Will tries to hold her hand but she jerks it away.

“I guess? Yeah, but-“

“She will do whatever it takes. She is controlling. Harry?” Harry glances back at Campbell, his eyes still mainly on Allie though, watching how she’s reacting to all of this. “You went through a little rough patch, right?”

“Eh yeah…” He shifts again in his seat, uncomfortable. If he’s honest with himself, he’s still in that rough patch. The empty house is achingly quiet at night. The only way he can truly sleep is if he’s fucked up. It’s not fun sitting in the silence sober.

“Eh, what’s this got to do with Allie?” Grizz’s voice cuts through the air. A hand on his head, he looks up at Lexie. She stays silent. Campbell waits impatiently to continue. “Lexie.” She purses her lips. He sits back. “Lexie. What relevance is this? What’s this got to do with Allie and Will?”

Campbell approaches Lexie, Harry watches as he whispers. Grizz throws his hands in the air, grumbling furiously to Helena. She holds a hand calming him down. Murmurs ripple through everyone, growing louder as the trial stalls. “Do we get to know what it is you’re discussing, or do I have to accuse the two of you of colluding” There are a few snickers of laughter from the crowd as Grizz’s annoyed snarky tones. Lexie’s face hardens. Helena starts urgently whispering to him, but he doesn’t look at her, just Lexie. Lexie nods to Campbell then coughs, gathering the rooms attention once more.

“Campbell’s questions have merit. He’s informed me of the line of enquiry. It’d do you good to wait until it’s your turn to do the questioning, otherwise, you’ll be escorted out the church.” Grizz goes to retaliate but Gwen leans over his shoulder whispering something. His mouth shuts. Grizz reluctantly nods at the triumphant looking Campbell to continue.

Harry is amazed by the scenes unfolding in front of him. He truly is amazed. Mock trials had never been like this. Nothing in school had been like this. Had everyone truly forgotten who they were? Had everyone just forgotten about the goofs and jokes? This feels so real but not. God. He could do with a drink.

“Sorry, Harry.” He plasters a fake grin of sincerity onto his face, waiting for Harry to finish drinking his water. “I don’t think I’ll be interrupted again.” Grizz grunts and there’s a nervous laugh from a few in the room. “I know you find it hard to talk about but I’m wondering, what was Allie’s technique in helping you? Did she comfort you? Did she check in on your regularly? Did she help you? What did Allie do for you?”

“She… She came to see me.” Bombarded with questions, Harry struggles to know which one to answer. He goes with the last.

“Once? Twice? Weekly? Monthly?” Harry sits back a little, taken aback from the energy Campbell is emitting. The room watches intensely, curious where Campbell is going with this.

“Once.”

“Once… Once.” He pauses, letting it hang in the air. Most knew he’d been struggling throughout all of this. They all had but most had gossiped about him. The great Harry Bingham down and out.

“What did she do?” He snaps his attention back to Campbell.

“She spoke to me. Told me to get up and work.” He shrugs, unsure exactly where he is going with
“Or what?” Campbell’s eyebrow raises, a gleam of triumph in his eye. This is where the argument is going.

“Or…” He glances at Allie. Her eyes dart down to avoid his eye contact. Guilt. “Or my rations would be cut. But I will say-“ Annoyingly, Harry is cut off once more by Campbell.

“Or his rations will be cut.” He repeats Harry’s words back to the jury. A slightly sombre tone to his voice. Harry stares towards the window. He’s twisting his words. Well, not letting him finish. As much as it sucks that Allie wasn’t more present for him, he kind of understands. Especially after their conversation last night. He hadn’t realised that she was so busy. From the outside, it just looks like she struts throughout the places with her bodyguards shouting out orders. But it’s more than that. She was right, he doesn’t actually know what it’s like to lead yet. They’ve not had anything big to do. Lexie is the one that’s been to meetings and spoken with people. Harry spends most of his day in his bed. He zones back into Campbells slightly provocative speech. “She tried to get her competition to drop out, threatened to cut his rations when in need of help. Allie is a calculated, cold and controlling individual, who is more than capable of rigging an election. She had been in the position of power which gave her the opportunity. If it hadn’t been for the whistle-blower, we would not have been able to stop her. She would have continued her reign of tyranny-“ He’s pacing up and down in front of the jury. Most are captivated by his words, believing and hanging onto every word. Grizz cuts him, and the jury’s attention, off.

“This is slander, Lexie! There is no factual evidence to support ‘reign of tyranny’ It’s confusing for the case and jury!” Grizz gestures towards Campbell and the jury, staring incredulously at Lexie as she reluctantly sighs, turning to face him. She opens her mouth but Campbell cuts her off.

“Sorry,” He holds up his hands in an apologetic way, spinning between the jury and Lexie. Lexie can’t help but roll her eyes. He’s not sorry, she knows he’s not. Campbell is throwing phrases out there, hoping they’ll stick, hoping they’ll stay in the back of the jury’s mind. Once something has been said, it can’t be unheard. It’s quite smart really, just really slowing the trial down. “Let me rephrase.” He pretends to pause for thought as if recalculating his words in his head. In reality, he’s surveying everyone’s faces. Annoyingly they individuals in front of him are not as captivated as he’d like. There are a few questioning faces. He continues anyway, focusing his attention on those who do not look fully convinced, “She would have continued as our Mayor until she died. Continued to treat people the way she treated Harry. Harry’s testimony is the perfect example of her character and how she could betray us. She just didn’t think we had any worth-“

“Putting words into her mouth. Jesus Campbell. A fair trial? This is going to be the fair trial?” Grizz scoffs and the jury cocks their heads slightly towards Grizz. His interruptions, Harry notes hold weight with them. There’s silent respect for Grizz that everyone seems to have. Whilst annoying and holding up the trial, once Grizz has interrupted their face go from agreement to questioning. They’re listening to him, their questioning Campbells intentions. His words hold weight. Harry had never paid much attention to Grizz, not as much attention as the other boys from the team. However, over the past week, he’s seen a lot from him, heard a lot. The meeting Harry had missed, Campbell and Lexie had shown up. Campbell giving him drugs and Lexie giving him a rundown from the meeting. The information Grizz had presented surprised him. He didn’t think he was as smart as he is. Yeah, the boy read but his not just a nerd who throws a ball. He’s strategic, smart and strong-minded. Harry can’t help but feel, they should have him on their side. Campbell doesn’t fully understand the threat Grizz is to them.

“Wrap it up, Campbell.” Lexie waves his hand, clearly growing impatient with both Campbells over the top statements and Grizz’s interruptions. She’d happily have the jury go vote without all of this
trial. However, she wants to do things the proper way. Show everyone this is how she does things. The right way, the proper way.

“Sorry.” He grins towards his audience, the jury, “I just get so passionate about this. I want this community to survive and thrive. Allie has shown all she cares about is number one, herself.” He turns to Helena and Grizz. “Any questions for Harry?” He bows out the way as Helena stands. Grizz glares, nostrils flare at little as he watches Campbell take his seat.

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8:30am. Day of The Trial.

Harry shoves his hands into his pocket, tucking his head down avoiding the stares and whispers as he strides through the town. Unused to being up at this time in the morning, he squints, it’s too bright for him. He hadn’t slept much. Every time he shut his eyes Allie’s face flashed in front of his eyes. His lips had tingled all the way home. The tingle had soon been replaced by a dram of whiskey. So after a sleepless night, he still found himself running late.

For some bizarre reason, Lexie had decided that instead of The Guard escorting Allie and Will, they would. She wanted to show the community a more involved and hands-on approach. They were not just sending The Guard to do their bidding. Harry honestly couldn’t give a shit right now. It’s too cold. He turns the corner and sees everyone waiting impatiently on the porch of Allie’s house. His step falters for a second as he catches eyes with Allie. She hastily glances away. Campbell stares between them. A smile creeps onto his face. Well fuck.

“You’re late.” Harry waves his hand and leans against a post.

“We’re still going to be a good ten minutes early.” She rolls her eyes. Helena exits the house, raising her eyebrows at everyone. Lexie offers a small smile. “So are we going?” Will narrows his eyes at Harry. For a split second his stomach drops. Did Allie tell him? Did she tell him about the…

“Let’s go.” Lexie takes the lead, cutting Harry’s train of thoughts. Campbell follows closely behind her. Helena and Will follow next, he’s questioning her on her plans. Personally, he wouldn’t do such a thing so close to Campbell. Unless this was a decoy plan that they hope he’ll fall for. Campbell’s too smart for that though. Allie isn’t far behind Will and Helena. Harry jogs up to her.

“Hey.” She glances at him and speeds up a bit. He rolls his eyes and catches up. “Allie.”


“I don’t need the third degree. I just wanted to see how you are this morning?” Her face softens, and her shoulders hunch. She doesn’t bother keeping up the bravado. Harry’s gut twists as she suddenly seems exhausted.

“Oh.” She mimics Harry, shoving her hands into her pockets, glancing at him. “Not great. Didn’t really sleep last night.” There’s a small smile which Harry returns. If they weren’t marching towards the church right now, this would be a pleasant walk.
“Me neither.” He exaggerates a yawn. A small laugh escapes her lips. He can see Will glancing back out of the corner of his eye. They fall into silence.

Allie slows slightly and it takes Harry a moment to realise she’s slowing to talk to him. He copies her lead. Once they were far enough away from everyone, she chews on her lip, staring at him as they walk, “Why did we… you know…” She trails off, unable to vocalise what happened last night.

“I dunno.” He simply shrugs. Last night is a bit of a blur to him. The only bit that’s in sharp focus is her lips on his, her arms wrapped around him, his body pressed up against hers-

“Great.” Her annoyance brings him back to reality. The fantasy version of his memory is shoved to the back of his mind. He’s not entirely sure it happened exactly like that, but it definitely made him feel… well just feel. She took away the numbness he so often felt. The day she came to him, whilst he lay in bed, unable to do anything, her touches on his hand had felt electric. If she had stayed, would things be different now?

“It takes two to tango Pressman.” She rolls her eyes, he manages to bring back the old cheeky grin he used to flash so often. A genuine smile cracks across her face. “I think we have both been stressed. Didn’t hurt though.”

The smile vanishes. Her expression deadpan, “I’m with Will.”

“Seriously?” Her face hardens at his sarcastic tone. Everyone knew she’s with Will. Kelly bloody told him during one of their many walks. It’d been gossip throughout the election. People in the community had viewed them like The President and First Lady. Or First Man. They were a team. Forever and always. Harry could taste the sick at the back of his mouth just thinking about it.

“Fuck off, Harry.” He’s a little shocked Allie took it so seriously. However, under the circumstances, how else was she going to take it? It’s a very stressful day.

“Sorry.” They’re silent again for a moment. However, she doesn’t speed up to get away from him. They continue to walk side by side. He sighs, “Look. Whatever happens today, it’s not just Lexie sentencing you. It’s me as well.”

