### Give Me Hell

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**Give Me Hell**

by [lilpeachy](http://archiveofourown.org/users/lilpeachy)
Summary

CHAPTERS ONE THROUGH TWENTY-FIVE ARE BACK.

Notes

Hi everyone o3o.

Before you start reading this poop, please -for the love of everything holy- keep in mind that English is not my native language so, if you find any mistakes -and I'm pretty sure you will?- don't be rude or belittle me, please, just correct me so that I can fix it and improve my writing, pretty please.

Just don't be rude, please.

Much love to all of you lil cupcakes.

IMPORTANT: There are mentions of abuse, rape and self-harm in the story, please, do know that I do under no circumstances mean to glorify, romanticize and/or to sexualize these things.

Those are things that I have experienced first hand and it's nothing I would ever wish upon another soul or glorify let me be really clear on this.

And if you're going through any kind of abuse or have suicidal tendencies and/or thoughts please, talk to someone about it, there's always someone out there ready and willing to help and listen to you darling.

Stay safe, I love you.
TRIGGER WARNING FOR SELF-HARM. PLEASE PROCEED WITH CAUTION, LOVES. IF YOU NEED TO TALK, I'M ALWAYS AVAILABLE AND HAPPY TO BE HERE.

YAY HERE'S THE UPDATED VERSION OF THE VERY FIRST CHAPTER OF ANYTHING I'VE EVER WRITTEN.
I'm super excited to re-work on this story and I hope you guys have a good time re-reading it (if you can be bothered that is, which, i don't blame ya if you don't wanna cos, let's be honest; cringe.)

Again, I did not change the plot or anything important, just rephrased some things and smoothed some things over that I had a hard time with the first time around. This is by no means a masterpiece, FAR FROM IT, but it's my baby -my disgusting, cringy baby- and I don't want to just leave it.

ANYWAY! Enjoy (?) I hope.

[UPDATED MAY 21, 2019]

JUST A DISCLAIMER; I've literally re-written the first three chapters in one day and I can't concentrate anymore for the life of me SO THERE'S PROBABLY HORRIFIC THINGS IN THERE THAT I'LL CRY ABOUT LATER BUT I WILL GO BACK TO IT SOON TO GET RID OF THEM, PROMISE. SORRY IF IT MAKES FOR A ROUGH READ.

Monday, 9th January 2017:

5:18 PM //

Your hands are shaking, every inch of skin not covered by clothing is now tainted a crimson red as you stay kneeling in the middle of limp, lifeless bodies. You keep your head down, chin tugged against your chest, as you try to get a little air back into your lungs.

Screwing your eyes shut, you nervously knead into the soft, giving flesh just above your knees with the tips of your fingers, the sound of your nails scratching on denim blending in with the white noise buzzing in your ears like there's a goddamn bee-hive in your head.

For the first time in years, the smell of blood and rotten flesh gets to you and you find yourself lurching up and forward, catching yourself on your forearms as you dry-heave and bile burns its way out of your stomach, up your throat and out of your mouth to land on the wooden floor below. Tears burn your eyes and make your vision fuzzy as you take big, shaky gulps of air in-between
heaves which only serve to send you into a coughing fit.

With a shaky sigh, you let your body roll to the side and land on its back, your head barely a few centimeters away from where you've just emptied the pathetic content of your stomach, but you can't be bothered to be put off.

Your entire body is shaking with exhaustion and left-over adrenaline, your eyes puffy and your face tear-streaked, your nose is running, and your throat feels raw. You're a mess.

You're finally in the clear after hours and hours of fighting off the dead in this small, lost in the middle of nowhere, church. Huffing, you push up on your elbows, your face twisted in a grimace as you do.

"The hell're you looking at?" You grumpily ask the huge statue standing tall in the small church before sighing deeply and pushing yourself back up on your feet only to go and slump down on one of the many wooden benches filling the place.

This is just another part of your "routine". You're used to this, all of it; the blood covering your hands, your clothes soaking in it, your trustworthy bow and arrows in your bag, emergency-ax hanging from a belt-loop on your jeans, and your bloody butterfly knife in your hand, knuckles white around the body of the weapon.

You're a lone survivor, you've been with a few groups before but it never worked out, you'd either get scared of losing the people you were with and leave, or you'd actually stick around and just watch it happen anyway. Hell, you always wonder how you've made it that far, how did you succeed where your friends failed and payed one hell of a price for it?

"Alright, y/n, get it together. You get what you need and get the hell out of dodge before more of 'em show up," you instruct to yourself in a whisper, trying to get a little motivation going.

You slowly stand with a pained groan, your body protesting your early activities. You never take some time off just to see, let alone take care of, just how much damages have been done to your body over the years, and you sure as shit are paying the price for it.

"Okay… Okay, first thing first… Search the bodies." You hate doing this, you hate looting bodies, but you know it's a necessity.

You've seen a lot of bad things, really bad things, but your humanity has yet to leave you, and it seems like it's not going anywhere anytime soon which both puts you at ease and angers you at times.

Now, don't get twisted, you're human; you're vulnerable, naive and ridiculously shy around people but you are far from weak. Many people make the mistake to believe otherwise.
A good fifteen minutes later, you're all done and you're pretty happy with the things that you're putting in your backpack; a bunch of candy bars, two lighters and you even found a comic-book in one of the dead survivors' backpack along with an old GameBoy.

“Man… That's so cool,” you whisper with a small smile, looking down at the huge grey box in your hand, feeling a little giddy with your new find.

you don’t need that, put it back.

Your smile fades and you quickly pull yourself together before throwing the console in your backpack, ignoring the voice in your head, and closing it before getting back up to start looking around the place. Hell, you did not almost die to get out of here empty handed.

“Nope,” you mutter to yourself, but quickly get frustrated as you look around and realize that the only useful things you'll find today are going to be the ones you've found on the dead.

With a defeated sigh, you grab the bible sitting next to you on the alter, shove it in your backpack, and walk out of the church, not bothering to close the doors behind you, frustrated and irritated.

“This is such bullcrap,” you mumble angrily under your breath.

As you get closer to the woods surrounding the area, you start hearing noises and you know better than to stick around but you freeze on the spot when you hear distinctively different sets of footsteps going around.

no way these are walkers...

Your body and mind go on full alert and, without thinking, you quickly climb on a nearby tree going as high as your weakening body will allow you to get to before, out of breath, you come to a stop and straddle a thick branch, pushing your legs up and placing your backpack between your chest and thighs, holding it close to you, your breathing sharp and frantic.

“Oh crapidoo… That’s not even a word… Oh my god, shut up, shut up,” you shakily whisper into your bag as you hear whistles going around in the woods, the noises echoing all over the forest giving you the eeriest of feelings.

Even though you're seriously high-up on the tree and clearly out of sight, you can't help but shake and screw your eyes shut like the scared child you used to be. There's a knot forming in your stomach and your throat is getting tight, keeping you from properly drawing breath which only makes your panic grow stronger and send your body and brain into overdrive which you kinda don’t need right at this moment.

“What d'you find?” You hear a man bark, clearly annoyed.

“Someone came through, dunno when but sure as shit did. There's a bunch of rotter’s down in this shit church, a few fresh bloody footprints, but no signs of anyone so far,” another man reports, clearly annoyed as well.

great, angry strangers is what we love and need…
“Fucking- Shit… C'mon then, get y'all useless asses back in the damn trucks! It's gon' get dark out.”

You catch a glimpse of the scene and it scares you even more than you already were when you realize that there's at least thirteen men right below you, right below the tree you thought you'd find safety on, and a single tear of panic escapes you.

But, at least, you can put a face, even if you can't see every single detail, on the scruffy, kind of angry sounding voice echoing carelessly through the woods. He's a white man, probably in his forties, pretty damn tall, slightly balding and he’s wearing a mustache you’re not sure how you feel about.

guess that’s a look...

You see him look around as all the men around him obediently get back to their trucks which, if you stretch your neck enough, you can see the roofs of two of them sitting on the road just outside the forest.

“What the hell am I supposed to tell Negan? Hey boss, someone's out there but we couldn't locate the li'l shit?”

Negan? who the hell is Negan? and who's he calling a “li'l shit”? rude much mustache man??

Still mumbling to himself, the man finally leaves, and you wait until you can't hear the trucks on the road anymore before you finally allow yourself to relax a little bit.

You dry your tears with the backs of your shaking hands and carefully climb off the tall tree, letting out a small, shaky sigh when your feet finally touch the forest ground again though you have to lean against the tree for support because your legs are shaking like leaves in high wind and you don’t really trust them to carry you right now.

After a few seconds, you finally start to walk back towards the road, carefully sticking your head out to check if the coast is clear and, when you feel it's safe enough, you slowly come out just to go and kneel on the ground to touch the thick tracks the tires left in the dust.

You can't quite put your finger on why, but you have a really bad feeling about those men, they didn't seem too friendly to you. They all seemed armed and they clearly had other people waiting on them, like that Negan-man the creepy mustached dude mentioned. He called him “boss” which kinda, just slightly, brings you to assume that he may, maybe, just maybe, be the leader of this group of men... You're just spittalling though.

man, i’m about getting sick’n’tired of people with a god complex...
With a sigh and a shake of your head, you slowly get back up to your full height. “Alrighty, guess it's time to go.”

go where...?

Where? That's also a part of your daily routine; finding your “where” every single night. It's tough living out here in the open twenty-four-seven but you make do, you always do; always have, always will.

You decide to head back to the small church, careful not to step on any corps lying around before locking yourself up in a small room at the very back of the place.

Once inside, you push the heavy wooden desk sitting in the middle of the room against the door and, completely out of breath, let yourself fall on the very small bed in the far left corner.

“What a crappy day, my dude,” you softly sigh out before closing your eyes, silently wishing for some sleep tonight. A full hour would be good.

10th January;

2:15 AM //

“ […] you little bitch […] stop right now or I swear to fucking God I’ll cut your goddamn throat wide open […] shut up! […] I already told you that's the way it is […] stop fucking fighting me, just take it like the useless piece of shit are! […] Stop fighting me! ”

Your eyes snap open, tears already spilling out of them like water out of a broken sink. Biting down your lips, you bury your head in the flat pillow below, your body shaking as you sob out and tears stream down your face to be soaked into the fabric beneath your head, wetting your face with the salty liquid.

Your lungs are uncomfortably fluttering, your heart feeling like it's about to beat out of your chest, and it seems like the room is closing-in on you. You start to panic, and everything goes black until, all too suddenly, everything snaps back to its normal state.

In what seems like the blink of an eye; the walls stop moving, your ears stop ringing, the tears stop pouring, and you feel the sharp pain in your left forearm and new waves of tears come rolling right through you.

“No. No, no, no, no, please, no,” you beg and panic as your sobbing gets out of control.

Your forearm is covered in blood, your blood, the whole room smells of it. Messy, deep cuts are carved into your flesh. Your right hand is shaking, and your fingers are weakly holding the sharp
razor blade responsible for the cuts.

*it's okay, you know it happens. it's okay.*

You hate to admit it but; you feel calmer now, almost peaceful. Your night-terror has been put back in the dark corner of your mind you let all your fears linger.

With a shaky breath, you look down at your arm and grab your untouched wrist firmly before reaching for your backpack to get some gauze and antiseptic out of it to try and patch yourself up as best as you can giving the circumstances.

Once you’re done dressing your wounds, you let your body flop back on the mattress until your back hits the hard, rough wall the bed is pushed up against, since it's lacking a headboard, and let your eyes close just for them to be forced back open by loud banging on the door of the small office you’ve found refuge in.

Your instincts take over and, before you know it, you're grabbing your backpack, zipping it up so it’s ready to go, and get a tight grip on the emergency-ax hanging by your right hip to pull it out of the denim loop it’s tugged in, getting ready to fight your way out.

You take a step back, waiting for the door to give out and for the desk holding it to be pushed away by the walkers behind by, bracing yourself. You can hear them groaning and scratching at the door but, before you can raise your weapon and make a move, the plank of wood you took a step back on gives out on one side, swallowing your foot in a tight, sharp hole.

“What the hell?!” You cry out in pain as your left calf sinks into the hole in the wooden floor, your foot touching the ground below the church, which is covered by grass and dirt, and you can feel blood soaking the leg of your jeans, a dead giveaway that you’ve successfully injured yourself. That, and the mean throbbing in your calf.

*great, just great...*

The office's door starts to shake more and more so you decide to just “do with what you've been given”. You grab the broken, or already taken out of place on purpose, fucked if you know, piece of wood and finish to tear it off the floor expanding the hole to allow you to now slip out of the room easily.

*okay.. so, you're under a big ass church, nothing scary right? just casually crawling underneath a fucking building... that's cool, not creepy at all... not a chance this thing is gonna collapse on our ass, right? Just... casually crawling underneath a fucking church in the middle of the night... that's cool.*

You shake as your claustrophobia acts up and gives you a hard time to move but you still manage to reach back inside and grab the wooden plank you tore off to put it back in place as best as you can, making sure nothing will end up crawling after you in the tight space, before turning on your belly to find yourself face to face with the hard ground.

“Okay, I take it back, this isn't just a crappy day, it's an award winning crappy day,” you bitterly mutter as you crawl beneath the church's floor and, when you finally see the end of it; it's only to
be greeted by muffled groans and gun shots.

You freeze in your movements as walkers start falling lifeless on the ground right in front of you, dead and limp, milky-white eyes looking right at you, and you feel tears filling your own once again today as a pair of brown-ish combat boots make their way towards you.

You want to move away but you're completely stuck there, you can't bring yourself to move, your breath is caught in your throat and, slowly, the person in the pair of boots kneels and brings himself to the ground looking at you with an amused smile on his face, you know you've seen him before but you can recall when.

“Well, what do we have here?” That fucking voice... “It's quite a situation you're in, huh, darlin’?” He chuckles, his breath showing in the cold air of the night, and you're still right where you've stopped a few seconds ago, your body shaking and your eyes watering so more.

“I-I don't ha-have an-anything. Please leave,” you try, your voice shaky and barely above a whisper.

Okay, not the best first impression...

“Yeeah, nah, sorry pretty thing but I just can't do that. Now, how 'bout you come out here, so I don't have to drag you to me, huh? How 'bout it? C'mon, be a dear for me, yeah?” He's amused by the whole thing and it pisses you off and upsets you beyond belief.

Does he really think you're just going to do whatever he wants? Hell no.

Well, you believed for a solid minute before his giant hand wrapped itself around your wounded forearm, making you cry out in pain, and making blood pour out of your fresh, still very much wide-open, wounds, just to drag you out of your small hiding spot, which you immediately find way more inviting now that you've been forced out of it.

You're pushed up onto your feet only to end up facing the tall mustached man you've spotted in the woods hours ago.

“Well, I'll be damned! If you aren't the prettiest li'l shit there is! Damn, darlin', lookatcha!” prettiest little shit? how does that even sound like anything remotely close to a compliment to anyone?

His words make you sick and you feel like crawling into a tight ball, but you force yourself to lift your head up just to see a whole bunch of other dudes standing right behind him, all grinning like psychos, armed from head to toe, and you're slightly blinded by the lights coming from the cars parked all over the place.

You take a few steps back, at least you try to, but electricity shoots through your left leg as it gives out making you fall at the man's feet, the open wounds in your calf smarting and making you whimper in pain.

“Shit, that looks like it hurts like a bitch, don't it, sweetheart?” The man mocks and you feel your
jaw tick, exhausted and out of patience to deal with some cocky douchebag.

“Stop with the pet names. You wanna kill me? Go ahead; try me.”

“Wow! She talks! And what a fucking mouth you got on you, darlin’,” he drawls out the last word and you impulsively pull yourself up just enough to punch him in the face, fucking up your knuckles in the process.

worth it.

“HEY!” A man barks from the back coming towards you, making you jump, and you try, you really do, to put some distance between the two of you while you eye the man you’ve just punched. He's down on one knee, the blow made him lose his balance, holding his now busted and bleeding jawbone.

You take a good look at the other man still coming closer and closer to you; he's blonde and… Shit, what the hell happened to his face? It looks seriously burned on one side and it fascinates and grosses you out at the same time, so much so that you actually stop walking away from him and let him come to you and, once he's close enough, he immediately invades your personal space.

“C'mere you li'l shit,” he grits out as he pulls you close to him, your body touching his, making you flinch, but he seems unfazed as he leans in real close until his mouth is at your right ear. “Do not make me hurt you, it'll be okay, just do as you're fucking told, princess.”

ugh! what's with the pet names! it's creepy.

And, maybe it's because of the fact that he's so damn close to you and it makes you uncomfortable as fuck and you're willing do to whatever it takes for him to step back but, when he harshly grabs your forearm, you let him drag you to his group of friends only to end up being forced down on your knees.

okay, don’t cry, don’t cry...

The man you've punched mere seconds ago comes back into view, crouching in front of you and smiling as blood slowly drips from his fresh wound. You gotta admit that you feel some sense of pride when you eye the bloody mess you’ve made of his jaw. People don’t know until they do.

“Oh, you're gonna get in some serious shit now, darlin’,” he explains with a twisted grin on his face, snapping you out of your contemplation.

The man gets back up and strolls towards the rusty and bloody RV parked right in front of you to knock twice on its door. “Let's meet the man,” he announces, his voice smug as the grin he’s wearing, and the door swings open, a tall figure filling the frame.

dramatic much?

The aforementioned man finally comes into view and your breath gets caught in your throat as he slowly walks to you. He's tall, lean but clearly somewhat built under his clothes. He's wearing a black leather jacket, dark pants and a red scarf is hugging his neck, his dark hair are slicked back
and he’s ever-so-casually swinging a barbed-wire covered baseball bat around before settling it on his broad shoulder.

Your body is shaking again and you’re not too proud to admit that you're scared shitless. You're surrounded by a bunch of creepy dudes at night in the middle of nowhere, and it seems like their dad just came by to say hi.

“Holy fuckin’ shit! You guys! Would ya look at that fuckin' face.” The man’s voice booms and echoes all around the otherwise silent night.

“Damn, now this I really fucking like! Now that's,” he points at you with the head of his bat, making you shift uncomfortably on your knees, “the kind of girl you just don't find anymore, and she’s all mine, too, huh.”

no thank you.

The stranger kneels in front of you, looking straight into your eyes, his bat making contact with your chin and you can feel the wire biting into your skin and a few droplets of blood sipping from your flesh.

Tears involuntarily slip out of your eyes yet again and your body starts to shake with fatigue and terror-induced-adrenaline. “Aw, don't cry, baby doll,” the leader of the group coos at you with a smirk tugging at the corner of his mouth.

“Simon, how about you tell me why the fuck your jaw’s all fucked up? I got a feeling this li’l angel might have somethin’ to do with it.” His smirk slowly falters as he waits for an answer, still looking right at you, clearly waiting for you to look back at him, which you don't. Your eyes have firmly locked-on to the ground and that won’t change so long as you’ll have a say in it.

“Well, this pretty li’l thing here seems to be a bit of a troublemaker, boss,” you almost scoff at that. Almost.

“She was underneath the damn church, looking like a scared, lost li’l puppy, and she got a little grumpy on me when I got her out of her hole.” This time, you do scoff and clench your jaw as he compares you to a damn puppy, and hearing the smile in his voice only serves to agitate you even further.

You hear the man in front you chuckle low and that's a dangerous sound if ever you've heard one.

“Shit! I like my girls with some fight in them, darlin', but,” he harshly grabs your face with a glove covered hand to force you to look up at him, making you wince in pain at his unnecessarily tight grip, “I can't let you punch the shit out of one of my men and let it go unpunished. You understand that, right, baby doll?”

“I- I don't- He-” You curse yourself for not being able to form a damn sentence in front of those men knowing fully well that they're getting off on you being so afraid and vulnerable in front of them.

“Now, kitten, no need to be nervous, even though I do understand why you would be. I mean, shit, that's a lot o'people around you and you have absolutely nowhere to fuckin’ run to, but! No one’s
gonna hurt ya as long as you're good. Now, are you gonna be a good girl for me or not?"

“Y-yes,” you cave with a whisper, raking your brain to try and recall the last time you’ve felt so humiliated and small.

“Yes what, sweetcheeks?”

“I-I'll behave.” The chuckle the man in front of you lets out makes your nose scrunch-up in embarrassment. You know that he’s amused with how easily you’ve given-in, but the current situation is that you’re injured, on your knees and surrounded by clearly ill intended and heavily armed men.

Your brain cannot possibly come up with a good ending for this scenario so you’re just trying to keep some semblance of control on the situation by acquiescing in ways you hope will keep you from too much harm.

“Nice!” You try to conceal the flinch your body gives at the sudden boom of the stranger’s voice but you’re pretty sure it’s been spotted. Oddly enough, you’re not too sure you care. “Now that's progress! That's the kind of shit that makes my dick twitch in my pants, y'know?”

You don’t think you’ve ever legitimately prayed for the ground to actually break beneath you and let you fall into the abyss until just now.

“Okay, now! Time for a little talk, doll. First things first; d’you have the smallest of clues as to who the hell I am?” Yes, of course you do. You've put two and two together the moment he’s stepped into view; he's the man that Simon-guy referred to as his “boss”.

“You're Negan,” you answer, your voice low and a little raw from non-use.

“Girl, I'm getting more and more into you with each passing second,” he praises with a smug smirk and gets back up to his full length before pacing around in long strolls in front of you.

“I, indeed, am Negan, darlin', and, from now on; everything you own is mine…” He pauses and points at you with the end of his bat which is covered in dried blood and the sight makes you recoil a little. “And so are you, baby doll.”

It's so cold outside, you're shaking, your head is spinning, and you feel like you're about to pass out. Your body aches and begs for some care as the tears filling your eyes once again threaten to roll down your face.

You feel lost, alone, and scared and you don't even have time to process what's happening to you as your brain shuts down to cool you off. Everything goes to black and you feel yourself slipping away to fall on the cold hard ground beneath you, not being able to keep yourself up anymore.
Tuesday, 10th January;

6:15 AM //

Your lids flutter open, narrowing in protest against the light hitting your pupils and shrinking them in a flash. Still in the fog, you reach your hands out to rub at your temples and work small, circular motions on the skin, trying to fight off the dull throbbing in your skull.

Carefully opening your eyes, you blink a couple times as they get used to the artificial light. Everything is a big mess of blurry figures and white dots for the first seconds until it finally all starts to take form and you're able to take your surroundings in.

You frown against the sensitivity in your eyes as you slowly push up on your hands, realizing as they sink into something soft, that you're lying on a bed. You move your body to sit and find yourself covered by a thick and slightly weighted blanket up to where it has bunched up at your waist when you've sat up.

where the hell...

You quickly notice the soreness in your entire body and look down with a frown when you feel something on your skin and find your left forearm completely wrapped up in medical band, and you grimace at the sharp sting briefly shooting through the limb like it’s letting you know just how bad you’ve hurt it now that it finally has your attention. There’s also an I.V placed on the back of your left hand, and you get a little pang of anxiety because you don’t know what’s in there.

Now that your view has cleared out, you can see that you're in a small cabin with medical equipment and the light that seemed so blinding mere seconds ago is coming from a small desk lamp sitting on a table on the far side of the room.

The walls are painted a plain eggshell-white and there's only a few little decorations that brighten the room up the smallest bit.
Scanning your new environment for a way out, you find a single window to your left, which is covered by yellow-ish curtains, thin enough to let the last bit of moonlight sip through, but not so much that you can clearly see through them, and there's two doors in the room; one on the wall to your left which you assume leads outside of what you now realize might be one of those small, individual medical bays the army had installed when the outbreak first started, and the other is to your right. It's closed so you can't see where it goes to; probably a supply closet or toilets if you had to guess.

A gentle knock on the door to your left makes your right hand twitch and reach under the covers for your butterfly-knife which you quickly come to realize you’ve been stripped of, but it seems your hand has a mind of its own and keeps on searching for it anyway.

Your jeans are also missing and your heart swells with adrenaline, thumping in your ears as you look at the door the knock came from like a literal demon might come bursting through it at any second, hating how vulnerable you’re feeling.

The door slowly creaks open and a head pops out from behind it, the smile the stranger gives is soft and hesitant, the furthest thing from malicious really, but your hands still claw at the bed covers with a white-knuckled grip, the flimsy fabric about ready to tear.

Carefully stepping in, the man stays next to the door as he introduces himself to you. “Hi, I'm doctor Carson,” his voice gentle, like he's talking to a wild, cornered animal ready to pounce. “I took care of you last night; you probably don't remember me... Or anything, really. You were in really bad shape when you got there... Do you have any recollection of that?”

You blankly stare at the stranger with a frown, your nails now digging into the soft mattress beneath you as memories of the day before come running back with a vengeance. The sharp pain coursing through your body, the tears you've shed, the fear eating you alive, the cold air of the night biting into your skin, those fucking creeps in the woods...

You jump when the doctor closes the door and carefully makes his way towards you but stops at the foot of the bed when you flinch and push yourself up against the headboard, knowing that's his cue to stop moving and not wanting to push when it's clear he's already too close for comfort if the look in your eyes is any indication and he knows better than to ignore or bypass it.

“It's okay, I promise,” he tries. You don't believe him. “You're at Hilltop, we're a small community. Negan brought you to me really late in the night, as I've said, you've lost a lot of blood and your body is suffering from serious injuries.”

“Negan?” You absolutely hate how panicked and small your voice just came out. “Where's he? Is he still here?” Your heart feels like it's tiptoeing on the edge of a knife as word-vomit leaves your mouth.

“Is he gonna come back? I-I don't want him to come back, I don't- I can't!” Panic begins to wash over you, and you feel your heartbeat getting out of control, your breathing quickening worryingly so.

“Honey, listen to me,” the doctor tries, keeping his voice soft, and this time, you don't flinch when
he carefully steps closer to you until he's standing by your left side, “no-one’s here to hurt you… Do you… Do you mind giving me your name? Mine's Harlan, most people around here just call me Doc, though.”

“I... Y/n, my name's y/n,” you whisper with a frown, nodding your head as if you need to acknowledge that y/n is, indeed, your name.

“Well, it's a pleasure to meet you, y/n. Jesus is going to come by in a few minutes to give you some fresh clothes, don't be afraid to talk to him, he's here to help.”

jesus?

A nod is all you can manage at the moment, the sound of you swallowing around the lump in your throat echoing in the room before you speak up again. “You didn't answer my question,” you observe with a whisper, looking up through your lashes to see Harlan looking a little confused as to which question you'd like an answer to.

“I-Is… Is Negan here?”

“No, he hasn’t come back yet.” The word “yet” makes your stomach knot. “Hilltop is not Negan's community, we're just...” you see him hesitate for a split second, “we simply work with him, help him out whenever he or one of his men need medical attention and such.”

You know better than to believe that this is the whole story, but you don't push it, not really feeling like getting involved in drama you want nothing to do with. Plus, if yesterday’s anything to go by, you might already have yourself some shit to deal with, no need to add to it.

“Alright, uh…” Harlan cuts into your thoughts, clearing his throat as he goes, “any pain?” He asks with a small smile and you silently gesture to your head.

"Headache?” You nod without a word and watch as he turns his back to you and moves across the room to a locked, wooden cabinet with glass doors, unlocking it and rummaging through before closing it back up and walking to the small table the light dimly illuminating the room sits on, to fill a plastic cup up with water from a bottle.

Walking back over to you, he hands you the full cup and presents you two Advil pills in the palm of his free hand, keeping his movements careful and stilling completely when you shyly reach out to grab the cup and pills with the very tips of your fingers, doing the most not to make contact with the stranger as you take the medicine from him, but still give him a thankful nod of your head and a small but genuine smile to seal the deal.

You're cautious, sure, but no need to be a brat about it.

“Anything else?” He asks as you silently swallow the pills down. “Any dizziness, aching, difficulties to move at all?” Your mind silently ticks every single box as Harlan lists the various symptoms but you shake your head when he's done talking, a sharp throb in both temples making you suspect that your body is turning against you as you, once again, ignore the pain it's in even though, this time around, it's only because you don't trust this man and taking the Advil is already a risk taken in your book.
“Well alright, then.” Yeah, he most definitely knows you're bullshitting. “I have a few things I need to tend to but do feel free to ask Jesus for anything you might need if you decide you're not doing so good anymore, he'll take care of you. In the meantime, though, I think you could do with a nice warm shower, might help you relax for a bit?”

Your eyes widen at the promise of hot water and soap. “Warm- Wait, you- you guys have hot water?” You ask in a whisper like you're talking about something taboo and not... warm water and soap.

“That we do,” Harlan smiles.

“And- I-I can... use it?” You hesitantly ask with your head down and a frown creasing your forehead as your fingers nervously play with the sheets covering your legs.

“Of course. You go right ahead, take your time and wash up. You just be mindful of your injuries but, again, if anything hurts, don't be afraid to ask for anything.”

The man gives you a gentle smile when you look up and give him a little nod. “I'll come back to check on you this afternoon and change your bandages if that's okay with you, of course.”

“Thank you,” you whisper, unconsciously bringing your right hand to the bandage wrapped around your left forearm.

“Of course,” the doctor acquiesces, his eyes silently falling on your dressed arm. “You can take it off before your shower, it'd be good to let the wounds breathe a little anyway,” you won't say it out loud but you're glad that he's referred to them as wounds and not cuts, “you just make sure to thoroughly dry the stitches when you get out. Other bandages stay on until tonight though, just to be sure, and we also need to take that I.V out,” he explains, his lips curled into a gentle smile and you give him one back and silently nod your consent.

Harlan is careful as he takes the needle out from beneath your skin and puts a waterproof band-aid on the small entry point, before giving you a smile and then slowly, almost reluctantly, leaving the room, his body awkwardly twisted because he's not completely turning his back to you, but you don't see any of it, too busy looking down at your covered legs.

Your body gives a subtle flinch when the door clicks shut and you let out a quivered breath you weren't aware to be holding, frowning against the anxiety you can feel eating away at you, tugging at your stomach and balling up in your throat.

You know you have to get the hell out of here, wherever here is, so you kick the blankets covering you off and slip out of the bed all whilst gritting your teeth through the aching pain echoing throughout your entire body. Your jaw clenches when you stand to put your weight on your feet, and you can feel your muscles protesting and tugging like too tightly wound strings about ready to snap and smack you in the fucking face.

You stand there, eyes closed, and head tugged into your chest as you wait for the sickening
spinning to stop, arms stiff on each side of your body and fingers crooked, frozen in mid-air after the first sensation of dizziness you've felt.

Carefully, you take the smallest of steps forward and, when you don't fall flat on your ass on that first attempt, you start taking baby-steps towards the curtained window in front of you. A voice in the back of your head reminding you that, in a normal state, you'd have been to the damn window in three steps, not ten, and the truth that thought holds only reminds you that; not only are you barely able to walk, you're also in complete foreign territory and that Negan douchebag and the douche-patrol seem to be keen on forcing their way into the picture.

Leaning against the wall, right next to the window, you bring a shaky finger up between the curtain and the glass to lift it the tiniest bit off, your lips curling into a small smile at the sight of the morning sky softly colored with the slowly rising sun.

Refocusing, you frown a little as you spot a few people walking around outside, some of them smiling and laughing with others, the noises carrying and penetrating the steel walls of the little installation you're in, though it's nothing too clear. You also catch a glimpse of a huge mansion-like building standing a few feet away from where you are.

You briefly wonder if the building serves as a common house everyone uses, eats, sleeps and lives in or if it's a fucking castle and someone's living large in this thing, a wannabe-royalty looking down at the "little people" whilst they stay safely tugged away in there.

_and that's why we don't do the whole people... thingy.

With a heavy sigh, you let the curtain drop back into place before anyone notices you sneaking a peek, and step away from the window with a frown, your eye-sockets aching as your eyes move all over the place to take your new surroundings in but stop dead when they meet your own reflection in the mirror-door of an old dresser standing across from you in the small room.

On autopilot, you walk towards your own image reflecting in the glass with a limp, shoving every pain, ache, pull and throb aside when you come face to face with the tall mirror.

_wow... that's... not a good look._

Black and blue is the only accurate way to describe your skin. Your lower body is covered in bruises, scratches and dried blood. Your left calf is dressed and there's fresh blood soaking through the bandages, and you can feel the pull of tight stitches on your skin when you move your ankle but that's the only limb that seems to have suffer real damage as far as you can tell.

The rest of both legs is slightly discolored, a few scratches here and there, mean-looking bruises kissing the skin every now and then, dried blood cracking and pulling the skin taut whenever you move and there's this buzzing, numb feeling in both limbs, like your legs are about to give beneath your weight.
“Oh man…” You whisper as you gently poke at the swollen and busted knuckles on your right hand, the skin all taut, shiny and slightly discolored. You always did pack one hell of a punch.

Exhaling a shaky breath, you slowly build up the courage to raise the loose shirt hanging over your quivering frame to make a quick damage control on the upper part of your body and frown at your reflection when it shows your skin littered in nasty looking blue, green and purple-ish bruises which are covering the soft, blood-stained skin of your tummy up to your ribs and there’re also a few cuts and scratches here and there… Yeah, you guess self-care isn’t really your thing.

With a pained groan, you take the shirt completely off, feeling safe in the room since the one and only window is covered, and the curtains are too opaque for anyone to be able to see what's going on inside.

Screwing your eyes shut, you bring the old, worn out and way too big t-shirt up to hug it tightly to your chest and hide your face in it. You love this shirt, it's all messed up now, the piece of cotton is going rigid where blood has soaked in and it has tears in it, but you’re not ready to let it go.

“Dad... Dad, what do I do?” You ask through the lump in your throat. “I don't know what to do. M'so scared,” you whisper into the soft fabric before letting out a loud, heavy sigh, trying your damnest to keep the fresh waves of tears at bay.

Shuffling back to the bed you've been laying on, your eyes catch a few patches of blood staining the white bedding and you briefly wonder what exactly went down while you were out but quickly decide against trying to come up with a possible scenario because you hate every single one of them.

The thought of strangers around you while you're unconscious and injured isn't something you're comfortable with. So, with a sigh and slight shake of your head, you drop the shirt on the bed and look around until your eyes fall on the only door in the room, aside from the front door which you have your back to at the moment, and carefully make your way to it, eyeing the medical supplies laid out on the messy table and the locked glass cabinet a few feet away from it as you walk by.

Your steps automatically become lighter as you approach the white door and you hold your breath as you push it open with your fingertips, part of you on the look-out for anything that could jump out at you. Your body stays tense despite the dull throbbing going through it, your muscles finding great discomfort in your current stance, but you move through it and swiftly flick the lights on once you've found the switch, your eyes moving fast as they scan the room, your shoulders rolling when you find no threats in the small space.

You take one last look at the open room behind you and, with a sigh, close the bathroom's door after fully stepping in before pushing the lock into place, your body only ever so slightly going laxer when it clicks shut.

Shrugging off the small rush of adrenaline you've just received, you slowly step away from the
door and quickly take the small room in before carefully stripping out of bloody bra and panties and unwrapping the bandages around your forearm, cringing when thick strings of coagulated blood stick to the bands of gauze beneath as you pull it off. Six of the many cuts on your arm are heavily stitched up and throbbing, the skin around them tight and swollen.

You shakily exhale when your eyes find the two names permanently engraved on your skin. The ink is still intact, untouched as it sits above the fresh cuts and the litter of scars on your left forearm, ones similar to them scattered all across your body, the black lettering a constant reminder of the promise you keep on breaking every time you let a blade cut through your skin like a knife through butter.

You screw your eyes shut and look away from your arm only for the small mirror standing above the sink and the reflection it gives of you from the shoulders-up, to remind you just how much of a mess you are the second your lids flutter back open. A drained face and tired eyes, rimmed red and glistening with tears, are looking back at you, silently begging for a goddamn break.

When you tear them away from your own reflection, your eyes are quick to locate a small pile of towels sitting on an old nightstand to the sink's right and you reach over with shaky hands to clumsily cover the small mirror up and conceal the reflecting glass.

“No thank you,” you mumble to yourself as you turn your back to it.

Taking a deep breath, you head towards the shower and slowly open the glass door to reach in for the knob marked with a red dot and slowly twist it around before stepping away as you wait for the water to come pouring out.

You almost jump in when you reach back in and under the spray to test the water and are greeted with liquid warmth sipping through your fingers before you decide against tempting the Universe to give you a concussion and carefully step into the cubicle, closing the door behind you and gasping happily when the warm water hits your skin, a content giggle slipping out of your mouth.

Slowly, you start washing your body, scrubbing gently at the skin with a soft sponge, careful not to wet the dressing on your left calf too much or pull any of the stitches in your arm and leg.

You take some time to wash your hair and let the water run down your body for a little while, just letting yourself relish in the feeling of a warm shower because God only knows when you'll ever get to have one of those again.