Her brow furrows puzzled slightly by what he’s suggesting. She laughs nervously, “Is that supposed to be comforting?”

He stops for a second, staring her in the eye. “I’m serious. I don’t want to hurt you.” He means it. He doesn’t hate Allie. He’s never hated her. Disliked her at times? Yeah. But hate? Nope. He doesn’t want her life to be destroyed over this, she doesn’t want her to break. Lexie is out for blood right now. She wants to humiliate Allie.

“Then why did you do this in the first place.” She walks off before he can even try and formulate an answer. He isn’t quite sure he has a truthful answer. No, he did. They’re just shallow and selfish answers. The answers he doesn’t really want to focus on. He doesn’t want to be that person, yet always finds himself falling into that pattern. Shoving his hands back into his pockets, he bows his head, following the group from behind.

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10:16am. Day of The Trial.
Harry is grateful to side back in his own seat once more. There’s a sort of safety next to Lexie, that he doesn’t feel in the witness’s seat. Helena tried her best but after one quick glance around the room, it’s clear they’re all still leaning towards Campbell. However, the uncertain expressions on some individuals suggested they were starting to question their sheep-like behaviour.

He’s not sure if he wants to win. Having stared, a little creepily, at Allie for the past hour, doubts are starting to take root in his mind. Is this all worth it? Dethroning Allie, what’s the point? Who decided she was a tyrant? Because they had to work for stuff now? Harry stares down at his own hands, scars from picked at blisters still shine. He’s part of the problem. He’s gone too far. He stares at everyone in front of him. It’s not like he can turn back now, can he? What exactly could he do that would help? Luke coughs from his seat. The same look of guilt and anguish is plastered across his face. Harry can spot those emotions anywhere. He’s the last witness to be called, not until the afternoon. Campbell wanted to keep the key witness for last, so the evidence would be fresh in the jury’s minds. That gives Harry time, gives him time to talk to Luke.
Break

Chapter Summary

Grizz has a mini panic and Becca realises something.


Lexie clears her throat. Grizz’s eyes narrow. It’s been a couple of hours and he is already at his wit’s end. “We’re going to take a 15-minute break to prepare for the next witness. Clark, escort the Jury back to their room, please. No one is allowed to discuss the trial with them.” He stands and saunters over to them. “The room must be filled again by twenty-five past and we’ll start promptly at half past.” She stands and excuses herself. It’s silent for a moment but then one by one people start to whisper, then slowly the noise level returns to a normal.

Helena and Gwen turn on Grizz. He grimaces at them. “Yes?” He knows exactly what it is they want to say to him. They talk over each other, both essentially saying the same thing. Don’t antagonise the woman who’ll sentence. Stop making an arse out of yourself. The jury won’t like it… It goes on and on. He stands up, ignoring their irritated calls as he strides over to Becca and Sam. He doesn’t want to deal with Gwen and Helena right now.

All the frustration melts away as Sam smiles at him. It’s nice to see Becca welcome his presence warmly too. People around them hush a little. He can feel the eyes on the back of him. Curiosity taking over the individuals closest to them. He starts patting his legs slightly. Sam reaches over Becca and takes his hand squeezing it. He rubs the back of it. Sam apologises to Becca as her face falls for a second, annoyed by his arm in her face. Grizz crouches down by the end of the aisle.

Suddenly people around them hush. Only Becca and Grizz notice, both start feeling uncomfortable. Sam glances between the two of them.

Grizz has been pretending to be straight for an extraordinarily long amount of time. Before everything, he used to longingly stare towards Sam. Now he and Sam were sort of, kind of, dating, in a weird way whilst he raised Eden with Becca. Not the exact relationship he’d wanted with Sam but just having Sam in any form feels better than not having him. He wants to be open about it, he’d argued with Sam about how open to be about it. They’re probably going to die here and he doesn’t want to hide away in shame. With that said, having everyone’s judgement on him right now is intense. Becca signs something out the corner of his eye and Sam lets go of Grizz’s hand. His heart clenches. As intense as the crowd’s gaze is, holding Sam’s hand is bringing some sort of comfort towards him. He reaches out for it again, grasping at it. Sam’s eyes widen and he can sense the fear flit through Grizz. Becca puts her hand on top of theirs.

“It’s fine. We’re three friends comforting each other about the trial.” Grizz stares at Becca, wide-eyed. She lowers her voice so it’s barely audible, even Grizz struggles to hear. “It’s okay if you’re not comfortable if you’re scared. I’ll be the buffer.” He shifts his hand so he’s holding Becca’s too. Appreciation floods his heart. Becca smiles sweetly towards the curious eyes, some of who have cocked their heads confused at whatever is happening between the three.
“I didn’t think I’d be this…” He waves his other hand about, unable to describe it. They stop holding hands as Becca shifts Eden. Grizz lets her grasp onto his pinkie. It’s his favourite thing she does. Just a reflex according to Kelly. It’s too early for anything else but he likes to think she chooses to do it.

“It must be paralysing sometimes. Being so sure in yourself, wanting to be who you are but then the years of fear and secrecy come crashing in. Everyone you know is here. It’s fine. It’s overwhelming. We all understand, no one’s annoyed.” Becca strokes Eden’s head, trying to soothe her as she starts kicking up a fuss. Grizz is thankful for Becca’s understanding. Sam smiles at him, only able to pick up half the conversation. Grizz will speak to him properly later.

“You’re very rude.” Sam signs and Grizz frowns. Standing up again, he places a hand on his hip, staring into the sparkling blue eyes of Sam. It’s incredibly hard not to get lost in them.

“How?” He grunts, trying to control the tone of his voice. He’s noticed that around Sam he can sometimes talk at a higher pitch, usually due to his nerves.

“Interrupting every few questions.” He raises an eyebrow, Grizz’s defiance stance crumbles and he scratches the back of his head. A coy smile on his face, slight guilt radiating from him.

His shoulders slump and he holds out his hands in a defensive posture. It takes some control for Sam to keep the jokingly stern expression on his face. “I’m interrupting for very good reasons!” Grizz cocks his head to the side, his voice lowering slightly, “Anyway, I came over here to get away from that. I’ve already had an earful from Gwen and Helena.” He jerks his head towards the two fierce women who are in deep discussion with Will and Allie. Gwen senses his stare, turns her head, points at her eyes and then points at him. Becca giggles quietly. Gwen and Grizz’s relationship really brightens the mood sometimes. Grizz gives Gwen a mocking wave and she turns back around to her conversation. Grizz leans a hand on the back of the pew. The jokiness disappears from his expression.

“You alright?” Sam reaches around the back of Becca and places his hand on his once more.

“Nervous. Really nervous.” It’s an effort to not glance away when speaking to Sam. He’s nervous and uncomfortable, making eye contact doesn’t usually go with those feelings. However, Sam needs to see his lips, so he’s willing to push through the feelings.

“You’re going to be great. You always are.” He squeezes his hand and Grizz feels the heat rise through his body. Sam’s smile increases, causing his blush to redden.

“Aww. Your ears go red when you’re blushing.” Becca knowingly grins at Grizz, who tries his best to glare at her.

“Becca.” He grits his teeth. It’s embarrassing enough blushing this hard in front of Sam, let alone having someone point it out.

“What? It’s cute.” She continues to grin. Grizz softens, he knows he’s cute.

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9:00pm. Night Before The Trial.
Becca collapses onto the bed, exhausted. She tentatively peers into the bassinet, holding her breath and praying that she is still asleep. Eden’s eyes stay closed and her chest is moving softly up and down. Sam had wrapped her up like a little burrito. When Eden’s quiet like this, tucked away in her bassinet, Becca can’t help but think she’s not real. She’s so quiet and peaceful, lovely, perfect. Perfect can’t be real. When Becca was pregnant, she could feel her move and wriggle inside her. Every time she did that, she knew she was real but now, when she’s still and quiet, it’s so hard not to think she’ll disappear. She’ll blink and POOF. Gone. A figment of her imagination. She obviously knows she won’t just vanish, but she never thought they’d be transported to a weird pocket universe. Yet, here they are. She’ll never let anything happen to her. She’s never going to vanish.

Eden moves her head slightly and Becca holds her breath. Don’t wake up. Sam just put you down. Her eyes fly open. Oh no. Becca swiftly sits up, rocking the bassinet slightly as Eden starts to stir, making a slightly blub noise. If she can just keep her from crying and get her back to sleep, then she could get a couple of hours in before the next feed. What is sleep? It wasn’t that long ago she had it regularly, yet, she’s forgotten exactly what it feels like. A couple of hours and she’ll feel more like herself again.

Sam sneaks into the room, trying to make as little noise as possible. His face is all gooey and dopey. If she wasn’t trying to hush a child to sleep, she’d be happier for him. However, seeing him smile so wistfully is just annoying her. Our child is crying, stop daydreaming of your boyfriend. With that being said, it’s nice to see him have that spring to his step again. Sam had always put her first, especially in the past few days. Stuck by her when she’s being a selfish bitch and when she’s been a hormonal mess. He’s taken up the mantle of being Eden’s father, not just because he’s wanted a child but because he wants to help her. He’s done so much for her. It’s nice to see him have something for himself.

“Help.” Becca signs to Sam as he finally clocks the now screeching baby. All the wonder and love Becca had for Eden is slowly disappearing at the prospect of another sleepless night. She wants to sleep. Why won’t Eden let her sleep? The books Kelly had found tried to warn her. They all said the lack of sleep will be a shock at first, you’ll never sleep again, yet she didn’t listen.

She crawls under the pillows as Sam hastily scoops Eden up, bouncing her gently up and down, whilst pacing the room. Through the pillow and through the screams, she can hear Sam chuckle slightly at the sight of her. Her head is hidden as if she were an ostrich. He can’t hear the noise, it’s already driving her crazy, will she get used to this? She hopes so. It’s been like a week and she’s ready to tear her hair out. Why can’t she just stay all cute and sleepy?

When Eden’s noises quieten, Becca rolls out from underneath the pillow, star-fished on the bed. Sam grins at her. “I think she’s hungry.” She glances towards them. He’s still shoogling her but she’s now sucking on his pinkie. It’s only a matter of time before she realises no milk is coming out of that. Becca groans. Eden’s always hungry.

“Whip my boob out and latch her on. I can’t be bothered moving.” She signs to him before letting her arms flop down on the bed again.

“I still think you’d need to sit up.” She can hear the laughter in his voice. Slowly but surely, Becca lifts herself up, resting against the back of the bed, gathering the pillows for support. She sighs deeply.

“I’m already exhausted. This makes it worse.” She points at Eden, “You know she’s just sucking the life out of me?” Sam gives a proper laugh, “There’s no milk here, it’s just my life.” Sam continues to laugh, shaking his head, as he passes Eden over to Becca. He perches on the edge of the bed, placing a hand on her knee, eyes soft and sympathetic.
“You don’t mind though. Not really. You love her.” Becca’s eyes narrow as she watches Sam’s hands sign to her. He’s not wrong. He’s never wrong. She just wants to cry at how tired she feels and then actually sleep, not feed her baby for the millionth time today. Yet as she stares down at Eden feeding, she can feel the tears well in her eyes. “Becca? Why are you crying?” She stares into his worried eyes. He’s always so concerned.

“I am just so tired” Sam raises his eyebrows as she starts to full-on weep. He wipes away a few of her tears, stopping them from falling on Eden.

“Oh okay?” He’s confused but understanding. Becca likes to wake him up when she needs to get up through the night so she’s not going through the exhaustion alone. However, he doesn’t have to feed the child as well. Most of the time he doeses as well, meaning he’s not nearly as exhausted as her.

“And I love her so much.” Her voice is a little whiney as she says it. She loves Eden. Exhausted or grumpy, she loves her. She loves her eyes, nose, toes, face, etc. All of it! She’s never loved anyone so much.

“Okay? She loves you too.” Sam gives a nervous chuckle now, he’s not really sure how to handle this. He thought the random spurts of crying was going to stop once the baby had been born. Clearly not.

“Then why won’t she let me sleep?” Sam hops over to the otherwise of the Bed, wrapping an arm around her, trying not to disturb the feeding Eden. Becca rests her head on him.

He gently squeezes her, “Because she wants to be with you.”

Becca sniffles, staring up at Sam’s bemused face, “Don’t make this cute. I want to sleep.” He rubs her arm reassuringly.

“I’ll use some of our rationed formulae tonight. Wake me up when she cries, and I’ll deal with her. You sleep tonight.” Becca cries once more. “What now?”

“You’re so nice to me.” She laughs as she says it. Becca knows this is ridiculous, but she can’t help all the swirling emotions building inside her. They come out in weird ways at the moment. As much as crying does help with the release of emotions, she’s getting sick of it. Sam kisses the top of her head. “I love you.”

“I love you too.” She smiles, seeing him sign it. The tears finally drying.

“You’re my best friend.” It’s hard to sign properly whilst holding a baby for feeding but she manages to convey the message to him.

“You’re my friend.” Becca’s face falls deadpan, she shifts slightly, locking eyes with a mischievous faced Sam.

“Sam.”

“Okay. You’re my best friend too.” They grin at each other. Becca’s never felt so lucky.

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10:20am. Day of The Trial.
Becca knows Grizz doesn’t want to hide from everyone. When they had discussed everything the other day, this came up. However, it hadn’t been a shock to her to watch his nerves freak him out. Sam had been out for ages; everyone is used to the idea of him as gay. She knew the whispers people had said once she mentioned Sam being the father of Eden. Everyone saw him as gay, how is he the father? It’s different with Grizz. People have only seen him as straight. He’s dated girls, slept with girls. She doesn’t think he realised how difficult it is amongst a larger group of people, having their eyes watch every movement, every interaction. She can see his frustration within himself. He’d made it obvious he didn’t want to hide and yet today he hid. She wishes she could get him to understand that it’s okay, that he shouldn’t beat himself up over it. It’s a stressful day as it is, he shouldn’t stress himself out more. It’ll get better. If he wants to hide a little bit for now, just around the larger community, that’s fine. She’ll support him as everyone else is.

Becca watches as Grizz and Sam clumsily flirt with each other. It’s full of badly signed words and awkward jokes. They love it though, she can see it in their eyes. They’ve clicked, they’ve found someone that’s synced with them perfectly. It’s nice to see. She’s so caught up that she doesn’t notice the stirring child strapped to her chest. In fact, it’s Grizz who taps Becca on the shoulder. “Huh?”

“Um, Eden’s starting to, well, not cry, but I think she’s about too.” And sure enough, within seconds of the end of his sentence, Eden lets out a tremendous cry.

“Tiny lungs, but loud as fuck,” Becca mutters, slightly exasperated. Grizz laughs at her comments as she stands. Sam goes to follow but she holds out her hand, sitting him back down. “Don’t worry, it’s either nappy or food. I’ve got it. I’ll try and be back for the next bit of the trial, okay?” Sam nods and Becca shuffles out the pew, bouncing Eden slightly as she exits to the front foyer of the church. She glances back and watches Grizz plop down in her seat, carrying on chatting with Sam. She smiles. She’s really lucky to have this family.
Law and Chaos

Chapter Summary

The trial comes to a close.

Chapter Notes

Hi! This is a long and dialogue heavy chapter. I hope you enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

12:15pm. Day of The Trial.

The morning went by fairly quickly. Having almost popped a blood vessel, Grizz had managed to keep most of his words to himself. Campbell still held the room. It’s clear to see in the faces. Helena is trying her best; she always does but even she can tell they just weren’t listening to her as much as she’d like. Campbell had regained his cock stature and was working the room, enjoying every bit of power he is currently yielding. It was starting to grate on Grizz, he couldn’t help but clench his jaw and fists every time he saw his slimy expression. By the time they’d broken for lunch, his jaw aches and indents seemed to now be permanently indented into his palms.

The final evidence is to be given after lunch. He’d spent the first fifteen minutes with Sam and Becca. They’d found somewhere a little more secluded, making it easier for them all to discuss everything without judgmental, prying eyes. It’d been a nice fifteen minutes. Sam draped around him like a comfort blanket. Becca complaining about Sam’s snoring from the night before. It had helped him forget about the next bit, his bit, of the trial. Not to mention the stress about what is to come after. He shouldn’t worry about that yet though, that will only happen if they win. His fifteen minutes had flown by and he was dragged away by Helena and Gwen to the room where they were keeping Allie and Will during extended breaks.

As he sits, half listening to Helena, he can’t help but think about throwing it. He won’t, he’d never do that to his friends. Especially since they’re innocent but for what comes after… If they win it all changes, again. He understands why it needs to change once more but my god, he’s tired as it is, this will make things exhausting. Soon he’ll have the same type of bags under his eyes that Sam and Becca carry. He’s never pointed it out to Becca though. It’s not something you point out to a tired mother. Especially after the meltdown, she’d described to him. Sam had just looked withered as she recounted her tears. She found it funny now, but Sam’s expressions suggested at the time it wasn’t.

“Grizz?” Helena’s sharp tone cuts through his thoughts. She’d asked him a question. Maybe he hadn’t been half listening at all. Maybe he just wasn’t listening. She sighs, pinching the bridge of her nose. “This really isn’t the time for you to be off in your own little world. You’re our last chance to get the majority of the jury on board.” Allie and Will glance at Grizz, very little confidence are on their faces right now.
“I’ve got it.” The little confidence they have fades a little more. “I do. We’ve been prepping all week. If I didn’t have it by now, I won’t have it in the next ten minutes.” Helena pinches the bridge of her nose once more. Grizz thinks she’ll be much happier once this whole thing is over.

“Do you think you’ll be able to trip him up?” She holds out her hand as she sighs, staring with tired eyes into Grizz’s. Her expression mostly exhausted but sadness lurks behind the eyes. It’s incredibly difficult for her, this whole thing is. Right now, she’s planning on watching her partner in crime be torn apart up on the stand. He needs support, he needs love and kindness but it’s something she can’t give to him. He’s supported her this whole time. When she wanted to open the church up to everyone, give sermons, take on this role within the community, he was right there, by her side, holding her hand, pushing her forward. Now, she’s repaying the favour by destroying his credibility in front of the whole town. She keeps believing that after today, they can go back to normal, they can put that all behind them. It’s naive, however, but it’s all she’s got. The belief that they can go back to where they were. She misses him. She wants him home.

“Maybe? I’m going to need to break him though. I think it’s the only way. Like, go in hard, destroy him.” Grizz shrugs as he leans back, chewing on the end of his pen. Helena stares wide-eyed at him. Gwen nods slightly in agreement before mimicking the shocked expressions around the table.

“Grizz. A bit extreme. We want the truth, not a broken man!” Helena is more shocked than Grizz had anticipated. Maybe that’s why she called on him. She knows this is the only way, she’s the one that pointed it out to him. Maybe now that the time has come, she’s scared about what will happen to Luke afterwards.

“I mean this black eye didn’t appear by having a friendly talk, guys.” Grizz points to his swollen, bruised eye. His eye is met with repulsion. No one had really been making eye contact with him today, grossed out slightly by the black eye. He could feel people whispering about it earlier, but no one has outright questioned him. Maybe that’s why they’d been staring at him Becca and Sam earlier. And he thought it was because he’s gay. God, he’s so in his own head sometimes. Sighing, he leans forward, “You guys have shown that the nice approach doesn’t work with him. You’re the one that started using guilt, Helena.” She chews on her lip, clearly regretting that move from earlier now that someone she cares about is about to go on the stand. “Confrontation got a reaction out of him before; it’ll get another one out now. One that the jury can see.”

“But what if the jury thinks you’ve just provoked him into lying.” Allie does have a point but Grizz doesn’t think they’d think that much into it. If they weren’t such sheep, he’d come up with a more strategic approach. They turned on Allie and Will so quickly and followed the pack, that he knows they don’t think that deeply into claims. At least not right now, he hopes.

“They won’t.” He tries to sound confident, but their questioning is making him second guess. Is he being like Campbell? Is he being too confident? There’s a moment where everyone’s quiet, thinking through everything.

Elbows on the table, head resting against his praying hands, worry all over his face, Will turns his attention to Grizz, “How can you be so sure that Luke is going to break?”


Helena cuts Grizz off, “I thought I did.” No one says anything for a beat. Grizz internally cringes. He hasn’t meant to upset Helena this whole time. It’s the last thing he wants to do.

He reaches out, holding her hand. She glances up at him. He really can’t get over how tired she is. “Helena. You do know him,” She shakes her head slightly. “If you were to really stare into his eyes right now, you’d see he’s almost there, we’ve almost got him back. This is the last chance he has to
confess; he knows he can’t handle the guilt forever.” Helena stares at her hands, blinking furiously, trying to stop the tears from coming. She will not cry. She will not cry over all this. Worse things have happened, do not cry. Grizz continues, “Plus, he’s in a church. He’ll feel the need to tell the truth. Whether he believes God is watching or not, it still has an effect on people.”

After a moment of thought, she glances up at Grizz, “I hope you’re right.”

“It’s annoying both Lexie and Campbell are currently carrying themselves as they’ve already won,” Gwen grumbles as she rips out a bit of paper from her notebook. Grizz hopes nothing important was written on it. Will straightens a little, staring around the room, curiosity dancing in his eyes.

“What happens if we win? Do Allie and I regain our positions? Do they stay as Mayors? What happens after?” Grizz freezes slightly. Everyone had been so caught up in the trial and what was happening right now, no one had thought about the after… Well, some had.

“Let’s worry about that later…” Gwen tries to swiftly shut the conversation down. It’s not a conversation she wants to witness right now. She’s unsure how Will would react to certain things. Will frowns, confused at why everyone was dismissing the conversation. It’s a conversation that needs to happen. He glances towards Helena, but she’s caught up in her own thoughts, barely listening to the conversation. Grizz refuses to look him in the eye. “Wait, no. We should have a plan.”