Turning the water off, you reluctantly drag yourself out and barely get the glass door of the cabin open when there's a soft knock on the bathroom door and you feel every single muscle in your body tense back up, the effects of your warm shower disappearing in the blink of an eye.

“Hey, I uh... don't mean to interrupt but I- I just brought you some clothes, put'em on the bed... I'm Paul, by the way,” a man announces through the door and you start to panic when you realize that; not only is this yet another stranger but you're also completely butt-naked and there's no way in Hell you're stepping out there with only a towel wrapped around your body.

Under the sudden panic, your voice bails on you and all you manage to push out is a weird,
embarrassing squeak that makes your cheeks burn.

“Crap…” You hear the man curse under his breath. “Hey, look, I’m really sorry if I disturbed you, I uh… You know what? I’ll just go wait outside the cabin, knock on the door when you're done?” Though you can't see him, the man seems as flustered and panicked as you are so that’s something.

You give a shaky hum and it seems to be enough for him to understand. “Alright, good… Alright… Again, I’m sorry.”

Every single nerve and tendon in your shoulders burns under the invisible pressure of sheer panic and anxiety as you listen for his fading footsteps as he steps away from the bathroom's door and wait for the front door to click shut before slowly unlocking the bathroom door and peeking your head out to make sure that the coast is clear, frowning a little when you realize that your right hand is resting on your towel-covered hip, clearly unconsciously reaching for your knife which, would you believe it, still hasn't reappeared, and you hate that you're now hyper-aware of its absence.

In a blur, you come out of the bathroom and walk to the bed where there's clothes waiting for you like the stranger said there'd be. You pick them up and look at them, inspecting them with narrowed eyes like they might explode if you shake them or something.

The first thing your hands land on is a set of baby pink boy-shorts and a cotton bra which you pick up with a crooked finger to hold in the air at arm's length and inspect. You're semi-aware that you look like freaking cat not knowing what to do of its very own reflection BUT, to be fair, you're just embarrassed that someone else has seen, even more so picked up, your underwear when you're used to it being something really private and personal.

The feeling only aggravates when the bra ends up fitting you perfectly and, suddenly, all you can think about, again, is that you've been unconscious around strangers and you don't know what happened and THAT'S CREEPY.

Mental breakdown aside, there's also a large, ripped up pair of black denim jeans that you put on with no problem at all though you quickly understand why your belt has been left beneath it and quickly nudge it into the pants’ belt-loops before tightening and fastening it to the waist, you also have to roll the legs at the ankles multiple times for it to fit the length of your own.

Last things on the bed are a loose and slightly faded AC/DC, black t-shirt, which you end up tugging into your jeans, and a pair of plain black socks which you have to sit down to put on thanks to the aching in your legs.

All in complete silence, you slip into your black combat boots, which have been left by the bed, and then slowly make your way to the front door before softly knocking on it, signalling for Paul, whoever the fuck that is, that it's okay for him to come back in against your better judgement.

You almost, almost, laugh when you step back and see him slowly opening the door with his eyes screwed shut. “You decent?” Yeah, he's definitely as uncomfortable as you.
“Yes. Thank you for… for th-the clothes ‘n all.” No matter how hard you want your voice to come back to you, it stays hidden and every single word comes out of your mouth as a whisper which isn't the best feeling in the world when you're surrounded by strangers you don't know the motives of.

“Hey, it’s no problem at all,” he explains with a beaming smile, clearly more relaxed now. As he steps in, he takes a look at you and his smile turns shy as he scratches through his beard. “Sorry about the size, the shirt used to be mine and we didn't have any woman's pants left… Yeah, they're way too big for you,” he observes with a small laugh.

You blush and tug at the black fabric floating out of your jeans and around your waist nervously and he immediately takes notice.

“Hey, no, I- I'm not making fun, you look great in those- They just... Ya know. Kinda swallow you up is all.” You let out a small laugh that you most definitely did not plan on letting slip out and look up at him, looking closely at his face through your lashes.

He's got blue eyes, long, light brown hair, and one hell of a beard. He's wearing a white-ish Henley, black work pants and combat boots, a little like yours.

“I'm Paul, by the way... I already said that, didn't-” You nod, and he purses his lips in thought, “Well, hm... You can call me Jesus though, everyone does.”

He gives you his hand for you to shake but just look down at it like it might burn you. “Jesus? Really?” You ask him with a frown, seeming genuinely confused and, though you don't see it because you're too busy trying to burn a hole through his gloved hand with your eyes, it makes a little smile tug at the man’s lips.

“Yeah. 'Was kinda weird at first but, hey, I rolled with it and it's lost its weirdness throughout the years,” he explains with a shrug and smiles when your eyes focus back on him instead of his hand which he retracts back to his side, your frown slowly fading as you give him a small smile and a nod.

You both stand there in complete silence, your head eventually dropping to watch as your fingers start to pull at one another and, without a single word, you absently start walking back to the bed and sit on the mattress without a word, your feet dangling as you keep your gaze fixed on your fingers.

Jesus silently follows your lead and drags a chair from the plastic table to the left side of the bed which you're sitting on before settling on it, watching you from his seat, careful not to invade your personal space.

“So,” he starts, his voice soft and calm, “what about you? You got a funky name?”

“No. N-no funky name just… J-Just y/n,” you answer in a whisper, your eyes still glued to your fidgeting fingers.

“Just y/n’s perfectly good,” he states with a tilt of his head, honestly unsure of how to start a conversation with you. Though conversation doesn't seem necessary and an oddly comfortable silence settles over the two of you, but it's cut short by a loud, obnoxious knock on the front door
that makes you jump damn near out of your skin while Jesus only sighs deeply, clearly knowing who's behind the door.

You don't have time to ask your question when Paul whispers a "dammit" under his breath before looking at you like he already knows your question and that you're not going to like the answer one bit. "That's Negan." Just like that, he cuts the wire.

Your hands start to shake, and you feel light-headed, about ready to throw-up. "You- You work for him? Were you there? Y-Yesterday?" You sound so hurt; the man might as well have stabbed you.

"No. No, y/n, I don't work for the guy, we- It's complicated but I can promise you that I'm not out of hurt you." He keeps his voice soft and you jump when there's yet another bang on the door that Paul ignores.

"Y/n," you look up at him and hate that you're letting him see the unshed tears that are making your eyes sting, "I promise you, I am not one of his men, I do not work for nor do I work with him and I am not going to hurt you." You absently nod to let him know that you've heard him.

"I don't- I don't want to see him. Please, don't make me- I just…" You curse yourself for not being able to have a single coherent thought, let alone form a complete sentence that makes sense from start to finish and doesn't make you look and sound like a scared three-year-old.

You flinch when Paul slowly rises to his feet and closes the distance between you two in a big step and crouches down a bit to be able to look you in the eyes.

"Hey," his voice is soft and reassuring but the banging on the door is the complete opposite and it's fucking with your mind, your brain unsure of which one to focus on; danger or safety. "Listen to me, y/n, nothing will happen to you," oddly enough, you're not sure you believe him on that.

"He can't move you anyway, your body is too weak so, for now, you're here. Doc's orders, no questions asked, he knows, you just-"

"Open the goddamn door, you dickhead," a loud, obnoxious voice orders from the other side of the metal door making Jesus sigh in defeat. He takes one last look at your face, before walking towards the door and unlocking it.

Your heart is trying to beat out of your chest and you feel like you're about to puke it out when Negan's tall frame appears in the door-frame, completely claiming the entire space without even trying, and he flashes you a smile that sends the worst kind of shivers down your spine the second his hazel eyes find you.

"Get out," he firmly orders to Jesus without breaking eye contact with you and the man obeys and walks out but not without looking at you one last time which doesn't go unnoticed by Negan and you can see his jaw clench as he shoves the blue-eyed man out with so much force it's a miracle he didn't fall flat on his face.

what fresh hell...
“Well!” He exclaims while slamming the door shut, the loud bang makes you jump, and you have to fight the urge to cover your ears. “Good morning, beautiful. Sun's shining outta its ass, and it's a wonderful fucking day.”

*what the hell are you even supposed to say to that? do you even say anything?*

Turning on his heels, you feel his gaze on you and hear him walk up to you, flinching when he comes to sit right beside you on the bed, making the mattress dip underneath his weight and shoving you into his side which you quickly scramble to get away from until the entire left side of your body is flushed against the headboard of the medical bed and you hear him chuckle.

“How'd you sleep, darlin'? You scared the fuck outta me last night, y'know that? S'not fuckin’ cool, doll.”

It's not just your hands shaking anymore, it's your whole entire body and you keep avoiding his gaze because you know you won't be able to hold it for more than a small second.

You cringe when you feel him get closer to you, effectively destroying the distance you’ve managed to put between the two of you, and your breath gets stuck in your throat, your lungs fluttering, keeping you from drawing breath properly, when you realize that you're stuck between him and a concrete wall.

“That shit on your arms?” The tone of his voice makes your nose scrunch up and your forehead crease in an alarmed frown as you do your best not to acknowledge him. You look all around you, avoiding any kind of contact with the man sitting right beside you, way too close for comfort.

Tears are slowly pooling in your eyes, your shaky fingers pulling and pinching at the skin of the backs of your hands. You can feel him getting impatient next to you and it makes you even more frantic.

“Look at me when I'm talkin' to you, doll.” You don't. You can't, but he doesn't seem to give a shit; what Negan wants, Negan gets.

Much like he’d done the night before, he grabs your face and forces you to look right at him, tightening his grip on you to keep you from looking away.

“I don't want to see any more of this shit, am I fuckin' clear?” His voice is firm, but not what you'd describe as completely cold either, as he refers to the self-inflicted cuts on your forearms.

Words completely bail on you once again, you feel your belly shake with spams and you can't hold your tears in anymore, you just fall apart right in front of him. Again.

His hand doesn't leave your jaw, and you flinch when you feel his thumb moving on your cheek to catch and wipe some of yours tears away, you can hear him lowly hushing you but it's far from being soothing. If anything, it agitates you further.

He's a stranger, one you know to be dangerous at that, you don't want him anywhere near you,
especially not touching you and you hate that he's seeing you like this. You hate that he's done that
to you.

“Hey now, baby girl. Why're you cryin’?” He asks as if they're nothing wrong with this entire
situation and you're the one making it weird.

Your mouth opens but nothing comes out except for hiccuped sobs that make your throat ache, so
you decide that the next best thing is to just close your eyes to keep him out of your sight since he's
still holding your face up to his.

“Hot damn, princess, you're a fucking mess.” His words might have sound harmless to him, but
they didn't to you, and you can feel your mind starting to shut everything out, your body starting to
curl in an attempt to get out of Negan's grip.

He seems to understand that his words wounded you and smiles down at you. “Well, shit, darlin', I
didn't mean to hurt your feelings. Damn, I actually kinda like to see you fall apart like that, lets me
know I ain't gonna have to work too fuckin' hard.”

Thankfully, Negan loosens his hand and lets you slip away from him. You’re so frantic though
that, when you do, you almost fall off the bed and you would have had it not been for his hands
quickly getting a hold of your elbows to steady you and bring you upright.

“Where's my stuff?” You ask through gritted teeth, grabbing an opportunity to turn the
conversation around, silently glad that you were somehow able to find at least a little bit of your
voice and steadiness to put behind your question because the man's seriously starting to piss you
off with his attitude. You don't even know him, who the fuck does he think he is?

He slowly gets closer to you, his nose almost touching yours and, that "steadiness" you've had two
seconds ago? Yeah, nah, it's gone.

"Didn't you fucking hear me last night? I own your shit, your backpack? It's mine to do with as I
fuckin’ please now.”

"But th- That's not- No! That's not fair!” You try out of his grip, but he follows your every step and
you feel like his frame is crushing you. The closer he comes the smaller you feel.

“I don't- I don't even kn-know you and you- you just- you-” Your brain doesn't know which
direction to go as you try to reason with this stranger for some fucking reason until your body end
ups colliding against the wall behind you, the only window in the cabin to the left side of your
face.

Your mouth keeps on wordlessly opening and closing, making him laugh as he stops right in front
of you, close enough to crush your breasts to his lower chest and the contact makes you extremely
uncomfortable.

"Either I’m the scariest sonuvabitch you’ve ever fuckin’ met, and I’m havin’ a hard time believin’
that I am, no matter how much of a blow to the nuts it is. Or; you’re really that fuckin’ terrified
which is also pretty damn hard to see ‘cause I’m willing to bet you’ve been out there all on your
own for a while, yeah?” You narrow your eyes and give a silent, almost careful, nod and he gives
one back, his expression thoughtful.
“So, s’just us regular folks with non-rotten flesh and somewhat clean breaths, huh.” You know by the tone of his voice that it’s not a question, just an observation, but you still bob your head up and down and, under any other circumstances, you would have smiled at the way he phrased that.

Negan takes a moment to observe you, eyeing the way he can see the muscles of your biceps rippling beneath soft skin like tightly wounded coils ready to snap, and he can feel your body pulling its weight back to try and put some distance between you and him though there’s a solid wall of steel behind you.

Yet, no matter how fragile you might look at the moment, there are hot coals in your eyes that seem like they’d make for a dangerous fire when ignited.

“Why do I feel like you’re holdin’ out on me, baby doll?” He asks with narrowed eyes and watches as your head tilts to the left.  

*what's that supposed to mean?*

He lets out a low, humorless chuckle that puts you on edge and, even though you try to hide it from him, he seems to pick up on it.

“I’ve been told you’ve made a fucking massacre in that church you were holed-up at,” he starts to answer your unasked question, “your go to weapons are a fucking ax and a knife and, goddamn, you fuckin' exploded my right-hand man's jaw, sweetheart.”

Negan grins, showing off way too well kept pearly-white teeth, before leaning even closer to you, his nose now touching yours and you flinch at the small contact.

“I’m willin' to bet that, right now, you're tryin' to figure out a way to fuckin' kill me, aren't ya, sweetness?”

You scoff and squint your eyes at him. “If I wanted to kill you, I already would've,” you confess, your stubbornness and pride kicking your voice in the ass and forcing it to come back and, yeah, it’s rough and not really at full volume but it’s there and as steady as it gets.

“I could kill you right now if I wanted to, all I’d have to do is sink my teeth into your jugular and let you bleed out, Negan.”

With a smirk, he drags his tongue out and across his bottom lip. “Damn, she talks. Not gonna lie, I really fuckin' like the way my name rolls off your tongue, baby doll.” Your eyes drop again, and you feel your face heating up in anger and frustration. Talking to this man is like talking to a damn wall.

*nah, the wall can't fucking talk back. and walls aren't so full of shit.*

Negan backs off the tiniest bit but not enough for you to feel comfortable and you quickly understand that that's exactly what he wants; for you to feel crushed, confined and uncomfortable and it makes your claustrophobia itch at you.
Part of you can't stand it anymore and it's quick to take over, making you spit right on his face before you can even think about the consequences of such action though seeing his jaw clench and roll and his smile turn into something misleadingly calm is more than enough to give you an idea of just how bad said consequences might be.

Scared, you try to push yourself further away from him but only manage to push yourself further against the wall behind you in your desperate attempt to try and create some distance between the two of you.

Instinctively, you bring your arms up and around you, like it'll do anything to protect or hide you. His movements are way too calm and gentle, and you know better than to trust the falsely disarming smile he’s wearing.

“Oh, now that’s...” He trails off, wiping your spit off his cheek with his gloved hand and looking down at it before wiping it off on his pants. “That’s not really fuckin’ nice, is it, doll?”

don’t piss yourself. for the love of god do not piss yourself, woman.

You cry out in protest when Negan suddenly grabs your body with a bruising force, making your skin buzz and you try to push him off, but he insultingly easily shoves you on his shoulder and walks you both to the small bed right behind him before dropping you on it.

It feels as if your heart is crawling up your throat as you watch, completely frozen, as Negan makes his way to the door leading outside the cabin but the silver of hope you’ve had that he might just leave you there is completely crushed when you see him open the door and reach to the left of it to then slam it back shut but not before the now fully risen sun had the chance to give you a glint of what exactly he’s just reached for.

oooh... fuck no.

Negan’s calm and collected attitude is a sharp contrast to your frantic and panicked demeanour but he doesn’t seem put off. You though... It feels like the air is too thick and it’s suffocating.

this is why we.don’t.do.people. people are fucking terrifying and awful and mean and gross and bad and...

The sound of the lock in the door clicking into place snaps you out of your frantic thoughts and makes your stomach churn and twist. It doesn’t get any better when your eyes fall on the deadly baseball-bat covered with barbed-wire, which tauntingly shines even in the dimly lit room, held in Negan’s right, gloved hand.

You try to drag yourself back on the mattress to try and create as much distance as you possibly can as he advances on you but then he’s right there, quick to grab your ankles and drag you back to the edge of the bed's left side, your body colliding into his with the force of his pull.

“Well, hi there,” he taunts with a wink before raising his bat right in front of your face, chuckling when you crane your neck to put distance between you and the damn thing. "Remember Lucille? Not gonna lie, I’d take it personally if you didn’t."
You can't help but try and get away from him once again, pushing against his chest with a booted foot but the fucker's not moving an inch, he just makes another grab for you and flips you over your belly with a single hand like a freaking pancake, and you start to panic as tears roll down your face, awful memories all flashing through your head at once, making you sick to your stomach.

“Calm down, darlin', I'm not a fuckin' monster. I don't do that,” he punctuates his last word, making it clear to you that he gets what's just went through your head, “but you've been a bad girl, sweetheart, and I can't have that.”

You suddenly feel the overwhelming need to justify yourself, the scold triggering something in your head. “No, no, no, I just- I- You were-” Yeah, no, your brain clearly took the day off and panic and her sister distress are now at the wheel of this shit-show.

“Oh, I know, princess, daddy fucked up too and I'll make sure it doesn't happen again but, right now, I’m gonna make sure you don’t try and pull this shit ever again.” You're confused as to why he’s suddenly giving himself a paternal name but don't ask questions because it makes you feel oddly warm and you're unsure of what to do with that.

“Here's the thing, darlin’; you're mine, all fuckin' mine. You fuckin' belong to me and I ain’t gonna have you actin' up and fightin' me like that, doll.”

You're about to protest his claims but the feeling of your jeans slipping down your thighs shuts you up and your silent tears turn into chocked sobs. Out of instinct, without thought, you cross your ankles tightly together and, if Negan sees it, he's not commenting on it.

God you hope he’ll just break your fucking legs or something.