“Will. It’s going to be fine.” Grizz’s voice is low but not soft. Will can hear it hit his chest. There’s tension behind it, a tension he doesn’t understand. He can’t help but feel something is going on.

He turns to Allie expectantly, she’ll back him up. The need a plan and they need one now. They have one for if they lose but where’s the plan for if they win. Allie is meticulous, she’s been fine with them not having a plan? “Allie, you’re not fine with-“

“Allie.” It’s all she needs to say to shut him up. His eyes narrow suspiciously at her. She knows he can sense there’s something going on. There are many things going on, some things he’ll never know the answer too. The kiss with Harry flashes across her mind. Some things he will discover in time. Her and Grizz lock eyes for a moment. Gwen rips the scarp bit of paper into little pieces, sensing the tension.

“Okay.” Will slumps slightly, giving up. They sit basking in the tense silence, unsure what to do next. There’s still a few minutes before lunch is up.

Helena sighs, studying the room sullen faces in the room. “Right, let’s go through this once more. It’s almost time.”

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12:30pm. Day of The Trial.

It took Harry surprisingly long to escape Lexie and Campbell. Campbell isn’t pleased with him right now. After being questioned, Campbell had rounded on him during the break. Short and sweet answers are what he’d asked for. Short and sweet. Harry didn’t have to lie, he just had to stop before
the information could be viewed differently. The dog attacked the cat, would make the dog seem guilty. The dog attacked the cat for attacking the mouse, would make it seem like the dog was the defender. Keeping it short and sweet changes the tone of the information. Harry had tried to give more than what Campbell had asked for. He hadn’t been pleased about that. He refused to give him some of his supply. It made Harry anxious for the next few hours. Every cough, sniff, scratch, he could hear echoed in his head. His heart rate thumped against his rib cage. He couldn’t sit still in the seat. He couldn’t concentrate on the room. He just needed a little bit. But Campbell was punishing him.

This behaviour had caused Lexie to become increasingly agitated with him. By the time it was lunch she had forced Campbell to give him something. “I don’t want him floating up in the middle of this. We can’t have him acting like some sort of rabid dog.” Harry couldn’t help but feel amused by that. She wants everyone to think she’s different than Allie, merciful. Maybe in some ways, she is but she’ll happily ruin the lives of others to get her own way. Is she any different than Allie? Allie had at least exhausted every option before ruin others. Lexie just goes to it. Maybe she hadn’t always been like that? Maybe this world made her this way? Harry couldn’t really think much longer on it. The drugs had kicked in, musing over Lexie’s inner demons isn’t the priority right now. The anxiety had rested, the world grew back into focus and he could see Luke. He needs to talk to Luke. He’s more himself now.

Harry watches as Luke chews the side of his thumb. A nasty habit brought about by intense apprehension. Before important games, he’d do it. Before he asked out Helena, he did it. He actually hadn’t done it in a while. Harry had always been surprised by how cool and calm Luke had been throughout everything. He guesses it’s finally catching up to him. Or maybe something else is eating away at him?


Clark coughs near them and Harry understands. He’s being watched, kept guarded. He’s a prisoner just like him. Just like everyone who associates with Campbell. Once Campbell has you, you can’t escape. Well, Harry can’t, maybe Luke can. “You’re needed in the back.”

“I’ve not been told he’s-“ Clark doesn’t get to finish his sentence. Harry’s sunken and gaunt eyes, glare deathly towards Clark. He shrinks a little, moving away from the two of them, backing down. Sometimes looking like Death can have its advantages. Here’s hoping when he’s greeted by him Death, he’ll think of him as a family and be merciful on his sins. “Luke.” Still nothing. “Helena needs you.”

Harry Stumbles back as Luke jumps up, eyes scanning the room. Helena, of course, isn’t here. She’s out in one of the small rooms around the back discussing tactics with her posse. This works in Harry’s favour as Luke, struggling to find the last bit of light in his life, starts striding towards the back. The only bit of privacy Harry will be able to have with him.

Harry lets him peak through the rooms, trying to find Helena for a couple of minutes before placing his hand on his shoulder. Instantly, Luke slouches. His panic posture dissipating. He’d known Helena didn’t need him. She’s never needed him, not really. They both sit on the floor in this corridor, Harry glances between exit and entrance making sure no one comes through. Luke just returns to blankly staring at the wall, however now, tears prick his eyes.
"I wasn’t wrong. Helena needs you.” Luke shakes his head. “It’s true, but she doesn’t need this.”
Harry gestures up and down. “None of us need this.”

“Fuck you, Harry. Do you think you’re any better?” Luke half arses the comeback. His heart isn’t fully in it, but there is still a bit of bite there. It’s a bite Harry had started to feel again during the walks with Kelly, during his kiss with Allie last night. Luke hasn’t completely become a shell yet. This will be the thing to break him.

“No. No, I don’t.” Harry’s matter of fact stare and frank tone cause Luke’s brain to stutter. He’d expected a quip, a taunt or something mean. He did not expect honesty. “I wallow in self-pity, hurt those I care about, think only of myself.” He lists the reasons so casually; Luke can’t help but stare in disbelief. How anyone can value themselves so low that it’s just a part of them, they just accept it, is unbelievable? Yet, is he doing the same? No, no, he’s doing this because this place needs better. That’s what they said, that’s what they agreed. Harry continues, “I do think you can do better; you’re just choosing not to.” He’s wrong. Harry’s wrong. He’s choosing to betray everyone he cares about because he’s trying to do better. Sometimes you have to do bad things to do good. Luke’s disbelief turns to annoyance, his brows knit together, shifting his body slightly away from Harry. Harry purses his lips, mirroring the annoyance that Luke displays, “You wanted more responsibility? You got it. This whole thing hangs on you. It’s your responsibility on which way it goes. In Allie’s favour or Lexie’s favour. It can go well or go…” He holds out his hands pretending to weigh stuff. One hand drastically drops. He can’t outright say to Luke do this. It’s not his place. He’s been forced and manipulated into becoming this shell, Harry can’t continue that. He can, however, point out the severity of this. Luke’s a good man, inside and out. He made a mistake. He still has time to fix it. It’s just he needs to be shown there’s a choice. Right now, Luke feels this is his only way, this is the only way to make things better.

There’s a moment of silence before Luke mumbles, staring at the wall in front of him once more, “What about you? Which way do you swing?”

“Heard you. I only think of myself.” Harry stands, patting Luke lightly on the shoulder. Doing stuff is extremely tiring. He needs a break. He needs food. He holds out his hand towards Luke. He stares at it. “The truth doesn’t matter anymore, not if we all keep on lying. Maybe you can make it matter again. Maybe you can help make this place better.” Luke takes his hand. “Just be honest with them.” Harry reaches the door, turning back to Luke who stands a little helpless. They avoid each other’s eyes, Harry pats the door slightly, unsure if he should say anything more. Quietly, he says “Be honest with yourself,” before heading back out into the chaos.

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13:05pm. Day of The Trial.

No one spoke, no one moved, and no one could breathe as Luke sat in his chair. With the other witnesses, there had always been background chatter, whispers, murmurs. Now, nothing. Even Eden slept quietly against Becca’s chest. She held Sam’s hand, scared.

Row by row, people lean forward, waiting, eager for what is about to come. It’s a wave of quiet movement, disturbing only the air around them. It crashes against the back of those at the front. Allie sits a little straighter, chewing the inside of her lip, eyes wide and pleading towards Luke, begging
her friend one last time. Will stays with his back slouches against the chair, glaring up at Luke, one hand on Allie’s squeezing it tight. A more threatening plea for Luke to tell the truth. The only person not staring at him is Helena. Her fingers dance across her necklaces, twisting it in and out. A blank expression, numb, across her face and eyes trained on the jury. She’s trying hard to disassociate from this part. She doesn’t want to witness this.

Campbell’s chair scraps against the floor of the church. Eyes dart to the sound, a few so engrossed in studying Luke jump in surprise. Becca let’s go of Sam’s hand, stretching her own, readying herself to interpret.

Time slows as each step echoes across the church. Luke can only hear three things; his ragged breath, his speeding heart and the slow clunk of each step. Campbell stops in front of him, smiling. A glass of water is placed in front of him, condensation clinging to the glass. It’s not just Luke that can feel the warmth in here then. He doesn’t reach for the glass. His hands were shaking, he didn’t want anyone to notice. He places them in between his legs, leaning closer to Campbell. Campbell’s grin widens. It makes it seem like he’s trusting Campbell, leaning in was a mistake. He shouldn’t have done that, the jury will think that Campbells right, that Campbells a reasonable man. His eyes flit to the jury, trying desperately to distinguish what they were thinking. He can’t tell anything; he can’t see anything. They’re all blank. The whole room is filled with blank faces. He needs air. Why don’t churches have open windows? Everything is a little out of focus. Nothing is sharp, except for his heart. His heart feels like it’s stabbing him. Dry, his throat is dry. He needs the water now. A shaky hand grasps at the wet glass, forcing it to his lips. The icy cold liquid sliding down the coarse surface of this throat. It hurts.

“Luke.” Campbell’s rough voice glints with glee as he watches the man squirm. He hasn’t seen emotion like that in a while. Maybe he needs to start upping his games with Elle. She’s grown used to their current routine. After today he’ll celebrate with her, he’ll have some fun. “I know this must be rough for you, seeing Helena route for the other team but it’s going to be over soon. I only have two questions I need you to answer, okay?” He nods. “I need verbal confirmation, Luke. We don’t rely on signs here.” Behind him, Campbell hears a slight shuffle and a noise that one could associate with annoyance. He knows exactly who did it.

“Sorry. Yes. That’s fine.” He coughs, clearing his throat as words sat weirdly in his mouth. Stretching his back slightly, he tries to seem comfortable, relaxed, confident but instead projects nerves.

“Question one, did you hear Allie and Will discuss the election?” He’s quick with his words, not allowing Luke to sit and think for a minute. If Luke thought for too long, he might end up changing his mind about things.

“Yes.” He says it before thinking, automatic response. They’d rehearsed it many times. Since it came so easily, it came across as sure, certain.

Campbell turns to the jury but holds out a hand at Luke, “Questions two, did they discuss rigging the election?”

“Yes.” The room erupts into chatter. Those who sit right behind Allie and Will start hurling abuse at them. Betrayal wrecks the faces of the room. Campbell watches the chaos and conflict around him, a smile on his face. He’s won. There’s no way in hell that Grizz could bring this back. No way at all.

“That is all.” He saunters over to his seat, leaning back into it, smug. He’s going to celebrate tonight. Lexie tries to call for order. No one wants to be still now. Everyone is eager to have their go at Allie and Will, eager to hear their punishment. They’d trusted them, they’d loved them, and they’d
betrayed them. Now it is time for their punishment. Even the stony-faced jury shifted in their seats, eager to “discuss” their verdict. No one wanted to carry on. They’d all made up their minds and it was guilty.

Silence falls upon them only when Grizz stands. He moves his seat gently, hardly making a sound, but the room falls dead by his presence. Standing behind his desk, he waits until every last voice has fallen quiet. Eden stirs slightly, sways gently side to side in her seat. She does not want to miss this.

Thoughtfully, Grizz makes his way over to Luke. He’s not as bold as Campbell, not as cocky. He didn’t want to frighten Luke, didn’t want to pressure him before they even got started. Grizz didn’t want to shut him down before he could poke him. He needs a reaction, a break and then falls if he wants to win this. He needs to break one of his best friends. He glances at Helena. There’s a tear rolling down her cheek. Grizz doesn’t think she’s noticed, and if she has, she’s ignoring it. He needs to move swiftly if he doesn’t want to hurt his friends for much longer.

Clearly his throat, he addresses Luke, purposefully ignoring the staring eyes trained on him, “Over half a year ago did you not suggest and help persuade Allie to take up the role of leader or Mayor as we’re calling it now?”

“Yes.” It’s no secret that Allie had been nominated by a select few back then. Over the months, individuals had wondered who had pushed her to take charge and little by little the story came out. At the time, she had been the best option. Luke isn’t so sure now.

“Oh, Um. Hm. One second, unlike Campbell, I have many questions, I just need to figure out which one to ask next.” Grizz counts on his fingers, going through the steps. He’s making Luke wait, keeping him in the hot seat, agitating him. Campbell rolls his eyes, glancing up at Lexie who through gritted teeth addresses him.

“That’s fine, take your time.” Grizz can’t help but show a half smile at her annoyance. If she’s this annoyed now, just wait until her case comes crashing down.

He wanders about a bit watching Luke increasingly shift and fidget, becoming restless. He turns on his heels, facing Allie and Will, asking, “What were you doing yesterday afternoon?”

“What?” Luke’s taken aback. It’s not exactly where he thought the questions would lead. What’s so important about yesterday afternoon?

“What were you doing yesterday afternoon?” Grizz repeats, turning to face Luke. Luke can see something behind his eyes. Then he focuses in on the black eye. Oh. That’s what he wants him to say.

“What were you doing yesterday afternoon?” He’s not being open about questions. He knows if everyone hears how he beat up Grizz, the room won’t be as trusting with his statements. Doubts about his character will start to settle in. He clenches his fists, a stony expression directed at Grizz.

“Okay. Were you by yourself or did you see anyone?” He cocks his head, studying Luke as he questions. Grizz needs to be able to see how tense he is. Right now, he’s keeping his cool, but his leg has started to twitch and Grizz had a sneaky suspicious that under the table his friend’s fists were balled.

“Yes.” Luke grits his teeth. He doesn’t understand why no one is stopping Grizz. This has nothing to do with Allie and Will.

Grizz waits a moment before sighing, “Who?”
“You. You know this?” Luke turns to Lexie, gesturing to her, addressing her “I’m sorry what has this got to do with Allie and-“ However, Grizz cuts him off. Luke screws up his face in response.

“There’s a reason to my questions Luke, I just need you to answer them honestly,” Luke speaks over Grizz, anger starting to rise through him. Grizz is calm and collected. The jury watches closely. Campbell has now leaned forward, the cocky smile disappearing from his face. Grizz continually surprises him. He needs to stop forgetting about Grizz.

“Lexie, I don’t think you should allow it. There is no reason for the incident that happened yesterday to,” He wants to scream shut up at Grizz. He’s trying to talk to Lexie, but he continues to speak over him. Everything had already seemed noisy and right now he’s trying to focus in and keep his head clear. He can’t concentrate on Grizz talking. He needs this over with. Once it’s over he can move on. But he can’t get this over with if Grizz won’t shut up.

“You allowed Campbell to seemingly drift off the case because he deemed it important. I am doing the same. All Luke has to do is answer each question honestly. It’s not difficult. We can finish soon if he just answers my questions.” Grizz keeps his eyes on Luke, watching him squirm and struggle to keep himself under control. His body is tense, and his teeth are gritted. For a split second, he glances at the jury. The poker faces have gone. Emotions displayed on each individual’s face, perfectly telling Grizz exactly what they were thinking. Shock. They can see the anger and annoyance building up inside Luke. A bomb about to explode. It’s a different side to the usually calm and rational leader of The Guard. It’s changing their opinion of him, shifting their trust.

Lexie watches the squabbling boys with disdain. They continue to talk over each other. Luke’s behaviour is clearly changing the opinion of the town which doesn’t work in her favour. Men, boys, are the ruin of this town. It sickened her that she had to work with The Guard after what they’d done to her, but you have to do things you don’t like to win. She needs to shut this down before Luke explodes. She can’t tell Grizz to stop because that’d show favourites and she’s not Allie. She won’t let people think she’s favouring people, even if she is. “Fine, whatever. Just hurry up and get to your point.” Luke gapes at her but she refuses to make eye contact with him. Pathetic little boys, she shouldn’t have put this much trust in men.

Grizz nods and waits for Luke to settle down. He doesn’t want him to completely calm down, that’d ruin his plan. He just needs to make sure he won’t storm out. He pauses, letting the room hang in silence before asking, “How did I get my black eye?”

Luke’s stomach drops. *Fuck Grizz.* He’s done with this. Grizz provoked him, Grizz argued with him, Grizz was the one that picked the fight and yet now he was going to drag his name through the dirt and destroy him, he’s not going to let anyone hear his side, he’s going to manipulate his words. He can’t let this happen. “Grizz…” It’s a warning tone. A tone that doesn’t go amiss from the jury. From his peripheral vision, Grizz can see a few of them raise their eyebrows. Everyone knows the answer, why would he ask about the black eye if it weren’t Luke who gave it to him? They still want to hear him admit it though. They still need to hear him say it.

“How did I get my black eye?” He repeats, waiting for the answer.

“We got into a fight. I hit you but-“ Grizz cuts him off. Luke clenches his fists again, that anger starting the bubble within him.

“Who threw the first punch?” Grizz starts firing off some questions, trying to keep Luke engaged and responsive, keep him on his toes, try and trip him up.

“Me.” Luke is talking through his teeth, if he opens his mouth any more, he knows he’ll explode. Every muscle aches as he stays tense, trying to keep control of himself.
“So you started the fight?” Grizz is facing the jury now, aggravating Luke further. He wants to be staring at him in the eye when answering, not the side or back of him.

“No, you provoked me-” He starts but Grizz cuts him off briefly facing him.

“I asked you a few things, was that provoking?” Luke falters, slumping slightly. He guesses that it’s true in a way. He should have kept a lid on his anger. It’s just with everything that’s weighing on his conscience, he’s been quicker to anger. Maybe this is getting too much for him.

“No but…” He trails off. Retreating into himself. Grizz’s eyes narrow. He can’t let him walk away. If he becomes unresponsive before confessing, then they’ll never win. The jury will zone out, they won’t care. He needs to establish Luke as someone who could lie, who was angry and lied. He needs to get them to see the connection. If Luke won’t confess, he needs everyone to have some doubt about his reliability.

“Did you try and run for Mayor?” Luke shakes his head, dizzy from the drastic change of subject. He can’t keep up with these questions. Especially if Grizz doesn’t let him speak.

“Yes.” Luke is curt with his answers now, at breaking point. He doesn’t want to do this anymore.

“Why did you stop?” A quick snarl goes across Luke’s face. Grizz is sure many didn’t catch it but he did. He’s angry.

“Allie told The Guard that we couldn’t participate because those who enforce the rules cannot make the rules.” There’s a murmur from the crowd and Allie shifts uncomfortably in her seat. It’s a reasonable rule she made up. It’s not fair for those who enforce the rules to also be in charge of them, there needs to be some distance. Lexie complained of a police state with Allie in charge but honestly, if she’d let them have more power then they’d really be in a police state. Sometimes Allie grows frustrated at the quick and short-sighted judgments that everyone has thrown her way. If they all just sat down and thought it through, they would see why she’d done everything she did. Maybe she should have made more of an effort to be transparent.

“Did that make you angry?” Grizz questions. He can tell the room knows the answer. Luke is buzzing with anger. It’s clear it made him angry.

“Yes.”

Grizz turns to the jury. Pausing for a moment, letting them sit on and digest everything they’d just witnessed and heard. A lot happened in an approximately ten-minute time frame. Helena still hasn’t made eye contact with Luke. It hurt. Everything hurt. Grizz studies the jury, making sure each individual make eye contact with him, making sure they were listening. “Luke. The key witness. Reliable and trustworthy. That’s what we’ve all believed. However, this place changes a person. Ambition and power change a person. I mean, let’s take a look at Harry!” Luke glances at Harry who barely reacts to Grizz. “For months he lay in a depression all because the power dynamics had shifted in his life. It took him everything to get out of that. Now, Luke wanted more, he wanted to do more to help us but when Allie, quite rightly, said The Guard cannot be in control of the rules and enforce them, something within him snapped. It’d happen to all of us.” He turns to Luke, striding right up to where he sits. “You lied to everyone.”

“No-“ Luke slams his fist on the table, jolting most in the room. Grizz cuts him off though, not allowing him to explain himself.

“You lied to everyone to hurt Allie.” Grizz continues to talk over Lukes protests. He can see in his friend’s eyes this was just as tiring as it was aggravating. He wants this over with, they both do.
“No, I didn’t.” He’s visibly shaking now, shielding his eyes as Grizz continues to hurl accusations at him. An accusation that is true. He knows they’re true but it wasn’t completely selfish. He’d wanted to help, he wanted to stop Allie before she went too far. It’d started off as an innocent lie made to prevent her from becoming Mayor again.

“You lied to everyone to make sure Allie felt exactly like you did when someone you trusted betrayed you. You lied—” This time it’s Luke that cuts Grizz off.

“I DID IT BECAUSE SHE IS POWER HUNGRY. NOT ME.” For a moment the only sound is the echo of Luke’s roars. Tears fall from his face as he continues, standing to point wildly at Allie. “She needed to be stopped. She’d stop at nothing to hold onto power. This had all been for show. She doesn’t care about us; she wants us to be her puppets. We did so much for her! We do everything for her, and we get nothing!” Grizz doesn’t hesitate before reaching out towards Luke, wishing to comfort his friend. “I lied! I fucking lied! But I didn’t think all of this would happen. I just wanted… I just…” He collapses into his chair, sobbing. Grizz grabs hold of his friend, not saying a word. Luke grips onto him as if it’s the only thing preventing him from sinking into the ground. Grizz is the anchor keeping him in place. The room sits stunned. Helena is finally staring at Luke. Her eyes red and puffy, tears pouring out them too. She’s stuck, stuck in her chair. She wants to run up to him, hold him instead of Grizz, love him but she can’t. She’s stuck, unable to move.