“So, here’s how this is gonna go. Since it’s your first time, I’ll let ya decide; hand, belt or Lucille? Either way you’ll get ten. First offence, sure, but you did spit on my fucking face, doll.”

You’re unable to process what he’s saying, your mind working overtime to try and figure out where this is going but your pants are around your knees and all you can think about is how exposed you are to the man standing tall behind you, and that he can see your pantie-clad butt and keep your ankles tight and-

“Now, doll. Before I choose for you.” Negan’s voice brings you back before you can get lost any deeper into your own head but you’re frantic and the word “Lucille” spills out of your mouth before you can even remind yourself what the question even was in the first place.

Your erratic behavior seems to be somewhat entertaining to Negan because you hear him chuckle behind you and, by God, you take make what you thought last night; this is peak embarrassment.

“Relax, sweetheart, promise she’ll be gentle.” yeah, okay, no way in hell we’re believing that.

“I'm even gonna be extra nice and let you keep your panties on, first time ‘n all. How fuckin' nice is that, hm?” s'that what they call it?

“How 'bout a thank you? What d'you think? I think that's in order, right? I totally deserve a thank
Swallowing your pride, you muffle a barely audible "thank you" into the mattress, your entire face burning with shame.

“Nah, see, that just won't do, doll. I'm gonna need you to speak the fuck up. C'mon, I know you can do it, you're a smart girl.”

You turn your head slightly to the side, your nose buried in the sheets and your eyes tightly closed as you speak up. “Th-Thank you,” your voice is low and scratchy from fatigue, full of sadness and embarrassment.

You feel your face heat up some more, to the point that it prickles your skin, when you hear him chuckle low in his chest and feel his body crushing yours as he leans down on you, his mouth ending up right next to your ear.

does this man know about personal space? someone should tell him.

“Thatta good girl. You're welcome,” you can hear and feel him smile and you know that if you had anything in your stomach, you would be throwing it up right there and then, especially when you feel a sick relief at his words, that constant need you have to be and do good taking great comfort in the praise.

“Alright! Now, my favorite part.” His weight leaves you and you hear him shuffle around behind you, squirming when you feel his eyes burning into your skin.

“Good God, princess, look at ya. When this is all said and done, we’re gonna have to have a li'l chat,” he declares, probably eyeing the discolored patches of skin on your thighs and the few cuts and scrapes you know are mapped out across your flesh.

You flinch when you feel the heat of one of his hands ghosting over the skin of the back of your left thigh and he chuckles at the fact that you've felt him when he hasn't even touched you.

“Man, you got an ass that'll drive a man up the fuckin' walls...” You ball your hands into tight fists in the sheets, trying to keep them from covering your ears because you don't want him to see you even more vulnerable than he's already made you.

“Fuckin' shit, I ain't never been so fucking tempted to touch something like I am right now. But, hey, I'm a reasonable man so I won't touch if you don't want me to and I know you don't fuckin' want me to,” his voice drops an octave lower, “that's okay though, I know you'll come around. They always do.”

You feel like screaming and kicking but that anger quickly fades when you feel the cold, sharp, teeth of the wire covering his bat cutting in the soft skin of your butt. “Pl-please don't. Negan, please, I-”

“It'll be quick, darlin', you just hold still for me, yeah?” You shake your head at that, not wanting him to feel like you're giving him the green light to do what he's about to do, hoping he won't cross
that line if you don't agree with it but you should have known better than to think he was even looking for any kind of consent on your part.

“You can cry if you want but I want you to count every single one of 'em, you got that?”

“No,” you stubbornly protest, shaking your head left and right into the blanket beneath you.

Negan chuckles at that and presses his bat harder into your skin making you wince in discomfort.

“Didn't quite catch that, baby girl. Come again?”

You cry out in frustration. You're not getting out of that one and you’re painfully aware of it.

You shakily breathe into the blankets and nod, keeping your face buried into the mattress, trying to brace yourself for the first blow, but nothing could have prepared you for the pain that shoots through you as Lucille comes down on your rounded mounds, getting both at the same time as Negan stands to your left to bring the weapon down on you.

“One!” Even the piece of sheet you’re biting down on and the mattress you’ve pressed your face into can’t muffle your cry and you know he's not even actually swinging that thing down on you; he's just flicking his wrists and it still hurts like nothing has hurt in a long time.

You hear him growl and the blows keep coming one right after the other. Your butt is covered in blood and small, shallow cuts by the time the bat comes down on it a tenth and final time, your body arching away from Negan, but you have nowhere to go.

“Ten! That's ten! Please, I-I can't- Negan, it hurts.” At this point you're crying hot tears into the bedheets and you feel blood soaking into the cotton of your panties and running down your legs and inner thighs, your skin smarting as your entire body tries to process what the hell just happened to it.

You flinch and whimper when a cold piece of soft cloth comes down on your butt to wipe away the blood and clean the fresh, oozing cuts.

“Shh, there you go, darlin’,” Negan's voice reaches you again through the buzzing in your ears.

“Good fuckin' God, you took it like such a champ, princess. M'so proud of you, didn't even flinch. Such a good girl for me.” Your breath gets stuck in your throat and your body goes rigid when you feel him plant a kiss to the back of your head.

“You mad at me, sweetheart?” He asks in your hair and you just shake your head no into the mattress, lying. Of course, you're fucking mad, he just humiliated you and it hurts so bad. Your body is on fire, but you're too worn out to pick another fight. Truthfully; you're terrified to.

You hear him growl again and you're not sure what to make of that sound.

“Well, I'll be dammed,” he mutters to himself. “Your panties are soakin' wet, darlin', and it ain't blood either, that's for fucking sure.”

“Wh-what?” You ask, genuinely confused as to what he's referring to because you don't feel
anything down there other than the blood making your panties stick to your skin, and you're
suddenly terrified that you might have went on yourself without even realizing but, surely, you
would have felt that by now.

There’s a moment of silence and then Negan chuckles as he realizes that you really don't
understand what he's saying, you're not playing coy, and that shouldn't be that big a turn on for him
but, goddamn, is it ever.

Without another word, he flips you over to your back and slowly brings your jeans back up on your
legs, watching closely as the flesh disappears in front of him.

He leaves the denim around your mid-thighs for you to finish pulling up and button when he feels
you flinch the higher his hands get, and you do so with shaky hands and have to arch your back off
the bed and wiggle around to pull the pants around your waist because you don't dare get up to do
it since Negan hasn't given you permission to and, again, you don't want a repeat of what’s just
happened.

Even though the rough denim hurts against your throbbing and wounded flesh, you're relieved to be
fully clothed again.

Negan's eyes bore into yours as he sits you up on the bed, your legs hanging off the edge, and you
feel yourself blushing again under his relentless gaze.

“Are you gonna behave from now on, baby doll?” He asks with slightly raised eyebrows, almost
like he’s daring you to backpedal.

“Y-yes.” Your voice is back to a faint whisper, but you don't really care anymore. You don't fight it
and just let yourself fall into that headspace where you know you'll be safe. If Negan sees the
switch, he doesn’t make it known.

“Good girl. See? A little bit of cooperation and everything works out, darlin’.”

“Why don't you just kill me and get it over with?” You ask in a whisper, a frown creasing your
forehead as you look down at your boots. Your mind focusing on the pulling of the stitches in your
left calf.

Negan’s brows furrow at that and he brings his right, gloved hand up to your chin to tilt your head
up, ignoring the little flinch you give at the contact, and he bends the rest of the way down to plant
a kiss on your forehead, letting his lips linger on your skin until your frown completely disappears
and it's such an oddly gentle gesture that it makes your eyelids flutter shut without you even
realizing it.

He might not be the best person to receive it from but, man, there's no denying how much you miss
and crave gentle affection.

“I have my reasons. Plus, that’d just be a damn fucking waste of a beautiful li’l thing.”

You jump when you feel his hands slip between the mattress and the backs of your thighs and he's
then slowly lifting you up and bringing you in his arms. You let him. You don't want to fight him
anymore; you just don't have enough energy left to waste it on such a futile thing.

Though, the needy, touch-starved girl in you is quick to poke her head out and you end up burying your face in the red scarf around Negan’s neck, hiding away from him as you feel blood creeping to the surface of your cheeks.

He’s just called you beautiful, no one’s said that to you in a long long time, at least not without wanting something out of it. You feel his chest vibrate as he chuckles. “I didn't even get your name, baby doll.”

“Y/n,” you whisper in the cotton around his neck.

“Y/n... We need to talk, baby doll.” You nod but keep your head buried in his scarf as you quietly wait for him to keep talking but he clearly wants to see and hear you so he sits you back down on the bed and a gasp escapes your mouth as pain shoots through your body when your butt makes contact with the soft blanket.

With a sigh, Negan lowers himself down in front of you so he can have a clear look at your face as he speaks, “You're comin' home with me, tomorrow, sweetheart-”

“N-No,” you cut him off, your body starting to shake with nervous energy again.

“Now, darlin’, that wasn't a question.”

“Wh- No, you can't- I'm not going-”

“Listen, you can either work for me back at the Sanctuary, earn your keep and what-the-fuck-not,” he pauses and gives you a smile that lets you know he's about to propose something you're not going to like, “or you could become one of mine. You won't have to work for shit, you just have to be good and I'll give you everything you need-”

“No,” you cut him off, your eyes wide and a little frantic as you try to fully grasp and comprehend what’s being proposed to you.

“Now, darlin', before you make any de-”

“No. No, no, no. I'm not- I’m not d-doing... That. I'm not- I'm not yours, I’m not- M’not a-anyone one’s.”

He gives a low laugh that would normally scare you but right now it just makes your eyes sting with tears of frustration. “I'll see you tomorrow, doll. You rest up.”

Just like that, he shuts down the conversation ... (“conversation”)... , completely discarding your words before kissing your forehead once again but it's different this time. This time you tense up and you quickly pull your body away from his lips only for him to laugh and shake his head like you’re a petulant kid throwing a tantrum.

Teary-eyed, you watch as he slowly gets back up to his full height and leaves the cabin, whistling and swinging Lucille around as he carelessly shuts the door behind him, leaving you all alone to process the complete mess he's made in your head.
Your eyes ache as they finally run out of tears to cry and it feels as if your head is submerged under water, the ticking of the clock sitting on the wall behind you loud but drowned out. Your body is still shaking, your rear painfully throbbing and stinging, and your teeth finally succeed to tear into the flesh of your lower lip, the strong taste of copper invading your mouth when your tongue peeks out on its own to lick at the fresh wound you've made.

You feel completely numb, yet it feels like your entire being is buzzing. Your mind is reeling, your surroundings a mess of blurry shapes and undefined lines, and you're so dizzy it feels like you might puke your stomach out right there and then.

Blinking the dryness from your eyes, the tattoo sitting on your right wrist finally comes into focus and what had turned into blurred black ink goes back to being clear names on your skin, your breath evening out as you finally manage to swim back to the surface and get a light grip back on reality.

You sit there on the left side of the mattress, legs dangling down, nervously running your hands back and forth on your thighs, your nails scratching against the denim of your jeans the only sound in the room, when you know you should already be out of this place or, at the very least, trying to find your way out.

You should be screaming, kicking, blaming God or whoever may want to listen, anything at all, but you're exhausted and fail to see the point in doing any of the above.

You can feel your heartbeat pounding in your injured forearm and you find yourself having to fight off the urge to dig your thumb into the bandages covering the cuts that are littered there.

You hate what lays beneath the medical band, you hate that it’ll probably turn into ugly, ragged scars that’ll never completely disappear, but that’s not what bothers you the most. No, you’ve been collecting scars like fucking Pokemon’s for years now, they don’t bother you anymore.

What does bother you is that you just can never seem to fucking stop. You feel like cutting is the only way you know how to deal with your emotions when they overwhelm you because you don’t know how else to cope, and that thought alone weights so heavy on you, it feels like nothing will ever get better.
You know the door of the room opens because your body flinches at the drowned-out squeal it makes and, in the back of your mind, you recognize that someone's talking to you, but the words aren't clear and don't quite reach your ears. You feel your head bob as you nod absently but don’t even register a thing as you blankly stare at the ugly curtain covering the window in front of you.

Your body recoils as a gentle hand comes down on your shoulder. “Y/n? Are you with me?” Doctor Carlson asks, his voice gentle as he looks worryingly down at you from where he’s standing to your right.

The only answer he gets is a slow, lazy blink from you as you keep on looking straight ahead, your mind clearly gone far away from this place.

Though you didn't take notice in your state of mind, Jesus came to check-in on you merely minutes after Negan left you to cry yourself dry, he even spoke to you, but all he's gotten out of you were tears and sobs so he sat in the armchair next to the window you're currently starring at and watched you cry for hours on end.

At some point, he'd decided to leave you to yourself, thinking you might need and crave some space but, every time he'd come by and peek his head in to check on you, he'd find you crying still.

Harlan recognizes your current state for what it is; shock and fear, but your behavior isn't any less worrying for it. It's like there's nothing on this bed, right in front of him, but an empty shell of a girl.

Since you stay unresponsive to him, doctor Carlson decides to bypass your authorization and carefully tend to you; changing the bandages on your left calf, cleaning the wounds laying beneath and checking on the stitches before covering them with greased gauze and dressing them back up with brand new, clean medical band and then does the same with your left forearm.

He gently dabs an alcohol-soaked cotton ball on the wounds and ever-so-carefully applies the tiniest amount of ointment on the cuts that did not require stitches, leaving the wounds bare of bandages to let them breathe.

You know he's talking to you throughout the whole process and, though your mind can't process the words, his voice sounds soft around you, almost comforting, so you let him tend to you and, once again, blankly nod when you understand that he's about to leave and says something along the lines of him being around if you need anything but that he’ll come back to check on you tonight either way, and that Jesus will come and check on you again in a few, bring you a meal too.

You just nod along until you hear the door click shut and start to push at your jeans. The large piece of denim easily slides off your legs and onto the floor, and you crawl back to the middle of the mattress before curling up into a tight ball underneath the blanket, your mind completely blank but still remembering what used to make you feel safe when you were little and things got eerie.

Crawl in bed, curl into a ball, and hide beneath the blanket until the monsters go away.
“You need to eat, kid, at least a little bit. You're running on fumes,” Jesus tries from the chair to the left of your bed, the one he's been sitting in for half an hour now, watching as you look down at the tray of food laid out on your blanket-covered knees like a chicken looking at a toothpick and not knowing what to make of it.

Your stomach is grumbling and protesting the lack of fork-lifting when there's a plate filled with fuming-hot food right within your reach and it's been so long since you've eaten anything you can't even remember when that was. Something along six or seven days.

Your last "meal" was a piece of stale bread and lurk-warm water, so, yeah, it doesn't really compare to a full plate of pasta, chicken and a generous slice of pecan pie.

Your eyes are a little brighter than they were when he first came to check on you this early morning, Jesus decides, and, though your cheeks are tears-stained, you look a little calmer, more rested, than he's seen you since you’ve first arrived at the camp. The outline of the pillowcase left behind on your left cheek might be the reason why, he silently observes with a small smile.

“I know it must be hard to trust people like that, which is why I'm not asking that of you, I just really believe that you could use a meal... You look like crap, kid,” he gently teases, testing the waters, and relaxes in the seat of his chair when he sees the corners of your mouth turning the slightest bit up, your head softly bobbing up and down, silently agreeing with him no matter how jokingly his words were meant to be taken.

You're a mess, sure, but you're not oblivious.

You both stay silent as you reach your right hand up to grab your fork and you go to bring your left forearm up to rest it on down on the tray when you feel Jesus' eyes on the stitched-up and still oozing cuts, and there's this quick but clear moment where the air turns heavy and you both tense as you brace yourself for a comment or remark that never comes.

All and any heaviness disappear then, and you slowly let your body relax against the pillow propped up between the medical bed's headboard and your back, your shoulders stinging with the tension constantly going through the muscles.

The room stays silent if not for the sound of your fork clinking against the porcelain of the plate you're eating out of bouncing off the walls and, as you're fidgeting with your cutlery, pushing the pasta around with the silver teeth of your fork, you realize just how odd it feels whenever this man, this stranger, Paul, Jesus, whatever you may want to call him, is around you.

The survivor in you says that it's because he's a stranger and that puts you on edge, but that's not what you're feeling; at all. As a matter of fact, you feel oddly calm in his company and that's a freaky thought if ever you've had one.

The man's a little clumsy, like he's tiptoeing on eggshells around you, but you can't really blame him for lacking words and conversation topics when, after all, you are strangers to one another and
you’re not the most talkative either.

The point, you decide, is that it feels nice to be around someone that seems real and genuine for once. He's not here with you right now, sitting silently and making sure you're getting something to eat, because he's been forced to be.

You know what that feels like, being watched over by someone who's been giving the specific order to hover over you like a freaking shadow and that's not what's happening here. Jesus is cracking jokes and keeping his voice soft, most importantly, he's respecting your boundaries and giving you space, not hovering like he's ready to tackle you if you so much as move the wrong eyelash.

It's easy to make the comparison with your encounter with Negan this morning. Now that was a shitty human being exhibiting an even shittier behavior. Sad part? He most definitely isn’t the worst you’ve had. Like, at all.

“You still with me, kiddo?” Jesus' voice pulls you out of your contemplation when your own memories give you a full-body shiver.

Extra focused on the food in the plate in front of you, you suck your lips in and nod before letting the flesh go. “Y-Yes...” You tilt your head to look at him. “Yes. Sorry.”

“You want to talk about it?” He carefully offers and you silently shake your head before turning your attention back to your meal, taking your second fork of pasta.

“I didn’t lie to you this morning, you know. About Negan.” Paul sees your ears perk up at his words and knows he has your attention. “This whole... thing, is a hot, flaming mess but, to spare you the headache, I'll keep it short and sweet and tell you that the man leading, if you can even call it that, our community is a grade-A assbag,” you don't mean to but you let out a breathy chuckle at that, “and he's made a deal behind our backs with Negan, the man offering protection and whatnot, without reading the fine lines and, next thing we know, the douche gallery is rolling into town with trucks, start taking our supplies, even furniture sometimes... We've lost people trying to fight back and get out of this so-called contract.”

“He's a killer,” you whisper down at your plate, not a question but a statement, and Jesus swallows and nod.

“Yeah, guess he fits the description. We don't really... get along. Weird how that is, huh?” He chuckles, trying to keep his tone playful, but you can see his frown from the corner of your eye.

“No. N-Not that weird,” you simply observe with a shrug before shoving a small piece of chicken between your parted lips.