Campbell sneers from his seat. Luke had never been one he thought would break. Put Harry on the stand, yeah, expect this performance but Luke… Luke had disappointed him. He’ll have to deal with the consequences later. There’s no way he’ll let this go unanswered.

Harry is possibly the only individual in the room with a smile on his face. A weight in his chest lifts slightly as he watches Luke cling to Grizz. It’s going to be tough but he knows Luke will crawl his way back up. It’s not too late for him. He may have needed a push from Grizz but he told the truth. Harry knows if it’d been him, he wouldn’t have had the energy to get angry. There wouldn’t have been a point in trying to break him, he’s already broken. Luke may seem broken now but Harry knows this is the beginning of the healing. He’s not broken, not really.


Giving her best sickly-sweet smile, she addresses the jury. “I think now is the best time for a break. If Clark would please—”

“Wait.” Becca stands up. The room turns their attention to her. Protectively shielding holding Eden, she stands a little taller, staring Lexie down. “Luke just admitted he lied. Surely that means this trial is over?” Noise erupts around them as everyone begins talking amongst themselves. Those who still didn’t trust Allie and Will argued with the others that it doesn’t matter if he lied, she’s not someone they want to follow. The other retort back that just because you don’t like someone, doesn’t mean they should be locked up. Campbell advances over to Lexie, hovering over her shoulder like the devil he is. He starts whispering in her ear, but she holds up a hand, his nostrils flare in response. Allie can’t help but think she doesn’t know who she’s dealing with. You don’t cross Campbell.

“Well. That… We can’t just let them go?” Confusion spreads across Becca’s face, unsatisfied with the answer provided. Even the Lexie supporters stared at her with tentative faces. “Oh, don’t look at me like that. Allie and Will aren’t to be trusted; you all know that! We can’t just let them go! So, we’ve had a setback—” People start talking over her. The jury murmur amongst themselves. Lexie can feel the room slipping from her, the support she’d once felt from everyone being chipped away because Luke couldn’t keep his shit together. She continues to try and talk to people, but the voices
of the town grow louder and louder, becoming slightly unbearable. Becca moves from her seat to the back of the room with Sam, ready to make a quick escape if needs be. Harry watches on, happy to let others sort this out. He’d been in charge for a week and quite frankly didn’t like it. Campbell joins Lexie in trying to calm the town, turn them back on side. Grizz tears away from Luke.

Amongst the chaos, Luke’s eyes meet Helena’s. For them, it’s quiet. The room is still, the only people there is them. She stands and makes her way towards him, the pain and anguish that she feels mirrored in his expression. It hurts, it hurts for both of them. Luke moves towards her and the two embrace. It’s not perfect, it’s clumsy as if they don’t know each other. In more than a week they’d gone from inseparable to strangers. Helena can’t wait to know him again. She wants to know him again. It’s the first time, in what feels like forever, that Luke has felt the warmth. He had thought it was the weather making him cold, it’d been more than that. However, having Helena wrapped up in his arms, he finally felt the warmth.

Their quiet moment of peace doesn’t last long as Campbell rips them apart, yelling something at Luke. He can’t hear him, he’s confused at what’s happening. Helena turns around and sees the town in disarray. People screaming across the room at each other, they’re one punch away from a riot. Helena whips around to see Allie nod at Grizz. She doesn’t have a moment to think about it when she sees Luke go to push Campbell. She needs to stop him.

As she places a hand on Luke, a loud, booming voice cuts through everything. “ENOUGH.” Everyone stops. Everything stops. Helena, just like many of the people in this room, turn to face the individual who was able to quieten the town. Who had been able to command them in just one word?

At the top end of the room, right in the middle, a grave expression on his face, Grizz stood. Tall and authoritative, strength projects out of him, rolling over everyone. People begin to sit underneath his gaze. Even Campbell moves back. “Thank you.” To Harry’s bemusement, a few murmur ‘you’re welcome’ back at Grizz. Everyone waits for what is coming next. The room is full of unsure people and they’re all looking to him for guidance.

Lexie turns, glaring at Grizz. “What do you think you’re doing?”

He stares down his nose at her, the disdain obvious. Within a week of her and Harry’s rule, the town had gone from functional to on the verge of a riot. With one quick glance at Allie, he addresses, not just Lexie, but the room.

“I’m taking charge.”

Chapter End Notes

Hi. So there are a few things I need to tell you all.

Until about the end of July, I will be working two jobs. The second job is kind of like paid work experience but it means I don't have much free time at the moment. Due to this, the next chapter will take longer to come out. I am really sorry about this. I always wanted to be able to post frequently but unfortunately, life has gotten in the way. I hope that after this month I'll be able to post more frequently but you never know.

However, whilst I won't be able to post frequently, I will be able to answer any questions about ANYTHING. Whether it's writing-related, fan related, or, I dunno,
recipe related, I will answer your question. I've had a few people ask me things on my 
Tumblr (https://ilikewrite.tumblr.com) and on here so if you want to ask anything, 
please feel free! I love interacting with everyone!

One final thing, I have really enjoyed writing this fic. (Don't worry, it's not over yet) I've never done anything like this, most of my writing is my own ideas and tend to be in script form so this has really challenged me. The feedback has been amazing and helpful and I am so grateful to every single person that has taken the time out to read this. So thank you. Thank you for the kudos and the 10,000+ hits! I never expected it and I'm so grateful.

Thank you, and I hope you enjoy everything that is to come in After.
A New Mayor

Chapter Summary

It's time for a new Mayor.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

8:30pm. A Couple of Nights Before The Trial.

“Allie?”

“I need to talk to you.”

The joy in Grizz’s eyes sparks out. He stares at the vexed face in front of him. Allie doesn’t waste any time and starts climbing up the stairs, moving quietly and quickly as to not alert the joyful people in the living room. Grizz can’t help but see the symbolism from moving from a light and laughter filled room up to the dark and cold upstairs.

He follows her towards the spare room. It’s a cluttered and messy room. Becca dumps everything in here when she doesn’t know where things go. The wardrobe is filled with Sam’s clothes and the surfaces have almost every baby toy imaginable, cards sitting beside them to help them remember who gave what. Becca’s parent’s room still sat empty and untouched. She’s still not ready to move anything in there.

After a few seconds of uncovering the light switch and moving objects giving them space to move, Allie sits on the bed. Grizz nervously fidgets with his sleeve. There’s an agonizing second of silence when Allie opens her mouth.

“I’m gay.” Allie closes her mouth, blinking confused. Grizz gestures at her. “That’s what you were going to ask right? What’s going on with Sam and me? It’s new, a lot has happened, it’s complicated, we’re just going with the flow and-“

“Yeah, no, I wasn’t going to comment on that. I figured.” Allie’s matter of fact tone causes Grizz to be the one now confused. The nerves are gone and now he’s just shocked. He stares at her, mouth opening and shutting like a goldfish. Allie raises one eyebrow, patiently waiting for him to speak.

“You-You figured?” He stutters over his words. Sam hadn’t figured he was gay. No one else had managed to figure it out. Grizz had spent his whole damn life hiding the fact he was gay, pretending to be straight and Allie is telling him she knew?

“I mean, you and Sam weren’t exactly hiding it tonight. Also, you have a hickey.” She points towards where his shirt collar is.
Sure enough, poking out from the side is a small hickey. Grizz tugs at his collar, “I-What?”. It’s actually a lot bigger and there are a few more marks across his body but luckily Allie can’t see those. He’d told Sam to be careful where he put them. He’s fine with people knowing he’s gay but damn, he didn’t want hickeys on show. He knows when he tells Sam he’ll be smug as hell about it. He gets lost in his thoughts. How can he get Sam back? His handcuffs come into mind but they’re still with The Guard. He really wished he’d managed to get those back.

“Grizz.” Allie sticks her foot out, nudging the statue of Grizz. He’d gone completely still, frozen as if the computer inside him had broken down. His eyes flit from side to side and she figures he’s having a conversation with himself. She kicks him. “Grizz! I actually need to talk to you about something really important.” Grizz jumps, holding onto his knee, glaring at him. She rolls her eyes in response, a deadpan stare locked on him. Rubbing his leg with his uninjured hand, he quietens down, staring half annoyed and half expectantly at Allie. What is so urgent? Allie’s face softens and she stares at her hands as she formulates what it is she wants to say in her head. She waves her hands in the air slightly as if trying to conjure the words from there. “Sunday, after the trial, if we win-”

“When we win,” Grizz interjects.

“If we win. I need you to do something.” Grizz frowns as she emphasises the if. However, he doesn’t push the matter, the expression on Allie’s face tells me this is no longer a somewhat light-hearted conversation. This is something that’s been weighing on her mind for a while now.

“Sure, anything. What’s up?” He casually leans against the door, folding his arms an equally serious face plastered on him. Grizz felt like the others should be there. This is clearly an important conversation. He’s not that important. Just in charge of the farm, nothing special and yet Allie has chosen to speak to him at this moment. Is this because they bumped into each other in the corridor? Maybe she’s speaking to everyone individually?

“I don’t think you’ll be so up for it when I say what it is.” She offers him a small smile but the words feel heavy in Grizz’s chest.

“It can’t exactly make my life any more complicated than it already is, can it?” A nervous laugh escapes his lips and Allie’s eyes grow sad. Panic rises through Grizz as he stares at his friend. “Can it? Allie?” She doesn’t speak for a moment, going back to staring at her hands. Grizz stops leaning against the door frame, straightening a questioning look in his eyes. What does she need from him?

“After the trial, if Lexie and Harry lose, you’re going to take charge.” It’s not a question but a statement. She’s not really asking him, more telling him. His stomach drops. No. He’s misheard her, she doesn’t mean it.

“Wh-What?” Another nervous laugh. It’s his go to right now. He’s trying to defuse the tension buzzing between them. However, it falls flat. This isn’t a joke. She’s being serious.

“You’re going to take charge.” Allie’s more confident saying it this time around. Cocking her head, she studies Grizz’s face, trying to figure out what is going through his mind. Panic is going through his mind.

“I can’t.” He takes a step back, waving his hands in front of each other. She’s gone mad. How could she think he of all people could do this?

“You can” Allie isn’t being forceful. She’s not raising her voice, in fact, it’s quite sympathetic. There’s an understanding in her voice, an understanding because she’s been here before. Leadership thrust upon her.
“No, I don’t want to.” She smiles at Grizz as he protests. There’s no point in arguing, she knows he’ll do it. He just needs to come around to the idea.

“That’s why you have to.” Annoyed disbelief spreads across Grizz’s face as he listens to Allie. What does she mean? How does that make him a fit leader? He turns in a circle as if trying to figure out how to leave. Allie waits for him to turn back to face her.

He motions his hands as he paces around the cluttered room, stopping everyone now and then to emphasises his point as he speaks to Allie, “I don’t want it! I barely like leading the small team I have and now you want me to lead the whole town? I barely know what I’m doing half the time-“

“Allie cuts him off, a bemused smile on her face. There’s a slight sound of laughter amongst her words. She truly finds it amusing how little faith Grizz has in himself sometimes.