You both fall back in silence after that and you give up on trying to finish your meal after three forks of pasta and two small pieces of chicken, leaving the slice of pie untouched, the only thing empty on the tray is the huge glass of cold water you've downed the second you saw the condensation on the clear glass.
When Jesus gets up and takes the tray off your lap, you immediately lay back down on the mattress and curl yourself up under the blanket, ready to waste the rest of the day sleeping before sneaking out tonight.

“I’m sorry.” Jesus suddenly says once he's standing in front of the door, your ears perking up at the sound of his voice. “I know that's probably just about the last thing you wanna hear but that's all I have. I'm just... sorry.”

You don't say anything but feel your stomach clench at the tone of his voice. “Try and get some rest, alright? Don’t hesitate if anything starts to hurt or you need something,” and, with that, the door opens and shuts, and you’re left to your own device once again.

Your eyes are drawn to the warm glow of the sun hitting the curtain covering the window you're facing and you end-up falling asleep to your stomach rumbling, fuller than it was yesterday but still not sated, the amount of food you've ate just then not nearly enough for what you have to make up for.

11th January;

MIDNIGHT //

You're pacing around the small room, the confined feeling driving you up the walls as you try to reason with your mind and quiet it down before it all overwhelms you and freezes you on the spot.

Your dad's old t-shirt is tugged away between your right hip and the waistband of your jeans, your hair up in a messy bun, every brush of the little strands floating around freely against the skin of your face feels itchy and uncomfortable in your frantic state, no matter how soft the hair and how light the touch is. God you need to take a minute to cut it.

There's an odd heaviness in your stomach as you eye the door leading out of this cage you're in, and you know it all too well; you’re afraid. Your body is buzzing with nervous energy and you hate to realize that guilt knocking at your door.

You don't know these people, sure, and you don't trust them, because reasons, but there’s no denying that the only two you’ve truly interacted with have been warm and, dare you say, caring. At least they gave enough of a shit to clean your wounds, patch you up, and keep an eye on you without it being out of distrust on their part. Though, deep down, you know they only did so because Negan must have had promised them some shit if they didn't and...

Fuck, why does that thought hurt? It's not like you're not used to people doing shit just to avoid something bad happening to them or because they want something out of you... This time though...

stooop it. this is for the best and you know it. you get out of their hair and you get to be free as a bird again, take care of Negan and his dogs if they decide to be stupid enough to come back around. people ain't all that they're cracked up to be and you know it. you're better off. this is for
You dance around it for a bit, your eyes darting from the bed to the door you know leads to freedom, your anxiety biting every time you try and think of what you should do and how it should be done though you quickly realize that the bitch will never go along with the only few options you have and decide to push through it, panic attack be damned. You’ll have time to cry and puke later.

Screwing your eyes shut tight, you give a sharp nod and, with a sigh, make your way towards the small, messy desk standing across the room in a few, determined strides. Your hand shakes as you rip a sticky, yellow post-it note from the rest of the stack and finally get a grip on a pen after you've made it roll around the various papers on the desk's surface multiple times, your shaking fingers struggling to get a hold on the damned thing.

You don't think too much, just scribble a little thank you note for doctor Carson, letting him know that you're grateful in spite of the pressure he probably was put under and that his, albeit forced, kindness and warmth were appreciated even if you didn't let yourself sink into it.

You slap the post-it for Harlan on the bathroom's door and leave it at that, just about ready to fucking bolt out of this place.

Nudging the door open, you peek your head out to check if the coast's clear only to find Jesus’ back turned to you as he sits on the three little steps leading up to the door of the medical bay. You let a few seconds pass, unsure whether he’s heard you or not and, if he has, what you should say because, as of right now, nothing sounds good to you.

You settle on not saying anything and shakily make your way down the first step to sit next to him on the second one, the soles of your feet resting against the rounded edge of the third step, the tips of your boots touching the ground.

You both sit there, completely silent, as your right leg starts to nervously bounce up and down, and you fidget with your shaky fingers, pulling and twisting them, until you feel Paul looking and suddenly feel embarrassed by your agitation.

“Got your bag back,” he calmly announces before reaching to his right and pulling what you recognize as your black backpack from behind the railing, your bow and arrows sticking out of it. Your hands twitch as you itch to reach out for it, and he gives you a little smile as he hands it over to you.

“Th-Thank you.” You hug the bag to your chest, hoping that it’ll settle you down a little, but your leg keeps on bouncing like it’s been dipped in cocaine. “How-How d’you-”

“Y/n Rovia,” he reads the embroidered white letters in the front pocket of your bag, “that’s you, right?”

“Yes,” you confirm in a whisper, the fingers on your right hand absently tracing over the white
thread. “Wh-Where did you f-find it?”

“Saw it in one of Negan’s trucks yesterday,” you frown at that. “You’re already all on your own out there, you don’t need people taking from you to boot.”

*oh no... oh noooo. he’s nice... ok, do not make it weird.*

“Wh-What- What is it y-you want from me?”

you’ve made it weird! you’ve made it weird, woman!

Jesus lets out a small, humorless laugh, “The world may have turned on its head but, at the end of the day? We’re still people. Ain’t that enough?” He asks with a small smile and you give the tiniest of nods. Still people, sure, but some you’ve seen behave like feral animals.

You know by now that *alive* doesn’t always mean *humane*.

Your head tilted to the right, you look at his profile and quickly advert your eyes when they meet his. “I-I guess i-it is,” you shrug, your forehead creased in a frown.

“You don’t sound too sold,” Jesus acknowledges, his voice lowered to a whisper like he’s afraid to scare you off, and your brain starts reeling-on about the “why”.

The fact that you keep on ending up in poisonous hands like you have a fucking neon sign hovering above you saying: “*HEY COME FUCK THIS ALREADY TRAUMATIZED AND VULNERABLE GIRL UP SOME MORE, DON’T WORRY SHE’LL TAKE YOUR SHIT FOR WHAT IT IS BECAUSE SHE’S BEEN MADE TO BELIEVE THAT IT’S NORMAL FOR PEOPLE TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF HER ANYWAY!*” being one of them. It’s the little things, really.

A moment passes and, though it’s in the forefront of your mind, you can’t seem to make yourself stand up to leave like you know you already should have minutes ago. You know you should already be long gone but you’ve never been good with confrontation and finding Paul sitting right there wasn’t really part of your non-existent plan.

“You're leaving,” Jesus states more than he asks, and you find yourself nodding, your eyes lifting back up to look at him, afraid of what his reaction might be. People can be so volatile; you’ve learned to tread lightly.

“You’re sure you don’t want to wait until morning?” You silently shake your head, your eyes dropping back down to the ground, and tighten your hold on your bag a little. “Alright... What’s the plan then?” He gets you back a little with that, though he sees the confused frown marking your brow.

“Wh-What?”

“If I hadn’t been there when you got out of the cabin, where would you have headed off to?”

“The wall,” you admit, tilting your head back towards the huge building in the center of the community and, from the corner of your eye, you see Paul take a glance around before standing up.
and motioning for you to follow with a smile and a slight tilt of his head.

Hesitantly, you push yourself up off the stairs and back onto your feet, wincing when your left calf throbs in protest. You stand there for a moment, your eyes scanning every inch of the man before you, racking your brain for reasons he may have to hurt you; you decide that’s a bad idea when you find way too many in under a second.

“Alright then, let’s go.”

“Um… G-Go where?”

“Get you over that wall,” he casually explains before walking off, and you clumsily throw your backpack on your shoulders as you take off after him, struggling a little to keep up with your injured leg and because of the fact that one step of his is two of yours.

As you follow after Jesus, you look over your shoulder to keep an eye on the two people working the night-shift and keeping watch of the gate, perched in the towers on each side of it, both facing away from you and clearly absorbed in their task.

You abruptly stop just in time to avoid colliding with Paul’s back and look around to see that you’ve reach the far side of the wall keeping the community closed and protected.

Scanning the area, you spot a few graves to your left and feel your face fall into a small little frown. It’s been a while since you’ve seen those, there isn’t really any time to bury the dead when you’re out there, and there’re too many to.

“I’m sorry f-for your loss,” you whisper without thinking, the sight of the wooden crosses sticking from the dirt affecting you more than you thought it would. Tragic as it may seem, that’s a sign of humanity you haven’t seen in a long time. Assholes don’t bury their dead.

There’s that humorless chuckle again. “Thank you, y/n. We’ve lost a lotta good people,” he seems thoughtful for a minute, but the look vanishes almost as quickly as it got there with a clearing of his throat and a smile. “I’m sorry for yours, too.”

You acknowledge his condolences with a nod and the audible gulp that comes with you swallowing around the lump in your throat, before turning your attention back to the gigantic wooden wall in front of you and you let out a frustrated huff.

You can already feel the splinters in your hands. “How on Earth am I supposed get over this thing?” You whisper to yourself, your frown deepening as you squint your eyes at the wall like it’s the reason the world is the way it is.

“Well, you're not supposed to be able to, that's like, the whole point of the operation here,” Jesus states with a hint of amusement in his voice and, without even thinking about it, you gently bump into him with your left shoulder, making him snicker.
“Hush.” There’s a slight blush on your cheeks and you’re grateful that he can’t see you properly enough in the moonlight to be able to tell that it’s there.

A few beats pass where you’re both seemingly contemplating your options until Jesus speaks up, his voice quiet but clear. “Where are you gonna go?” He asks. “I mean, you want to get over this wall? No problem, I’ll help you up, I’m not about to force you to stay here if you have a problem with that but I just…”

You wait a bit to see if he’ll find his words, but he seems to have given up on the whole thing. “I can’t stay,” you explain, looking down at your boots with a shrug, suddenly finding great interest in them. “Plus, now, with… with N-Negan and… I just- I need to get away from that.”

“You’d be safe here,” you almost immediately dismiss his words with a sad laugh and a shake of your head, making him frown a little. “You would, we-”

“You’re connected to this… this whole… thingy, w-with Negan. Maybe not directly, but you’re still linked to it- I don’t even wanna know, a-and I… I’m not p-putting m-myself into this, I have my own weight to carry, plus… I don’t… do people.” You look up through your lashes to find him staring back at you.

“Hug goodbye?” You barely catch it but, when you do, you surprise yourself when you feel your head nod consent on its own and, as ready as your mind seemed to have been for the contact, your body is taken aback and flinches when you’re suddenly wrapped into the man’s embrace, your arms stuck to your sides.

Swallowing around the anxious knot in your throat, you free one of your arms from the man’s bear-hug and awkwardly pat him on the back, completely unsure of how to interact with the stranger he is to you but mostly having forgotten what the whole “affection without ill attentions” feels like and feeling a little overwhelmed to receive something like it after years of violence and touch-starvation on your part.

“Just so you know, this is weird for me too,” he confesses in a hushed whisper, his tone light and playful, and you laugh softly in his chest, your body relaxing the slightest bit in his hold.

“So…” Jesus trails off, “need a boost?” And, just like, the moment goes but your stance stays soft when you look up and nod at him with a small smile, your mind back to focusing solely on what you’re out here, in the freezing cold of Georgia’s winter night, in the first place for.

With a nod, you part from one another and Paul walks up to the wall, leans the right side of his body against it and bends down a small bit, all ten of his fingers laced together in a fleshy little step for you to put the tip of your right, booted foot into, which you carefully do.

Putting your right hand on his left shoulder for balance, you brace your leg and then he’s jolting you up, high enough for you to be able to grab the edge of the tall wall, using your arms to push yourself the rest of the way and up to the very top.
All under Jesus' watchful stare, you steadily straddle the wall, putting your injured left leg over it but stopping mid-way from bringing the other over. “I trust you and- I don't know why?” You confess with a confused frown on your face, your eyes glued to the forest waiting for you beyond the wall.

“You just feel... safe? Does that make sense? It doesn't, I know it doesn't...” You look down and see him looking at the ground, his long hair completely hiding him from you. “Sorry, I didn't- I didn't mean t-to be we-weird o-or anything just... I dunno... I’m not v-very good at this,” your frown deepens, and you let out a shaky sigh, whispering a small “thank you” before bringing your right leg over the wall to join the other and jumping down, effectively leaving the safe zone.

You grit your teeth against the sharp flash of pain you feel when your feet make contact with the ground, your sore and beaten body not appreciating the harshness of the impact. “Y/n? You alright?” Jesus asks through the thick wall, your silence and the small whine you've let slip alarming him.

“Y-Yeah... Yeah, I'm okay. I-I'm alright,” you assure him, nodding as you do even though he can't see it. It’s more for you than it is for him.

“You... Listen, you take care of yourself out there, alright?” Again, you forget about the wooden wall between the two of you and silently nod. “Y/n?” He gently calls out, and you feel your bottom lip wobble at the tone of his voice.

You hum to let him know that you've heard him. “I'm glad that... I'm glad that I could make you feel somewhat safe even though the past twenty-four hours must have been a whole lot for you to take in,” Jesus admits through the wood and, again, your head bobs up and down, words failing you as you look down at the grass beneath your foot.

Your chest is tight, it feels like you're about to burst into tears, and you frown against the feeling, not too sure what it is or why it's there. “I'll see you around?” Jesus' voice reaches you again and pulls you out of your dwellings.

“You'll see me 'round,” you softly repeat with a small smile, your nose scrunched up and your throat fluttering. You decide to start moving instead of letting yourself dwell on it and get overwhelmed.

yeah, you've cried enough tears today to cover the last two years ahead of us.

With a pang of hurt in your chest you try not to acknowledge, you shift your backpack on your shoulders and head down towards a small path in the high-grass leading into the forest surrounding the area, your right hand reaching back to get your bow out of your bag and keep it at your side with a firm grip, ready for use.

And, just like that, you're all alone again, aimlessly wandering around in the middle of the night with nowhere to go and nowhere to be.
You're not sure how long you've been walking for when you reach the deepest part of the forest, finally out of sight or, at the very least, harder to find thanks to the density of the trees and you decide to try and find a safe -as safe as it gets out in the open, really- spot to settle in for the rest of the night.

Moving in the dark isn't your favorite thing to do, believe it or not. You're good, real fucking good, but you know better than to get cocky. You end up settling in a shallow hole carved into a big tree-trunk.

You easily get yourself in the little foyer and put your backpack between your legs, opening it to check if all your supplies are accounted for but freeze the second the zipper has been pulled down and the bag opens, a frown creasing your forehead when you see that it's filled to the brim with supplies you know aren't yours.

For a second, you're afraid Paul might have had taken the wrong bag and you frantically start to inspect black canvas; it's covered in ironed-on patches and your first and last names are still right there, sewn in white thread on the front pocket. Still, you take it all in twice just to be sure. You already have enough problems; you don't need to be carrying someone else's property and get in trouble for it when you didn't ask for any.

Spotting a small note sitting on top of the supplies filling your bag, you carefully grab it, like it might bite you or something. It reads; Stay safe. - J. Guess it was pretty damn clear you were eager to bolt. You shake your head and feel the sting of a smile in your cheeks, a sharp contrast to the lone tear that escapes you which you simply let fall and get soaked into the canvas of your bag.

Paul's a good man and you really believed you wouldn't meet any other after you've lost the two best men you've ever had in your life. They'd set the bar too high for you to ever be able to fathom that anyone could ever be as good as them.

You can't compare the two though, you barely know Paul, but, still, a malicious person or even someone simply indifferent, wouldn't have done half the things he's done for you in the last twenty-four hours.

You slowly fold Jesus' little note up and slide it in your jeans' back pocket before looking back at the contents of your bag. So far, you see that the gauze, antiseptic product, two bottles of water, four candy bars, your lighters, old GameBoy and your butterfly knife, which you're quick to pull out and shove the blade into the ground right next to you just to have it there, are all accounted for.

Seems either Negan didn’t take the time to rummage through your stuff or he just didn’t care for any of it when he has.
You have to bite back a smile when you see the slice of pecan pie you didn't eat last night sitting in a plastic container and a full jar of peanut butter both laying on top of a soft, fuzzy, crimson red fleece blanket that you carefully pull out and wrap yourself up in, your body buzzing with the warmth and softness it brings.

Your emergency-ax lays at the bottom of the bag and you pull it out as well, putting it on the ground next to your knife. There's also a first-aid kit, a watch and a map with a red circle around a specific area labelled HILLTOP.

Putting the watch on, you twist your right wrist around to inspect it, it read; 3:13 AM. The feeling of the piece of jewelry wrapped snugly around your wrist is foreign but welcomed. The only thing you've had to keep track of time to this day has been your journal, which is laying at the very bottom on your bag.

Hell, you have it all in your head. Today, it’s been two years and two days since the outbreak, or; two thousand, five hundred and fifty-nine days.

you need a hobby... real bad.

With a frown, you cringe when you realize that the small, thick razor blade that you usually keep hidden in the small pocket inside the bag is gone and, though you hate that you do, you feel a pang of distress swell in your belly.

Seconds from a complete meltdown, you hear loud growls and leaves cracking through the forest. “Can I catch a break?” You grumpily mutter to yourself though you're thankful for the distraction.

crisis adverted for another hour.

The blanket is shoved back into your bag with the rest of your supplies, and you take your knife out of the dirt, swiftly cleaning the blade on your jeans before grabbing your ax and slowly standing up, careful not to make too much noise and keeping an ear out on your surroundings.

Your backpack is swung back on your shoulders, your ax slipped into a belt-loop to your right and you keep a steady grip on your butterfly-knife, not bothering with your bow in the middle of the night. You're not about to take a shot at anything, or anyone, in the dark.

It's simple really, when it's dark, you go the “unless it's in front of you, leave it be” way, you don't need to deviate from a path you can't even see just to shoot something that's not a threat to you only because you can see and/or hear it.

Unless it’s right in front of you, it’s not a bother. So; knife it is.

You can feel your body protest as you start to walk again. You're tired, your body is aching, and your head is spinning from all the information it's received those past twenty-four hours, your mind reeling and working over-time to sort it all out when you don't have that kind of energy to waste.
Man, you wish you had energy to waste.

4:15 AM //

Your face splattered with blood, you finally stumble out of the forest and onto the open road, your surroundings clearer now, and you quickly spot the sign of an old diner down the road. The very dim light of a single neon letter weakly flickering, clearly about ready to bust like the rest of the sign already has, looking the tiniest bit promising. Yes, you’re grasping at straws.

might be worth checking out.

With a tired huff, you head towards the old building, ignoring a few walkers on the way there but you have to put three of them down to clear the entrance of the diner before going in, closing the doors behind you and blocking them with a heavy table, your body aching with the effort.