“Excuse me?” Grizz slumps his shoulders forward in disbelief at Allie. Has she not watched his and Gwen’s conversations? He struggles to keep that girl from meddling half the time! How is meant to deal with a whole town? It’s fine when people are compliant but if they’re all like Gwen, which most are, it’s a bloody nightmare. He just wants to farm.

“You’re a natural at this. People instinctively follow you. You know what you’re doing.” Allie smiles as she says it. It’s a compliment. Grizz knows it’s a compliment but it’s one he doesn’t want. He doesn’t want to be good at it. It’s shit scary having people rely on you. Emily flashes across his mind. He turns away from Allie. Grizz puts every life he’s in charge of on his back. Throughout the whole expedition, he couldn’t sleep, he constantly searched the ground, was vigilant to an obsessive degree. He can’t watch someone die again. He’s watched too many people die. That’s without him being in charge. Could he even stomach it?

“Doesn’t mean I want this.” His voice is low that Allie almost doesn’t catch it. She frowns, slightly annoyed. He forced it on her once upon a time and now he can’t handle it when it’s done to him?

“I didn’t want it.” The sympathy has gone from her voice. When she was grieving they forced her into this position. It’s shit scary but Grizz is better than this. He’s also the only one that could do this. She can’t be pussyfooting about right now. The trial is in less than two days, she needs to make sure this plan is in place and secure.

“But you do now!” He whirls around, arms in the air. Allie doesn’t even react. He rubs his face. “Why can’t you and Will just go-“

Allie cuts him off standing up and going to him now, she grabs him by the shoulders, holding him still. She needs him to listen, needs him to understand why it’s him. Why it’s got to be him. “Because they’ve lost trust in us. They don’t like us anymore. They like you, they trust you.”

Grizz’s face screws up thinking for a second. Allie sees where he’s about to go before he even says the words. She lets of him, raising an eyebrow as he opens his mouth, “Why not Helena?”

“She’s the head of the church. The same rules for The Guard apply to the Church. Did you never watch Game of Thrones?” The laugh is back but Grizz can’t help but feel it has a slightly annoyed tone to it now. She’s right. Allie is usually right and Grizz knew the answer before he said it but he still wants to make his case. He’ll try anything right now. He doesn’t want to face the fact that what Allie is saying may be their only option.

“She’s not the real head of the church though, is she? She could easily take control, people love and respect her-“ He starts to babble and list of the reasons why Helena could be the one in charge and Allie lets him. She needs to let him get this out of his system. This is the fear talking, but she can
already see in his eyes that he knows what he must do. Eventually, he trails off. Allie pats his arm before collapsing back onto the bed.

“Grizz. It’s you.” His head hangs slightly, his uninjured hand rubbing the back of his neck. She continues, “And the fact you don’t want it reinforces why you should be at the top. You wouldn’t be in it for control and power, you’d be in it for us, for everyone.” She pauses, letting it sink in that this isn’t about a favour for her, it’s about the good of the town. It’s about the survival of the town. “Don’t you want what’s best for everyone?”

“That’s all I’ve ever wanted Allie. Don’t use that as a way to manipulate me.” He stares sternly at her. He won’t be manipulated into this. If he does this, it’s because he can’t see any other option. He’s the last resort.

“I didn’t… I was just trying to explain.” His face softens as he realises she wasn’t intentionally trying to manipulate him. She just wanted him to understand the gravity of the situation.

“I know.” He sighs. The sit in silence for a few minutes. Allie glances at him every now and then waiting for his answer. Grizz quickly draws a pro and cons list in his head. In the end, it’s pretty evenly split. There’s always going to be a benefit and there’s always going to be a cost. He can’t just have a simple life here, can he? “Okay. I’ll do it.” Allie beams up at him, jumping to her feet, trying to walk over to him. Grizz holds up a hand, stopping her in her tracks, “But only if I need too. Only if I can’t see any other way. I want what’s best for everyone and if that means I need to take control I will.”

“That’s all I ask.” They embrace. Grizz can practically see a weight lift from Allie’s shoulders and onto him. When they win the trial, he’ll be the new Mayor.

He glances down at the top of Allie’s head, “Allie.”

“Yeah?” She stares up at him, curious.

“It doesn’t mean things will go your way. If I end up taking control, I’ll do things my way. I’m not going to just do what you ask.” They break apart. Grizz tries not to look as grave as he feels. He won’t play favourites. He can’t. If the town is to survive and thrive then he will need to be as unbiased as possible. Allie won’t get special treatment. She won’t be pulling strings behind the scenes. He’ll make the changes he needs to make, regardless of whether she agrees or not.

“I know. That’s why it has to be you.” Allie moves to the door, getting ready to leave the room and re-join the others. Grizz had forgotten about everyone downstairs. How is he meant to return to their happiness when he’s just been given the world to carry? Allie pokes her head back around the corner. “Oh. Please don’t tell anyone, it’ll be best if we keep everyone focused on the trial for now. I don’t want this to add to everyone’s stress.”

“You were a good leader.” Allie’s eyes water slightly as Grizz quietly compliments her. She knows she was good. She hadn’t wanted it. You never want it, not really but it grows on you and she did a damn good job. It just…

“Not good enough.” She smiles, patting the door awkwardly before swiftly disappearing out of sight. Grizz can hear the laughter of everyone echo through the house. He hopes he can keep the laughter.

*
The words hit every single person differently in that room. Most felt it in their bones, felt the words vibrate against them. A few couldn’t quite understand what they are hearing. They stare dumbfounded at everything that’s happening. Then there are those who feel the rage unlock inside them. Their silence is born from the fury wrapping around them. They’re the only ones not to move. Lexie continues to furiously glare up at him. The rest wordlessly sit, staring up at the gaze of someone they’ve known for years. Someone who had never really taken an interest to stand out. Everyone knew Grizz, they knew the jock, the protector, the explorer but the expression upon his face now is someone different. Someone who is equally disappointed and angry.

“You’re what?” Lexie’s words are meant to be dumbfounded but instead come slashing out cutting through the weary awe of the town.

In a calm and collected manner, Grizz returns his gaze to the furious woman. Did she realise how much her anger had already shaped her? The vengeful gaze she holds shows that all anger towards Allie seems to have dissipated, he’s the focus of the tunnel vision now. He keeps his words even and controlled, hoping she’ll back down, “I’m taking charge.”

She scoffs, turns for a second towards the town expecting them to hold the same expression as her. Instead, the sea of eyes gawks at her with a mixture of shame and embarrassment. She rounds on Grizz, the town’s pity fuelling the hatred suddenly ignited inside her, “Like a dictator? You can’t just, just take over!?”

“I would like to—” Grizz tries to explain. He’s not trying to just take over per se, there is a plan, an idea. He doesn’t want to be a dictator. That’s the last thing on his mind. But they need someone to step up, Allie wanted him to step up. Watching the chaos from before he understood why she asked him. There is no other option right now. It has to be him.

“Can’t you see he’s just Allie’s puppet?” She turns back to the crowd, wild-eyed and desperate to regain control. The one thing Lexie has struggled with is the unknown, the lack of control. The need for control has increased greatly since they’d been transported to this place and she thought she’d finally had it. Now the faces before her look towards another. In the space of a few minutes, she’s lost it all. “I—”

“Sit down, Lexie.” It’s firm but not harsh. Lexie is the result of the way people have treated her. He may not like her but that doesn’t mean he can be cruel to her. She has a valid point; it feels like he’s about to start a dictatorship. He can’t become cruel. This position isn’t about an abuse of power, he’s not trying to control everyone, he’s trying to protect them.

Lexie makes her way to a seat off to the side. Campbell hovers on the floor before retreating back to his table. Along with Lexie, he glowers up at Grizz, arms folded, a closed off defensive position. He’ll never get through to him. There’s a moment of quiet, the only sound coming from Eden who has woken up from her nap. Becca and Sam still stand at the back of the pews. Becca bounces but continues to sign for Sam. Grizz is too far away for him to properly read his lips. He steps forward, “I know that this seems like a power grab.” A few people instinctively nod. He smiles. He’d be the same. “I can assure you it is not.” His smile disappears as he walks down the steps, pacing at the front of the pews, making eye contact with as many people as possible. “What you all just displayed
to me is what happens when people try and grab power. I do not want a part in that.” Everyone visibly shrinks in their seats. His gaze is powerful and angry. Guilt washes over them all. “As of right now, we are not a stable society.” A few people tilt their heads as if disagreeing in their head. Grizz stops pacing as if to emphasise his point, “We’re not. It’s a simple fact. We’re burning through resources.” He gestures to the space around him. It’s the afternoon and although the days were getting shorter, they were still long enough that they shouldn’t need the lights. However, they’d kept the lights on. The mass of wall length windows scattered about the church allows enough light in that the lights shouldn’t be on. And yet, they are. Helena bites her lips while Luke rubs her shoulder. The church always had the lights on. She knew about the houses need to limit their electricity supply, but she’d completely forgotten about here.

“And not to mention, we’re crucifying each other purely because one person said this, one person said that. It’s pathetic.” The Guard start to shuffle in their positions, the part they’ve played over the past months dawning on them. Grizz had thought the Dewey incident would have cemented their understanding that this is serious, this life and the job The Guard do is serious. Clark and Jason continued to run it like a joke, a gang. Grizz can see in their eyes something was finally starting to click.

“I am not going to stand back and watch us kill ourselves. That’s what we’re doing currently, that’s how this would end if we carry on this path. You may just think you were screaming and shouting but how close were you all to pushing someone?” One by one people start to glance around the room. The adrenaline finally dropping and the rational parts of their brains analysing the behaviour they just displayed. “Punching someone? Really hurting someone?” A few heads hang in shame, they all knew deep down they’d been one move away from doing some damage. Damage that could have had lasting and horrifying effects. This group of people were a powder keg waiting to blow. So focused on their selfish wants that they had lost sight of the bigger picture. Grizz glances at Allie and Will. They may not want to admit it but at times they had too.

Grizz’s stance softens slightly, his posture opening up taking in the guilt and emotions of those around him. The heads raise and listen, ready and accepting for change. “We’ve been through enough, we shouldn’t be putting ourselves through more. It’s not even just about us anymore. Eden,” The room shifts a Grizz holds out a hand to Becca, Sam and baby Eden. Becca shifts slightly away, wishing for everyone to turn back around. She felt exposed, defenceless with this many people gazing at her, she glares towards Grizz. He could have made the point a different way. Grizz continues, however, undeterred, “a purely innocent child brought into this life, should have the chance to survive. So yes, Lexie,” Grizz turns on his heels to face the heathen. Her nostrils flaring, stream practically blowing out her ears, Lexie sat, a pure pot of anger. Grizz holds his ground. He won’t underestimate her but she shouldn’t expect him to be fearful of her. He’s weary, yes, but there’s she can raise her hackles all she wants. He will not be afraid of her. “I am taking charge, taking charge of this and everyone here. But not forever.”