Once the doors are secure, -ish, you loudly call out to get what, or who, -ever might be in the building to come out. After a few tense minutes, waiting in silence, your ears perked-up, nothing comes forth and there are no grunts or banging to indicate that walkers are in the building.

You relax a little and shift your fingers on the handle of your knife, trying to relax your death-grip on the damn thing before you cramp.

Walking further into the diner, most of the tables and seats have been pushed against the barricaded windows, some flipped upside-down, and there's a torn sofa sitting on the far corner of the small restaurant, right below the boarded-up windows at the front of the building.

Your eyes lazily closed, and your head slumped, you let your backpack slip from your shoulders and let yourself fall limply into the surprisingly comfy couch.

Scanning the place with curious eyes, your forehead creases with a frown when you spot blood on the walls, floor and, if the smell is anything to go by and you know it is, you know the sofa you're laying is also stained with it. You try not to think too hard about what happened but the trails of blood on the floor make it hard for your head not to go for the darkest of scenarios.

With a heavy sigh, you get off the sofa and follow the trails of blood leading from it, around the counter, past the restrooms, to the back of the building and stop right in front of a door with a little plaque on it that read PRIVATE. Your jaw ticks and you hesitate before twisting the handle on the door, gently pushing it open.

The smell hits you immediately like a chair to the face, and you have to swallow down the bile that’s just threatened to come up.

Peeking your head in, your eyes quickly find the source of the putrid smell and your face crumbles
into a sad frown when you see the old couple laying in each other’s arms, the mattress below them stained with brown-ish blood.

Reluctantly, you step inside, walk up to them and, with a shaking hand, reach for the blanket bunched-up at their feet to gently cover them up, briefly stopping midway when you realize that they both bear a bullet wound to the skull, a gun in the woman’s now stiff hand, her husband’s covering it with his own.

The couple covered up, you turn back and get out of the room like a bat out of Hell, though you do take the time to snatch the key from inside of the door to be able to lock it from the outside. You know they’re gone, but you feel like it’s only right that they get some peace and privacy.

Swallowing around the lump in your throat, you shove the key in your back-pocket and make your way back to the sofa which you all but flop down onto, your limbs suddenly feeling too heavy to carry. Eventually, your lids start getting heavier and heavier until sleep finally claims you, your body sinking into the soft couch, your breathing slowly evening-out and getting steadier.

You like it here. You belong here.

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HILLTOP ;

8:15 AM //

“Alright, I'm gonna ask you one more fuckin’ time, doc, and I want a good fucking answer this time. So, again; where the fuck is she?”

“As I’ve already told you, I don't know, Negan. She was gone when I came to check on her this morning.”

Negan lets out a chuckle at the repeated answer, but there's no humor in it, just sheer frustration, before delivering a punch to the helpless man in front of him for the fourth time this morning and ordering his men to let go of the now unconscious doctor, after the fact.

When Harlan's limp body falls to the floor, Negan pays no mind to him and simply walks out of the room to make his way towards his next potential victims which are all waiting for him down on their knees in the courtyard like this is a normal occurrence; a sight he's all too used to by now.

He smiles, a cold and cruel thing, when he comes to a stop in front of the line-up. They're all looking down, scared because they know the man isn’t the most stable person. “Alright, shitheads!
Nothing personal here folks but—Yeah, no, actually, scratch that; it is pretty fucking personal,” he’s addressing them all but is looking directly at Jesus before walking up to him and crouching down to his level.

“Where’s she, Paul? C’mon, be a buddy and I swear I won’t bash your skull in for taking her backpack from my goddamn hands. Y’know how I feel ’bout theft,” and that right there is the most comical thing Jesus’ ever heard. The hospital mocking the charity.

“You did something to her,” Jesus states, no question in the tone of his voice and his eyes not afraid to find Negan’s.

“I would never,” Negan taunts with a mocking smile but still somewhat meaning his words, people just don’t need to know that.

“She was scared of something and you’ve spent the morning with her, you really expect me to believe there’s a coincidence there?” Amused but pissed, Negan harshly grabs a fistful of Jesus’ jacket just to drag him along to the cabin you were in a few hours ago, and doctor Harlan is currently passed out in, before closing the door behind them.

“Sit the fuck down, dickhead,” he orders whilst grabbing a chair for himself.

Paul carefully grabs a chair, worried when he spots Harlan lying unconscious on the floor, his face bloody and swollen. His expression clearly amuses Negan because the man lets out a small chuckle. “He’ll be fine, worry ’bout yourself. Now, sit down before I fucking make you,” he waits for the younger man to sit in front of him, nonchalantly tapping the barbed-wire-covered-head of his baseball-bat on the linoleum floor, a silent warning to behave.

“You really thought I wouldn’t put two and two together?” Negan asks with a frown the second Jesus has sat down, “Now that’s just insultin'. Her fucking backpack disappears from my truck and you seriously thought I wouldn’t come back to kick your ass? No, it doesn't work like that. I'm seriously pissed. That shit is really fuckin' uncool, you have no idea.”

“That's all she had; she's earned to keep it don’t’cha think?” Jesus slowly and carefully responds, looking Negan in the eyes, trying to keep a small amount of control over the situation.

“Yeah, you're right, asshole, but I really fuckin’ needed this damn bag.”

“Why?” The bearded man asked, genuinely curious. “You people have everything you need, one more backpack won't change a thing. Or s'it just a pride thing?”

“You really don't fucking get it, do ya?” Negan asks, leaning forwards with narrowed eyes, like Jesus is the irrational one in this situation, “I would have given her the damned thing back if she took my li'l invite to join me at the Sanctuary, you stupid fuck. Tit for tat and all that.”

“Negan… Did you actually believe for a single second that she would even consider, let alone accept, something like that? I mean, she's just a kid for God's sake.”

For some reason that’s what sets Negan off and he gets up from his chair to get dangerously close
to the man facing him, slowly raising Lucille. “Listen here, shithead, not only did you take from me and helped one of my girls run off, she could be anywhere by now, she could be fucking hurt, now you're talkin' back at me? You got a death wish, dumbass?”

“You're convinced that she needs help, that she can’t make it on her own, but she's been doing it. She's a smart girl, it only took me a day with her to figure that out and she didn't even speak to me all that much. She doesn't need you or anyone else for that matter.”

“We found her hurt under a fuckin' church,” Negan coldly interrupts.

“What do you want to know?” Jesus asks with a frown, “I helped her get over the wall, gave her her stuff back and some extra supplies, that's it, she just vanished after that. If she had somewhere to be, somewhere to go, she didn't make a beep about it.”

“Which side of the fuckin' wall, Jesus?” Negan demands through gritted teeth, clearly getting impatient. Jesus only shakes his head which lands him an angry punch to the cheek and the Saviors’ leader then storms out of the room, barking at his men to check the area outside of the safe-zone while he orders Simon to stay with a few men to collect supplies as punishment.

Without a single glance back, he gets into his truck, angrily starting the engine like the vehicle is the reason for his sudden anger, before driving off.

“Stupid fuckin' kid,” he bitterly spits out as he looks around whilst driving, his eyes scanning the area for any signs of you.

3:30 PM //

“[…] one of mine […]” He runs a fucking harem. When Negan told you you could become “one of his”, he meant… that he runs a harem.

Curiosity killed the cat, you know that… Then why the fuck did you go looking for an answer you didn’t even need because it’s not like you've ever even considered getting associated with this man… Right?

Dropping on the old couch in the diner, you wipe the blood off your cheek only to smudge it further on your skin.

You don’t know why you even went out there in the first place, why you’ve wasted your damn time retracing your steps and tracking fucking truck’s tracks for hours only to end up face to face with a cold looking compound kept by chained-up walkers.
Okay, so, you can’t lie; it was amusing to sneak around and how you so easily went completely unnoticed inside the damn place BUT it’s a risk you shouldn’t have taken, and it wasn’t even worth it.

Bright side, you guess, is that you’ve briefly met someone… One of his, as he so delicately pulled it yesterday. She saw you outside the fence as you were about ready to leave this hell-ish place. She seemed sweet enough, her voice was soft and her hand shaky as she smoked her cigarette. You’re pretty sure she told you her name was Amber before she told you; “[…] don’t let him rope ya into this, hon. You’re too smart for that, I can see it.”

There was no venom nor jealousy in her voice, just a simple heads-up like she, herself, didn’t really want to be in the position she's in and you almost felt bad walking away and leaving her there.

You’ve decided you didn’t mind Amber.

With a huff, you let yourself slump back into the soft cushions of the leather couch and bring your right arm up and over your eyes, trying your hardest to get your thoughts under control before it gets out of your grip.

people suck.

6:45 PM //

Negan has spend the whole damn day driving around and burning through fuel, but he dares hope it's all been worth it when he spots a dim light shining through the cracks of an old diner's boarded-up windows.

He parks his struck for the thousandth time today and he knows that he's going to lose his shit if this turns out to be yet another dead end.

Killing the engine, Negan steps out and carefully gets closer to the building, Lucille in his right, gloved hand. He tries to get close enough to be able to look through the cracks of the boards on the windows, but he trips on something and almost falls flat on his face, making him groan in irritation.

Turning around, his grip on his bat tightens, ready the bash whatever tripped him, but he freezes and smirks when he spots three limp bodies lying on the ground, one clean entry point on each head, right between the eyes.
“Thatta girl,” he praises, putting aside the fact that he's supposed to be mad at you for a second, and taking his time to admire your clean work before walking around the building knowing damn well that you'll probably just run away again if you spot him.

“Oh, sweetheart, you better be in this shithole.”

It doesn’t take long for Negan to find a broken window and he’s grateful for the opening but pissed that, if you are in there, you didn't bother to block or secure it.

The modest opening lands him into a small break-room and he quietly makes his way to the door, ears straining, and body wound tight, only to be greeted by the sharp end of one of your arrows aimed at his forehead, right between his eyes, the second the door cracks the tiniest bit open.

“You're really loud,” you observe in a faint whisper, your head slightly tilted to the side.

“Shit, that supposed to be my line, darlin’,” Negan chuckles, hands up, careful not to trigger you into letting your arrow slip from your fingertips. You take the shot; you get the kill. He's all too aware of his position.

“Wh-What?” Your head curiously tilts further to your left as you slowly lower your bow, your forehead creased with confusion. You look so lost and he gets off on how innocent you are, not getting any of his grossly sexual jokes.

“Never mind, doll. Now, c'mon, we're going-”

“I'm not going anywhere with you,” you calmly correct, which doesn't sit well with him.

You can see his body tense as he examines you, spotting fresh blood on your clothes. He sees that you're being careful not to put too much of your weight on your left leg and quickly understands that the wound in your calf must hurt you and any patience he thought he could have going into this completely vanishes.

“This ain't a fucking discussion, I'm bringin' you back with me and that's that. Fucking Hell! You're really fuckin' stupid, you know that? What the hell came over you to just run off when you can't even fuckin’ stand straight for fuck's sake!”

You flinch and take a small step back, hurt by his words. Though you don't mean to let them get to you, your mind still processes what’s been said as something hurtful.

Slowly, you lower your weapon until it's loosely hanging by your side before turning your back on Negan and walking away from him to go back to the comfort of the small fire you've started in an old steel bin in front of the sofa.

You can feel his gaze burning holes in the back of your skull but you try to ignore it and just take a seat, putting your hands up above the warm fire burning in front of you and letting your bow rest at your feet, keeping it within arm’s reach out of habit.
With a sigh and a frown, you slowly tap the empty spot beside you, silently inviting Negan to come sit down instead of standing there like an idiot and, to your surprise, he *silently* takes the invitation.

The gruff man comes to sit next to you, completely silent, and it's almost weird to you not to hear him make an unnecessary comment or talk shit for once. It's a welcome change for your aching head. "You hungry?" You ask in a whisper, making him look at you in disbelief like you've just grown a second head.

"Go ahead, tell me all about how stupid I am. I know it's burning your tongue, Negan," you invite, already sick and tired of the way he's looking at you.

You hear him sigh and feel him shift next to you but pay him no mind as he looks outside through the planks of wood covering the windows from the inside.

There's a somewhat soft thud as he slowly settles his bat, Lucille, on the floor, the handle of the weapon leaning against the sofa always within his reach. Your eyes shift his way when you hear a click and then statics. "Boss," a voice comes through the small black box, "we've got no signs of her so far, maybe we should-"

_of course he sent out a fucking search party._

"I got her Dwight, call off the others and head back, it's dark out," Negan sternly orders.

Dwight. You remember that guy. He seemed somewhat decent, that is, of course, until he decided to grab you and drag out around like a freaking ragdoll so... Yeah, kind of a deal breaker. "Oh, yeah, okay. Sure thing, boss."

"Everythin' alright?" Negan asks, his voice so scruffy it sounds like his throat is coated in sandpaper.

_that can’t be comfortable..."

"Yeah, no, everything's fine. Everyone's safe, s'just- Uh..." The man on the other side of the walkie hesitates and you see one of Negan's eyebrow quirk up. It's almost comical how quickly this man gets annoyed.

"Spill it the fuck out, Dwight." To your surprise, Negan doesn't sound pissed, if anything, he seems amused by his man's hesitation to speak freely to him.

.um... yikes?

"Well, I mean, what do I tell the girls? I mean, they're gonna ask where you are, y'know?"

"You fuckin' tell 'em that it's none of their fuckin' business, to go the fuck to sleep and not cause any goddamn problems." The words sound so nonchalant yet hold so much threat in them that it's almost scary.

"Got it. Be safe out there."

"Yeah. Tell Simon I've put you in charge of the compound while I'm gone."
“Alright, I'll keep things running.”

“Yeah,” Negan sighs before putting the small device away and turning to look at you, clearly waiting for you to ask him about the conversation he's just had with Dwight, but you can't be bothered.

You're blankly staring at the flames in front of you, lost in your thoughts until his hand gently taps your shoulder to bring you back to him and you flinch at the contact. “Wh-What?” You whisper with a frown, your eyes glued to the fire in front of you.

“We're staying here for tonight, s'too dark to move.”

“You need to stop acting like I don't mean what I freaking say,” you counter, your frown deepening, “and that includes me saying I'm not going anywhere with you.”

Negan chuckles at your own censoring even though you're clearly not in a laughing mood. It amuses him and it pisses you off. “Hate to break it to ya but some people can actually form a sentence without punctuating every three words with an insult.”

“When they can even form a sentence that is, huh?” He counters.

shithead.

“C'mon, say it. Just once? For me, baby doll.” His tone is smug but, surprisingly, not mocking.

didn't even know that was possible.

“Stop, you're being annoying.” You're not sure how you meant for your voice to come out right then, but a whine definitely wasn't it.

With a sigh, you let yourself slide off the couch and screw your eyes shut when your sore butt makes contact with the hard ground, Lucille's touch still lingering. If Negan notices your discomfort, he doesn't make a point to comment on it, so you'll give him that. Though it is simple common decency.

“What came over you, darlin'? Why d'you run away?” He suddenly asks after a few seconds of radio-silence.

You give a silent shrug, not wanting to tell him that the idea of him coming back to take you away scared you beyond belief and that you're also terrified of the idea of losing your freedom.

He's a stranger, he doesn't need to know, and you shouldn't feel bad for not telling him... I mean, you do, but that's not the point because it's not about him.

You hear him move around on the couch and see him put his head in his hands, his elbows resting on his thighs. He lets out a deep sigh. “Look, I get it. The whole “one of mine” shit pissed you off and probably freaked you the hell out too and- Look- Fuckin' hell- I didn’t mean for it to and I shouldn’t have phrased it that way either.”
“I just… Wh-What is it exactly you want from me, Negan? I-I don't understand…”

“I don't fuckin’ know. We done with the questions now, doll?” You know he's getting irritated by the tone of his voice. Good for him, but so are you. You're tired all of the cryptic bullshit you're being served.

“Not like you're really givin' me answers anyway,” your voice is a whisper but it's loud enough for him to catch it.

He sighs, like you're the one being irritating and simply states; “I have my reasons, darlin’.”

'k, good for you.

“'Course,” you breathe out, “s'all about you.” At this point, your forehead will disappear if your frown gets any deeper.

“Wow, okay, that hurts.” Negan straightens up and brings his hand up to his heart, clutching at the shirt covering his torso like he’s hurt. “You've just hurt my feelings, doll. How fucking rude of you.”

You watch from the corner of your left eye as he slowly lets himself fall down on the couch, playing dead, a cocky smirk on his lips, and it actually gets a small giggle -that you’ll never admit to- out of you. It's not loud but he still catches it. “Damn, I fucking love that sound,” he coos, closing his eyes as if he's replaying the sound in his head.

You feel your cheeks heat up and turn your head to the right, not wanting him to see it. “Ugh, I'm still dyin’ over here, sweetheart. Aaand, I'm pretty sure that only a kiss'll bring me back to life... And you gotta put your heart and tongue into it, too.”

You’ll probably forever question where this sudden bravado came from but, before you can think twice about it, you crawl over to him and slowly get close to his face, keeping yourself on the floor not wanting to have to climb on his body to get to his face. He seems surprised to see you there and watches as you carefully lean close him to get to his ear and slowly whisper to him; “Die then, ya bum.”
You're both sitting in a somewhat comfortable silence, Negan's eyes fixed on you after the little stunt you've pulled while yours are back to being locked-on to the fire in front of you, trying to ignore the heaviness of his gaze.

"Okay, so, maybe you should've tried to play with him."

"D'you take a look 'round the place before gettin' comfortable, darlin'?" He finally breaks the silence and you could deflate you're so relieved.

"Yes," is your short, whisper of an answer. You don't like that he's even asking you that question, like you're stupid enough to just settle somewhere without checking the place out.

"If he only knew.

"You sure about that? 'Cause I fucking came in here through a broken window, y'saw that?" Your face scrunches up and you let out a small sigh.

"Yes, Negan, I saw," you tiredly admit, not really wanting to be having this conversation with him. He's not your dad; he's a stranger trying really hard to insert himself in a position of power in your life.

"Then why in the holy fuck didn't you cover it up or some shit? Are you really that fucking st-"

"Call me stupid one more time and I won't be responsible for my actions anymore," you cut him off, too drained to deal with this asshole of a stranger who's already crossed one too many lines in less than forty-eight hours.

"s'almost impressive, really. being that big of a douche."

You hear him chuckle and feel the spot next to you on the couch dip, his right shoulder making contact with your left one as he settles right next to you. You try not to let it bother you. It's not working.