Turning once more, he surveys the mass before him. He can see the spaces where Emily would have sat, where Dewey would have been. Cassandra wouldn’t have been in the crowd, she’d have been in his place now. Could he really do her job? It’s a bit late for him to question it now. Three people dead. He’s determined there won’t be anymore.

With a serious face on once more, he proposes the real threat they should all be worried about, ”Winter is coming and it’s our greatest danger right now. You’re all oblivious to how harsh winter can be, we don’t know what the weather will be like, what illnesses people may catch. We don’t have our parents to care for us. We’ve been sailing through it believe it or not. These coming months are the real test. Winter is the real test. This winter could be the death of us.” This breaks the silence. Murmurs start to spread around the church. Many had already felt like they’ve been worked to the bone and yet here is Grizz, so commanding and powerful, telling them it’s going to get worse. Allie
had warned them. Allie had been honest about it but no one had listened, not really. Every warning they’d had gone to the back of the town's mind. They’re kids, after all, it didn’t seem real, it didn’t seem like a pressing matter. Yet now they were listening. Whether it’s because of the dropping temperature and holes in their clothes, or because they somehow trusted Grizz more, something had clicked and they were listening. “So I will lead us through the winter and then in the spring, we’ll hold another election. One with rules and regulations. Not something just thrown together in a week.” Allie coughs, her tongue is pressed into her cheek. An unnecessary dig towards her in own personal opinion. Only those around her seem to notice. Grizz fights against apologising. If they think he’s in allegiance with Allie they won’t go for it. He’s friends with Allie but he told her if it comes to it and he has to do this, which it has, then he’s going to do it his way. She’s about to see what his way is. “If we want to go home, we have to survive. We have to grow up. Stop fighting each other and work together. It’s hard, I know, but what does that say about us if we give up as soon as it gets hard? We have to keep pushing forward.” He lets the room hang in silence.

Everything from the day plays over in their minds, the information and speech Grizz has given sinks in. Their eyes gaze up in confidence, accepting him. He can feel the shift in the room. He can feel their choice. However, he needs them to show it. “Does anybody object to me taking charge?”

“Yes.” It is not only Grizz that turns to glare at Lexie but the whole room. It’s only Campbell who doesn’t seem to pay attention to her. His eyes are solely trained on Grizz.

Grizz shuts Lexie down, “Lexie, as much as I appreciate opposition to make me work harder, you are very lucky right now that The Guard hasn’t arrested, you and Harry for setting Allie and Will up.” Lexie goes to speak but slumps back in her seat. She knows now isn’t the time to pick this fight. Plus, without the communities support she’d be unable to gain control over him. Grizz turns his attention back to the town, “Does this community have an issue with me taking charge?” Silence. “No?” No one moves let alone speaks. “Can I have a raise of hands to see who is in favour?” Before he’d even finished his sentence, hands shot up in the air left, right, and centre. Sam and Becca tentatively raise their hands, a worrisome look upon their faces. Grizz’s gut twists. He should have told them about this. He pats his leg, smiling towards everyone. A few faces smile back, everyone else still holding somewhat pensive expressions, “Okay then, first things first, whilst I have you all here and have your attention,” People start to sit straighter, leaning forward making sure to take in everything he’s saying. “Quite frankly, this trial was a farce, designed to ignite hatred and hostility within the community. Whether you support Allie and Will or not, this is not how you go about it. Allie and Will will be released from their custody, all charges dropped.” A few voices rise from the crowds to objects. Will embraces Allie, joy flooding him. Allie glances at Harry over his shoulder. He gives her a small smile, nodding. She embraces Will back.

Grizz holds his hand in the air. The room falls silent. It unsettles him how a simple action as that caused them all to stop. How much power a hand gesture can have, his gesture could have. It didn’t sit right in his gut. He needs to push through, “Second, shared housing is coming back into effect immediately. I’ll allow you all to choose which house you’d prefer to go to. Couples have their own rooms. As I’ve said, resources are finite. This will help prevent a shortage during the hard winter months. Plus, I’ve already heard from most of you that you find the empty houses lonely.” A genuine smile grows on his face as he watches individuals grab their friends instantly, whispering amongst themselves about living together once again. Some seemed disgruntled but no one was outright objecting him so it’s gone better than he thought. He hears Harry shift in his seat, sighing loudly. Grizz might suggest his house stay empty. He’s sure no one would mind. Harry has always wanted his own space, it might keep him happy.

Holding his hand up again for silence. Everyone quickly hushes themselves, waiting for the next thing. What else was he going to say? What rules would he add, if any? There was a new buzz in the room. A buzz that comes with every new leader. It’s a buzz that’s hard to keep around. Grizz hopes he can keep it for as long as possible, keep them happy and alive for as long as he could. “Thirdly,
the council will be made up of representatives from the Guard, a member from the church, a member from the committee of going home, and someone nominated by me. This will be the Inner Council.” Interest is sparked throughout the room. It’s different than what they’ve heard before. He continues before he has to call for silence again. “Then we will have the Greater Council. This will be made up of a representative from each job. We’ll meet every fortnight to discuss the issue and plans. During this, there will also be an open forum for other grievances from around the town.” Grizz is pleasantly surprised by the continued silence. Either they’re extremely unhappy or waiting for more. Eden starts to gurn at the back of the church and he takes that as a cue to wrap up. He has more he wishes to discuss with the town but that can wait. It has been a long and eventful day. They do not need to go through everything now. Even as he thinks about wrapping up this impromptu meeting, the tiredness creeps into his bones. However, he can’t give into it, there are still things he needs to do even after he’s dismissed, everyone. “I realise this is a lot to take in. I do not expect to have the representative right now. Whichever job you are in now, is the job you can represent. You’ll be staying in that job permanently if you go ahead with it. Tomorrow there will be an introductory meeting. 9am. I wish to see the chosen people then. For now, I think we have all gone through enough today. I suggest we all go home, get some rest. Thank you.” He strides over to the desk where Allie and Will sit. Helena casually walks over. One by one people start to talk amongst themselves but no one moves. They all continue to watch him out the corner of his eye. Gwen hands over a notebook to Grizz casually and he hastily places it under his arm, gathering some of his papers from today. Helena goes to speak but struggles to find words. She thinks she could be in shock, unsure of what exactly just happened and what is going on. Will is whispering in a hushed tone at Allie but she ignores him, instead, giving a subtle nod towards Grizz. Will’s brows furrow as she watches the exchange. Happy with his freedom but unsure what has been planned behind his back.

“That is a pretty well thought out plan for a reluctant leader.” Campbell's slimy voice slips into his ear as he sneaks up behind him. Grizz straightens, papers gathered in his arms. Gwen watches the exchange, ready to jump in if needed.

“I wouldn’t push it, Campbell,” Campbell raises his eyes in surprise. The soft boy he’d always taken Grizz to be seemed to have been replaced by a darker presence. The weight of the world changes a person. He’s clearly been feeling this weight for days, that speech wasn’t just taken out of thin air. They’d planned this. Little soft boy Grizz, what have you gotten yourself into? Campbell continues to smile cockily at him, this is a new challenge. He likes challenges. Grizz’s grave tone and expression stay on his face as he continues, “I haven’t forgotten about your involvement in all of this.” Campbell pats him on the back and walks away. Lexie follows after him.

Grizz relaxes a little and glances around the room searching for specific people. He points at Gwen first, “Gwen. Helena. Gordie and Clark. With me.” He doesn’t wait long for them as he starts walking out of the church. Gwen hastily gathers her things; she’d been expecting him to do this but still wasn’t ready. Helena reluctantly leaves Luke in the care of a disgruntled Allie and Will. She knows they’re not happy with him, but it’ll be good for them to spend some time together, clear the air. Gordie is confused and follows. Kelly stops him briefly handing him his bag and jacket, two things he needs and two things he’d almost forgotten. Clark trails behind Gwen. Both sneaking glares at one another. Gwen can’t believe he’s chosen, Clark. Out of everyone why him!? As soon as she gets the chance, she’s going to yell at Grizz. Could have warned her first at least.

They exit the church. Grizz sees Becca and Sam standing out the front, waiting. His steps falter when he sees their expressions. Irritated and full of worry. His guttightens again. Turning to his group, “Gwen can you take everyone ahead, there’s something I need to do.” Gwen glances between the three of them before nodding and directing everyone in the direction of Grizz’s house. He thought it best not to continue operations at Allie’s house. Might be a bit too close to home.

Sam’s heart beats fast as Grizz walks over to them. He still radiates the power he’d held in the
church. Sam had never seen him like that before. It wasn’t a bad thing, Sam liked it, he feels safe with Grizz and the town will feel that way too. However, this doesn’t mean he’s not insanely worried and slightly hurt. Hurt that he wasn't trusted with this information. Worried about what could happen to him. Things had gone so wrong for Allie and Will so quickly; he doesn’t want that to happen to Grizz. They all need Grizz, he needs Grizz.

Grizz shoves his hands into his pockets, coyly staring at the both of them. Usually, he’d struggle to make eye contact, but Sam needs to read his lips. He really can’t wait until he’s able to sign. During these kinds of situations, eye contact makes him feel incredibly uncomfortable. “Hey. Can I come over tonight? It might be late… I-I’m sorry for not-“ His voice cracks as Sam doesn’t even respond to him. He doesn’t change his expression, he just continues to stare intensely at him. Becca places her arm on Grizz’s shoulder as he hangs his head.

“It’s okay, Jon Snow. We’ll see you later.” He smiles at her, rolling his eyes slightly. Jon Snow. Is his reluctance that obvious to them? He hopes the town doesn’t notice. They need faith that He’s up to this.

They turn to head back home when Grizz pulls Sam back around. “Hey. See you soon okay?” A wry smile appears on Grizz’s face and Sam’s expression soften slightly. The annoyance disappearing but the worry is still there. Grizz can see it. He holds Sam’s hand pulling him into an embrace, his lips brushing the top of his head. Sam doesn’t want to let go. Becca coughs. They break apart.

Grizz peeks at Eden, wiggling a finger at her to say goodbye, hugging Becca and then turns to leave. Just before he heads, Sam signs, “See you soon.”

Grizz hadn’t particularly felt the cold. There had always been a chill recently, but it hadn’t bothered him. Walking away from Sam and his family however, he couldn’t help but feel the full force of it creeping across his body. Winter’s here. He scoffs as he realises, he really is turning into Jon Snow. That nickname better not stick.

Chapter End Notes

Hi Guys,

Thank you for all your lovely messages and understanding about infrequent updates! I'm still on the work experience and it's going really well, I'm enjoying it a lot. There have been boring bits as any job has but ultimately a lot of fun.

I've managed to find some time to write this chapter. I'm not sure when the next one will be out but I hope you've enjoyed this one!

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!