"Stubborn. I was gonna say that you're really fuckin' stubborn, doll." You let out a huff and he laughs and grins because that only furthermore makes his point a valid one.

"You didn't cover that shit up 'cause feelin' safe freaks ya out, doesn't it?"

"Okay, may have underestimated his ability to read people a bit... maybe he's not that dense."
Slowly, you turn your head to look at him and realize that he's way closer to you than you've originally anticipated he would be. Without a word, you quickly get up, feeling uneasy after what he's just pointed out, and make your way towards the old diner's kitchen.

“Y’want something to eat or not?” You ask, shifting the attention away from you and bringing back the fact that he didn't answer you when you've asked earlier on, but don't wait for his answer as you push passed the big doors leading into the kitchen.

You take a moment to compose yourself and then make your way to the big stoves and open the gas on one of them before flicking your lighter over it, creating a bunch of small, bright blue and red flames. You jump and almost burn yourself when you hear a low whistle straight in your right ear, making you turn around only to end up getting crushed into Negan's chest.

how the fuck does he do that? follow-up question; can he stop?

“God! You ever heard of personal space?” You grumpily mumble, slightly annoyed and frustrated when you feel yourself blushing at how close you two are. It's not him specifically, you're just not used, and frankly are a little scared, to be so physically close to somebody.

“Aw, someone's all grumpy, uh?” He mocks and, by God, you're a fucking saint for not slamming his stupid face into the flames behind you. “How the hell do they still have gas in this place?” He asks, actually seeming genuinely surprised, and gets closer to the working stove to inspect it.

do not shove his face in it… do not...

“Uh, it’s- it’s running on an independent tank, most pipes were broken but I fixed one of them up as best as I could to have at least one of 'em up and running for the night... S'running on fumes though.”

“You got that shit working all by yourself?” He turns to look at you, his grin slowly turning into a smirk; you decide you don't like it. “Like a big girl, huh?”

“Aha, yeah, real funny, old man.” You watch as his smirk goes back to a smile and he slightly leans back as laughs.

“Da-a-mn! Here's that mouth Simon told me about!”

Rolling your eyes, you turn away from him to fetch food from the small storage room connected to the kitchen, grabbing pasta and getting back out in the kitchen just to see Negan leaning against the counter-top next to the lit stove, his eyes fixed on you.

You decide not to pay him no mind and just put the box next to the stove before putting water to boil on the fire.

With a little jump, you sit on top of the steel island in the middle of the kitchen, kicking your feet slightly as you mindlessly keep your eyes on the small flames licking at the pot the water is boiling
“What?” You ask when you feel Negan persistent eyes on you and find him wearing that damn smirk of his the second your eyes find him.

“Oh man, uh?”

“Oh, I'm sorry, did I hurt your ego?” You honestly have no idea what’s with this guy and bringing this attitude out of you but you’re not gonna question it. You’ll have time to be embarrassed later.

“Why don't you go and get some comfort from one of the many women you’re collecting? M'sure you'll be over it in no time.” You didn't mean for it to come out that way but even you can hear how bitter you are, and it makes you frown and look down at your kicking, booted feet.

where'd that come from? stop it. i don't like it.

The chuckle Negan lets out is not a genuine one, it's humorless and kind of cold as he looks straight back at you, his jaw rippling as it rolls beneath his skin.

“Watch your mouth, darlin'. Remember who you're talkin' to.” You can’t help but scoff at that, irritated by his gigantic ego, and look up at him through your lashes.

“And who, exactly, is it I’m talking to, huh?”

“The man who saved your pretty, sorry ass, girly.”

You jump off the counter, a little angry now, your hands clenched into tight fists. “You know what? No. I didn't ask for any of this crap you're putting me through. Your men literally dragged me to you, I was doing just fine, I didn't need saving! The man that saved my ass, huh? Try; the stranger who forced himself into my life and won't get off my back 'cause he needs to feel some sort of control and I'm not handing it over to him.”

You don't let him answer knowing damn well that he'll just spit venom in your face, and storm out of the kitchen to the storage room, which hides a small door that leads to a small, closed off place outside, and you make sure to slam it shut just for good measure.

Once outside, you take a deep breath and look around you. You're surrounded by a thin, fragile looking steel fence and there's a few walkers aimlessly walking around the parking lot on the other side of it. Two of them spot you and come pushing against the fence and you curiously walk over to them, stopping a few feet away, your eyes fixed on their rotten fingers wiggling through the holes in the fence.

With a shaky breath, you reach for your knife, which is safely tucked into your jeans, and push the blade in-between their eyes, watching as the limp bodies fall to the ground one after the other with a heavy thump. A man and a woman. Seems like they've been gone a while too.

You feel a knot form at the pit of your stomach and decide to try and ignore it as best as you can,
but your breathing quickly gets out of control and you know this is happening whether you want it to or not.

Getting away from the fence, you go sit against the wall of the diner, trying to calm yourself but your hands are shaking, and you feel tears rolling down your face though there’s no noise coming out of you. It’s just tears and silent shakes, the ones that make your belly jump.

You bring your legs up to your chest, put your head into your knees and try to breathe as best as you can but it’s not doing much.

no, not now, please. not with him around, please

With a shaky hand, you blindly reach for the old shirt still tugged into your jeans, dangling on your hip, and nestle it right between your face and thighs to nuzzle into the fabric as white noise invades your ears and the anxiety drowns you, the world around you fading away.

“Dad, I’m scared. Oh G-God...” You whisper repeatedly into the soft shirt that once belonged to your father, trying to calm yourself down. Like it would somehow lighten the weight on your shoulders.

“I’m sure he's really fuckin' proud of you, doll,” Negan’s voice pierces through the veil and you cling to it hoping that it’ll pull you out of that dark place but the bitch in your head reminds you of just how vulnerable you are right now, how fragile you’re showing yourself to be, how pathetic-

You register your weight being moved around, the huge shiver you’re sent at the contact of big hands on either side of your waist, and you feel your body getting stuck between reacting negatively to the touch or relaxing into it, but then you’re settled over Negan’s lap, your head limply falling into the red scarf wrapped around his neck and you can feel his scruff on your temple as you cry every single last drop of liquid in your body into the fabric; and it’s okay.

Your body doesn’t object to the contact though your shoulders and thighs stay a little tense and you keep your hands between your parted legs, still balled up into your dad’s shirt and fidgeting with the soft cotton, relaying on that to keep you grounded.

“Y-you weren't- you're not su-surp... You- You're not supposed t-to see me like that- I-” You're overwhelmed with your tears and you feel like you're about to explode when you realize that you're letting him see just how vulnerable you are and you hate it. You hate that it doesn't feel as wrong as it should in your mind.

“Hey, t's okay, baby doll,” Negan gently coos and, if you weren't so busy being a wreck at the moment, you'd be freaked out at the gentleness he's proving capable of. Especially when he was exhibiting how much of a dick he can be just mere seconds ago.

Your hands slowly come to an halt and go limp when you feel a gentle hand at your back, and you barely have time to register the change when you’re suddenly being lifted up, your legs getting a
mind of their own and quickly wrapping themselves up and around Negan’s waist as he gets up off the ground still holding you, the firm hand on your mid-back keeping you secure and flush against his chest.

“C’mon, you're fucking freezing, angel.” His lips are pressed to your temple as he gently hushes you, softly rocking you in his arms to try and soothe you a little as he carries you back inside the building.

Usually, physical contact is too much when you’re in this state, it’s a huge sensory overload and you find it more distressing than soothing, but, somehow, Negan’s touch successfully coax you out of that dark place and your body doesn’t seem to be having a hard time processing the contact.

Once inside, he gently settles you down on the couch and takes his leather jacket off to slip it on your shaking frame, closing it before kissing your forehead. The sudden contact, no matter how soft, startles you a bit but you find that your eyelids have fluttered shut to let you relish in it, your craving for affection showing through.

“Gonna get you some' to eat, you stay there,” Negan instructs before walking off to the kitchen.

You take the opportunity of solitude to wipe at your tear-swollen eyes and runny nose with the backs of your hands and, with a sniffle, you bend down and over to grab your backpack, which is still sitting on the floor, and hook your middle finger through the handle at the top to use it as leverage to bring the bag to over to you.

Settling it on your lap, you giddily dig the warm fleece blanket Jesus gave you out of it. You know you'll eventually have to come up with an excuse for yourself for not taking Negan's jacket off even after you've found another way to keep warm but, for now, you'll just stick with; “I'm cold and I'll take all the extra layers I can get.”

It's not a lie but it definitely does not explain why you're shoving your nose into the lapels of the jacket and taking big whiffs of it in like the leather holds the only breathable air left in the world.

maybe it does, okay? ... you don’t know... there no way you’d know.

The sound of the heavy kitchen doors swinging open makes your head jerk up so fast you feel something pop in your neck, and Negan is walking out and up to you with two steaming plates in his hands.

oh... this is so fucking weird.

Without a word, Negan hands you a plate which you take with shaky hands and place on your blanket-covered lap, before sitting down on the couch himself and taking his glove off of his right hand, his own plate settled next to him.

“Listen, darlin', I get it. You feel like crap and I'm sorry, but you gotta eat somethin’.”
You’re not too sure why but your eyes fill with tears and your voice wavers as you speak; “I just… I’m n-not… I’m not used to… I-I dunno,” you give up with a shrug and shyly look up at him, your face scrunched up and your eyes glistening with tears.

Truth is; this is odd to you. Someone taking care of you feels strange because you’re not used to it. You’ve always done everything all on your own, you took care of you and that’s how it’s always been because it had to be.

To have a complete stranger do that for you is overwhelming in ways that you can’t understand. You don’t know if you’re put-off or just freaked-out because you’re not used to the attention.

“I get it. S’a hell of a lot all for one day, huh, doll?” Though you know he’s not really asking, you still nod your head before looking back down at your steaming plate of spaghetti.

“Eat a little, sweetheart,” he asks of you. “We’ll talk after, promise.”

There’s a silent nod from you but the way you’re looking down at your dinner doesn’t seem promising. Negan already knows what you’re about to tell him before it can even leave your mouth.

“Get some rest if you want, doll, we’ll make sure you get something to eat after,” he interrupts you before you can phrase the dreaded “I’m not hungry,” which he knows is bullshit, but he’s not gonna push and risk sending you back to the place you just were.

Honestly? He much prefers the way you’ve just ever so briefly looked at him and the tiniest little smile you gave him before putting your plate down on the floor and curling into a ball on the couch, your back resting against it.

Negan watches with a small smirk as you try to fight against the imminent closing of your heavy eyelids, your face lit up by the fire burning a few feet away.

Sleep quickly claims you though, you were no match for it, but let’s be honest; it wasn’t a fair fight, so he’ll give you that, he thinks to himself as he reclines against the couch’s cushioned back and let’s his head fall against the leather with a sigh, wondering how the hell he’s gonna pull off bringing you back with him without having to force you into. He will if he has to, but he’d rather not.

Negan will admit; he loves conflict because he thrives in it. He’s an asshole and he’s aware of it so you can’t really use that as leverage when arguing with him. He’s not a man who’s afraid to get angry and loud either but, with you, fucked up as it, he feels like he could easily just coax you into things without having to raise his voice.

“Gonna be a fuckin’ shit-show,” he mumbles to himself whilst keeping an eye on your sleeping form, a small smirk on his face when he sees that you’ve shoved your thumb in your mouth.

Yeah, you’re down for the count and he’ll let you have that moment because he gets the feeling
you don’t usually sleep all-too-well.

12th January;

3:15 AM //

Your eyes slowly open, your head aches and it hurts when you breathe but you still manage to slowly come to, squinting a little against the light the fire a few feet away from you is emitting. Lazily stretching on the couch, you wince when your body protests the stretch and you feel the stitches in your left calf and forearm tighten and pull along with the rest of your body.

“Easy, doll.” You jump a little at the sound of Negan’s voice. Your sleepy mind clearly had temporarily forgotten about his presence and you’re not used to being around people anymore so you can’t help the way your right hand twitches as you stop it mid-motion from getting to your knife.

With an incoherent mumble, you carefully push yourself up onto your elbows to then slowly properly sit on the couch, your legs crossed one under the other, and you’re still grumpily muttering as you try and rub the sleep from your eyes with closed fists.

It takes a minute for you to blink the pressure you’ve just put on your eyes away and, when things aren’t so blurry anymore, you’re greeted with hazel orbs carefully observing you.

“Hey,” you sleepily greet him, blinking and squinting as you look down at the watch on your wrist and you can’t help but smile a little. It’s been a long time since you’ve had any more than three straight hours of sleep.


“Sore and achy. Almost stabbed ya just then too,” you admit with a small smile as you carefully shift on the couch to put your booted feet on the floor, mindful of your injured calf.

“Good to know,” he chuckles, rubbing his eyes and you can tell that he’s been sleeping, though he still looks exhausted. You guess you two have way different sleeping patterns and needs that come with having much different lifestyles.

“Sorry,” you mumble, still groggy with sleep, “m’just not used to having people around is all.”
Slapping a hand on your mouth just in time to cover a yawn, your eyes scan the place and land on a little plastic lunchbox sitting on top of your bag, filled with the spaghetti’s you didn’t eat earlier.

You almost feel guilty for not eating it because it’s not every day you get to have a proper, warm meal, but the mere thought of doing so makes you want to vomit. You know that’s a problem you need to solve but, honestly, with everything else going on; it’s been pushed pretty damn far down on your list of priorities.

All-too-aware of Negan’s eyes on you, you silently reach for your bag and wordlessly put the plastic container in before pulling the bible you’ve found back at the church two days ago out, tearing some pages out of it to feed the fire you’ve started yesterday because it’s running on fumes by now.

Slipping off the couch, you go to kneel in front of the steel bin the fire is dimly burning in and start throwing the pieces of paper in, your eyes glued to the way the flames grow as they’re being feed.

“Ya know, some people would be pissed to see you burn a bible, darlin',” Negan says, his voice even scruffier from sleep.

“I guess some people are just that lucky they get to be bothered by the little things, huh?” You observe more to yourself than to him. “When you don't have a choice, you make do.”

Slowly, Negan sits up, rubbing his eyes awake like you did seconds prior to that before looking at you. “You wanna eat somethin’?” He asks gesturing to your bag with a nod of his head.

“N-No. No, I’m alright,” you whisper, keeping an eye on what you’re doing not to get burned.

He leans back into the couch, running his hands over his face. “What happened to ya, baby doll?”

You sigh, your shoulders slumping, before crawling back on your previous spot of the couch.

“You caught me in a moment you weren't supposed to. Just- Just drop it. Please,” you plead with him, referring to the panic attack he’s found you in the middle of earlier on.

“Not what I meant, sweetheart,” he points out but doesn’t insist and you frown a little, wondering what he actually meant if he wasn’t referring to what happened a few hours ago.

Slightly turning your head to look at him, you see him looking off ahead and take your time to really take him in. His white t-shirt is clinging to his chest and shoulders, he looks even broader without his jacket on. His hair is a little messier than they were when you first saw him, and he looks a little on edge.

Your eyes then find his right hand, the one he usually covers up, and his knuckles catch your attention. They're covered in dry, cracked blood, bruised, and the skin on two of them seem to have cracked.

“Is he okay?” You ask in a whisper, your eyes glued to his knuckles.
“Who the hell are you talking about, darlin’?” Negan questions, turning his head to look back at you.

“Paul. Jesus. Did you hurt him?” You can see the confusion written all over his face when you look away from his hand and back up at him.

“Listen, I uh... I don't, like, know everything a-and all but I'm not- I'm not stupid e-either,” you explain with a frown, nervously pulling at your fingers. “You're here, which means you went back to Hilltop and saw that I wasn't there anymore. I've seen the way you-you've pushed him around the first time and-and then you show up wi-with bloody knuckles...”

Negan chuckles and looks at you with a shake of his head. “He's fine. Promise.” A small “'kay.” is all he gets from you. “What's with you two, anyway?”

“Wh-what d'you mean?” He rolls his eyes. “C'mon, darlin’, you're not asking me how he's doing just to ask.”

“Yeah, s'not like people can a-actually care about one another without it being about s-something else.” You shake your head and frown in thought, his words not sitting right with you.

“Fair enough,” he thankfully leaves it at that though he keeps his eyes on you.

You both stay silent for a little while until you start fidgeting on your spot on the couch, feeling uneasy. You need to move.

“Okay, do whatever you want but I'm moving,” you announce with a whisper as you get up off the couch, grab your backpack and start walking around to make sure that you're not forgetting anything.

“What the hell does that mean you're “movin””? You're not goin’ anywhere, it's still dark out,” Negan scolds as he follows hot on your tail.

“I have a flashlight,” you counter, not paying attention to him.

That is until his right hand shoots out to harshly grab on to your left forearm making you wince in pain. Your wounds still haven't healed, and his grip seems to loosen up a bit at the sound, but he still keeps a firm hand on you to pull you flush against his body, careful not to pull too hard and break your stitches.

“You're really fuckin’ stubborn, princess, but, when I fuckin’ say something? You listen. Am I fucking clear or do I have to let Lucille remind you?”

“No!” He's barely finished his sentence when the word leaves your mouth. “No, I'll listen,” you promise, scared at the idea of a reunion with that damn bat.

Negan chuckles at your moment of panic and kisses the top of your head ignoring the slight flinch
you give, and his right hand leaves your forearm to come up and carefully caress your left cheek with his thumb.

“Good girl, now, was that so complicated?”

yes. yes it fucking was.

You feel yourself blush at the praise and let your head drop, looking down at the ground, but Negan's hand jerks it back up, forcing you to look up at him and, oh how surprising; you're greeted with a shit-eating grin. “Was it?” He asks again, slightly tightening his grip on your jaw to make a point.

“N-no,” you quietly cave, your cheeks burning so hot it’s uncomfortable at this point.

“You're gonna have to learn to behave and listen to me, doll, ’cause I won't have you giving me attitude back at the Sanctuary. Are we clear?”

“I-” you hesitate for a second but decide to stay calm and stand your grounds, “I've already told you, I'm not going anywhere with you, Negan.” Your voice surprisingly doesn't waver but it's still not at full volume and the shrug you give afterwards is only there as a buffer.

He's about to speak when loud banging noises shut him up. You both look at the big windows of the diner to see that there's a bunch of walkers scratching the glass outside and banging on it.

Wooden boards won't hold them for long if they get through the damn glass.

of course he just had to raise his voice...

“Is it still too dark for your liking or can we get a move on now, your majesty?” You spit out, almost surprised at the sharpness and sarcasm in your own voice.

man, can't it always be like that?

Negan glares at you, pissed off because he knows that he's gonna have to let you be right this time.

“Fuckin’ shit,” he snarls as he makes his way back to the couch to grab his bat before walking back to you and grabbing your left hand in his to pull you along. “Let's go then, doll.”

Your eyes are glued to his hand holding yours, completely engulfing it, your brain in awe at the foreign contact. When you finally snap out of it, you're standing in the small room Negan came in through last night, standing by his side.

He's looking down at you with a smirk when you look up at him, your hand still in his. “Ladies first,” he declares with a wink.

You let out a small sigh and try to hide the frown creasing your forehead when he lets go of your hand, though not without giving it a little squeeze goodbye.
Pushing your backpack off your shoulders, you walk up to the broken window and reach up to try and get a hold on the edge but quickly realize that it's too high-up for you to reach from inside.

You hear Negan chuckle behind you and flinch when you feel his hands firmly grabbing your waist to pull you up without so much as a grunt of effort and, once you've crawled out, he hands you your bag and his bat, and you feel yourself hesitating to take it.

“C'mon, doll, she doesn't bite ‘less you piss her off or you ask real nice, promise.”

Carefully, you take Lucille in your hands and wait for Negan to come up, your entire body perking up when you hear walkers coming around the diner, clearly attracted by the noise the man isn't even try not to make.

*how did he even make it that far?*

“What in the holy fuck are doing in here!”

“Im helping you, you jerk,” you explain through gritted teeth. You honestly have no idea what the hell you're doing. You could have left the obnoxious asshole in here to die, problem solved, but you know you couldn’t have gone through with it.

You push him off the door and quickly take his place. You’re smaller though and end up getting pushed around through the wooden door, the dead seemingly unwilling to give up on the idea of getting in. Why would they? There are two portions of their favorite meal right within their grasps.

“Like hell I am! I'm not leaving you in this shithole! Are you fucking insane?!”

“Just trust me. Negan, please!” You give him a small nod, your eyes pleading, and he groans out in frustration.

“What's the fucking plan here?!”

You don't have time to answer when the walkers in the building start to lose patience and push
harder on the door, forcing you to apply more of your body weight into it to keep it closed though there's still a big enough gap that some of them are able to peek their head through.

“Negan, please! I'm smaller and faster than you, I can easily out-run them, just get out of here!”

There's a frown on his face as he takes a step back and decides to trust you even though he doesn't like leaving you to deal with this shit all on your own, especially when he doesn't see a way for you to do it that doesn't include you getting gutted.

With one last good look at you, he gets a hold of the broken window frame and easily lifts himself up, getting out of the small room. Once he's out, he quickly grabs Lucille and swings your bag on one of his shoulders, his eyes scanning the area for any threats. Nothing.

“Y/n?” He calls out for you as he pushes himself down to the ground to look through the small window he just came out of and his blood runs cold when he sees the room empty aside from what he counts to be six bodies, limp on the carpeted floor, but no signs of you.

“C'mon, doll, this shit ain't funny. Where the fuck are you?” He whispers to himself. “Stupid fucking kid. Why d'I listen to-”

“Hey,” Negan jumps back up onto his feet when he hears your small voice calling out.

From head to toe, you're covered in blood and guts but you're still wearing that shy little smile of yours.

“Fucking hell, doll,” he exclaims with a nervous chuckle. “How the hell- What-”

“Told you I'd handle it... Guess we're even now. You've saved my "sorry" butt and I've saved yours.”

He sighs and cups your face in his hands to make sure you don't look away from him, the unannounced contact making you flinch. “I didn't mean it like that, baby doll.”

You try to look down, but his hands firmly keep your head in place. “We- We should- We should g-get going,” you timidly whisper, trying to get his attention away from you.

Negan whispers a soft “yeah” and his hands leave your face, his right one finding your left one again as he walks the two of you around the front of the diner towards his truck.

Taking a quick look around, his eyebrows shoot up when he spots a bunch of corpses lying on the concrete ground, your bloody footprints in the middle of it all.

“Good fucking God! I knew you were holdin' back on me. Look at the fuckin' mess you’ve made, doll.”

_let's just take that as a compliment..._
He looks back at you with a smirk as he opens the door on the passenger side of his truck for you and you slowly get in, letting him close the door behind you.

You absently watch as he makes his way in front of the vehicle to get to the driver's side. Once he's settled in, you look at him and hesitate a bit before asking; “Now, what?”

“Fucked if I know. How about we just go lookin’ around, huh? How’s that sound?”

“Sure,” you shrug, looking out the window and sighing deeply, knowing you're not getting out of this.

*how come we always end up with the crazy ones??*

The truck rumbles as the engine comes to live and Negan guides it back onto the road, driving to God knows where, as he whistles contently and seems to be completely at ease with the whole situation.

*good for him.*

You're not.

With a yawn, you look around the cabin and spot something shiny on the dash. Curiosity gets the best of you and you lean over to gently grab it and see what it is, but Negan's voice makes you jump and freeze in your movements.

“Wouldn't recommend ya look at this crap, doll. Just sayin'.” Your curiosity only grows twice its size at his words, and you decide to go around his warning and look at the small item that you now realize is a polaroid picture.

Frowning, you bring it closer to you to look at it and feel your throat close when you see that it's a photograph of a completely bashed-in head, the person's body is completely untouched but his head has been smashed to a pulp. You feel sick to your stomach.

*who... what... the fuck...*

“What—What… N-Negan? What is that?” Your voice is back to a hushed whisper right when it seemed like you were starting to finally relax around the man.

“That, darlin', is how I deal with pains in my ass. Bash 'em,” he casually explains with a proud smile on his face, clearly not seeing the same problem you are with his statement and actions.

Without even thinking twice, you reach for the handle on the door and open it, making Negan stop the truck abruptly. “Y/n! What the fuck!? Where the hell do you think you're goin'?”

“I'm not staying with you. I can't, I... I'm gonna be sick.” You grab your backpack and jump off the seat, slamming the door of the truck before you start to head off like you usually do but you're barely passed the front of the truck when Negan stops you.
“Unless you want to end up like that son of a bitch, you better get your ass back in the fuckin’ truck, darlin’,” he calls from his seat in the truck, his voice low and threatening.

You stop in your steps and turn back around, looking at him through the windshield. Your backpack slips from your shoulder as they slump, your body shakes and tears fill your eyes.

“Do it,” you whisper with a shrug. You're too tired to deal with this whole situation. You’re too tired of everything, really.

Negan frowns and gets out of the truck, not even bothering to turn the engine off, before slowly walking up to you, making you step back and away from him.

“You askin’ me to fucking kill you?” He asks, tilting his head to look at you since you're looking down at the road, clearly avoiding him.

“What’s the point of all this anyway?” Your voice is so hushed you're not sure if you even spoke up and just had a thought.

“Allright, listen up here, darlin’. I'm gonna ask you one more fuckin' time; what the hell happened to you?”

You let out a loud sob and curl-up against a tree-trunk by the side of the road behind you. You don't want to tell this man anything about you, but you also really do. You just need someone to talk to, someone to help you carry all that weight you have on your shoulders.

You can't do it all by yourself anymore and you hate that he's pushing this out of you because that’s not how you function.

“I- I can't-

“Yes, you can, and you fucking will. Not here though, we're gonna find a place to crash in first. C’mon, doll.” He gets a hold of your shaking body and ignores the little “no” you unconsciously push out as he carries you back to his struck, shutting the door once he's put you in your seat and fastened your seatbelt.

It's a long, silent drive and you let a small smile appear on your face when you get to see the very first rays of sun, the sky colored with a soft pink.

You frown and pull your head away from the passenger's side window when the truck comes to a halt.

“Here,” Negan announces, turning the keys in the ignition and shoving them in his pocket before getting out of the truck and you follow, confused as to what he means by “here”.

“There's... There’s nothing here,” you quietly observe as you scan the area. There's nothing but
trees surrounding you and road ahead.

“\text{I know. C'mere,}” he gestures for you to come to him as he stands in front of his big black truck. You look at him, confused, but still do as you're told.

“\text{Wha-}” you let out a surprised squeal as he lifts you up above him and orders you to grab-on to the edge of the truck. You do, still slightly confused, and push yourself the rest of the way up before settling on the truck's roof.

Your eyes widen and you let out a shaky breath when you see that, from where you're sitting, you can see the sunrise perfectly above the trees. You're so into it, you don't even realize that Negan's followed you up and is now looking at you, amused and satisfied to see you in awe in front of the scenery.

“\text{Better?}” He carefully asks.

“\text{Better,}” you absently repeat, your eyes glued to the first colors of the slowly rising sun painting the very early morning sky.

You quickly realize that, once again, this is how Negan says sorry without having to say it out loud, but it doesn't matter to you. You've only met him two days ago and you're already sick and tired of fighting with him, so you don't question it, you just let things be.

For now.
06:30 AM //

Everything is so calm and, for a short instant, it's just you. You shut everything out, erase Negan too, and just let yourself get lost in the sight of the rising sun.

For a short moment, it feels right to be alive, like things aren't as wrong as they always seem to be.

Just for that short little moment in time, you allow yourself to take pride in the fact that you've made it that far all by yourself. You take pride in never getting greedy when it'll be easy for you to be in this world, in never letting the bad things you've been through shape you into someone you've been haunted by the idea of becoming for years and still are to this day.

You've made it through thick and thin and, even though you're all beaten, bloody and bruised, a little lost too; you're still here. You're still here and it has to count for something. You need to make it count for something.

You know that you're softer than most and, it took some time, but you've learned to made your peace with that. After all, your dad did teach you very early-on in life that a gentle soul is power and strength; never a weakness.

It's so easy to let the bad things of this world take over you but, being soft? Well, you've came to term with the fact that it might be your biggest strength no matter how looked-down upon a trait it is nowadays.

“What's on your mind darlin’?” Negan's voice pops the bubble around you and brings you back down to that harsh reality of yours.

“You were wrong… About me not wanting to feel completely safe? It's not that I don't want to, it's... It's just... S'complicated,” you confess to him with a frown, your eyes still glued to the horizon. You know you didn't answer his question, but you felt the need to vent after he's busted
your bubble so suddenly.

“Try me, doll,” his voice still holds that cockiness to it, but you know that he's genuinely leaving the door wide open for conversation. That conversation.

You let yourself soak in the sight of the pretty early morning sky before screwing your eyes shut, your nose scrunching up with the movement.

“Have you—” You take a shaky breath in and let it out with a sigh, “Have you ever been hurt? Like... real bad?” You ask looking down at the palms of your hands now.

“Nah, seems I've always been the bad guy of the story,” he admits with a shrug, turning his head to look at you.

“Oh...” It’s barely a whisper but Negan catches it and watches as you curl up on yourself, bringing your legs up against your chest and resting your chin on your knees, your feet on the edge of the truck's roof.

“How 'bout you, baby doll? I mean, it's pretty damn obvious you've been fucked over but, shit, kinda makes ya wonder just how much, y'know?”

“I, uh...” You let out a nervous laugh, digging your fingers in the sides of your calves. “My- My mom.”

“What about her?” He cautiously pushes, curious now that you're letting him step the tiniest bit closer to the walls you've build around yourself.

“I don't- Well... I don't r-really know,” you admit with a shrug, a constant frown plastered on your forehead. “My dad he... He got into a car accident and I-I was with him. I made it out, o-obviously, but uh... He- He didn't.” You feel tears coming and your throat tightening, the mere mention of him hurts, even after all these years.

“My-My mom, she uh... She changed after that night, I guess. She... I-I just... This sucks. Talking sucks,” you say with a little laugh that sounds sad even to you.

Negan gives a chuckle of his own. “Tell me 'bout it,” he teases and you almost smile. You don't know the man all that much, yet even you can tell that he's not one to openly talk about his feelings.

You guess it's kind of reassuring in some ways to have someone next to you who knows that struggle even if it's not based on the same reasons.

“You need to though, don't ya, doll?” Looking at you, he sees your eyes shining and he knows you probably can't see a damn thing right about now.

He sees your fingers nervously digging into the flesh of the outside of your calves and he briefly wonders exactly what it's gonna take for him to get you to let go of that control you so desperately always seem to be fighting to keep.
You know Negan's right. You hate to admit it, but you do need to talk about what happened. You never did, too scared that something would happen to your mom because of you but, now that she's gone, no one can take her away from you.

Hell, your mother was gone long before she died. At that point; death was just closure for you, really.

“It started wi-with really mean words, you know? She- She'd tell me that… That it should have been me, not him, and that…” You take a deep, shaky breath, “that I'd taken the only person she'd ever loved away from her, that she hated me, that she wanted me dead.” The click your throat makes as you swallow around the lump in it sounds ten times louder in your ears than it actually is.

You force a smile to try and look like you're not about to break down but miserably fail. Between the frown creasing your forehead, the unshed tears in your red-rimmed eyes and how tight and small your voice comes out; you're not fooling anyone, especially not yourself.

“She uh- She started to... b-beat me up. She tried drowning me once but, most times, she'd just lock me in-in my closet for hours, days sometimes... She- She would just leave me in there. She stopped feeding me, forced me to drink alcohol too sometimes…”

You peel your eyes away from the, now blurry, horizon to take a glimpse at Negan. His jaw is clenched, you can see it rolling and tensing beneath his skin, and his eyes are full of a whole lot of something you're not quite sure of.

Your body starts to shake, and you let out yet another nervous laugh to try and shrug the tension off. “But, hey, some people have it way worse.”

Negan's head turns to you at that, his eyes narrowed like you've just insulted his mother. “Jesus fucking Christ, y/n.”

*huh... kinda thought he had re-baptized you “doll”, good to know he actually knows your name.*

You both let a moment pass, Negan watching as you fight to even your breathing out and blink away the unshed tears drowning your eyes. Hell, you don't even know how you're holding them in at this point.

“Keep it goin’, doll. Let it the fuck out,” he nudges when he sees you've calmed down a little.

“I'm just making you angry, aren't I?” You ask, tears you thought you've had under control silently rolling down your cold cheeks, and you curl even further up into yourself, pushing your legs completely flush against your chest to try and feel a small bit safer.

“I'm not mad at you, sweetcheeks,” Negan clarifies, and, with a quiet sniffle, you turn your head to look at him, the right side of your face resting on your right knee, him sitting to your left. Your eyes flutter over his face, trying to gauge whether he's lying or not.
“Stop tryin’ to read between lines that aren’t there, darlin’. If I was mad at you, you would know.”
You frown in thought and give him a silent nod.

With a shaky intake of breath, you stay facing him, but your eyes shut as you decide to look back on a time in your life you're terrified of, and never dared to go back to because you knew it would hurt.

Living in denial of trauma can be somewhat blissful, you think. Not that it disappears but, not giving it any attention makes it somewhat less... real. It’s a weird dynamic.

“She just... didn't stop, y'know? Just... kept pouring alcohol in my mouth until I'd fall unconscious and she- she'd just leave me here just- just f-for me to-to wake up hours later and puke my guts out. I just... I was just a little girl, you know? I loved her so much. Despite everything, I loved her so much... I was only six, so I guess... I guess that makes sense,” you hear the man beside you grumble something but can't make it out.

“I-I grew up really fast, you know? Had to. She-She loved me too... I think? I- I dunno... All I know is that, sometimes, when she'd get r-really drunk, she would come into my room and just sit on the bed next to me and-and cry. She'd apologize, tell me that she loved me and... and I'd believe her.”

Your eyes open and meet Negan's for a short second before drifting away and down to the dusty roof of the truck, a frown creasing your forehead. “Every single time, I would... tell her that everything would be alright, that we'd make it through... I guess we never did,” you observe with a sad little laugh that makes your nose scrunch-up.

“She was back to hating me the morning after and I just- I'd take it because, at least, she was paying attention to me then;” a venomous scoff leaves your parted lips, "I'm that pathetic. I was so afraid to be alone, I still am... I hate being alone.”

“Well then, doll, guess that’s just one of the other many fucking things we don’t agree on. What she did to you? Now that's fuckin’ pathetic. You've been mistreated by one of the two people that's supposed to love you no fuckin' matter what and grew up to be a more decent person than a man who grew up in a somewhat stable home. Trust me, doll, I know pathetic; and this ain't it.”

You shrug, not to be dismissive but only because you can't find the energy to come up with words to answer him with.

Your body flinches and you tighten your grip around your legs when Negan's arms snake around you.

Exhausted, you go pliant and don't protest when he moves you onto his lap and brings your head down into the crook of his neck with his right hand at the base of yours, much like he’d done the night before.

Needing to ground yourself, your right hand sneaks out from between your and Negan's torso to go
and grab at his left bicep. “Y-Your skin's so cold,” you whisper, “m'such a brat. I'm w-wearing your jacket while you're out here the cold with only a-a shirt on.”

Negan lets out a chuckle and kisses the crown of your head before tightening his grip on your body. You welcome the pressure, craving something to keep you from dissociating, and let out a surprised squeal when you feel him jump off the roof of the truck all whilst carrying you like there isn’t an actual person in his arms.

“M'not cold, darlin'. You though, you're fuckin’ freezing even with my jacket on, so, back in we go.”

You let him carry you to the passenger's side of the truck and whisper a “thank you” when he carefully slips you into your seat before closing the door and going around to his side.

Climbing in, Negan starts the engine and you almost melt happily into your seat when the first thing he does is turn the heater on. You’d almost forgotten about those. Nowadays, your main sources of warmth are either clothes or fires.

“So,” he turns on his seat to look at you with a small smirk, “how about some house hunting, doll? See if we can find anything worthwhile.”

“Can we try to find one with a fireplace?” You shyly ask, nervously playing with the sleeves of his jacket which are completely engulfing your hands, your fingers peeking out from the leather up to the second knuckles.

“Hey, I may not be the finest sonuvabitch there is, but you can fuckin' talk to me, doll. If y'wanna ask me something, or ask me for something, fuckin' go for it.” You silently nod, not a hundred percent convinced that he wouldn't get pissed or shut you down if you asked for specific things. “And, yeah. Fuck yes we can, sweetcheeks.”

The truck goes back on the road and, after that, a surprisingly comfortable silence takes over in the small cabin of the truck and you slowly relax into your seat, looking out the window to occupy your hyper-active mind.

It doesn't take long for you to feel Negan's eyes on you and it makes you squirm uncomfortably in your seat. “W-what is it?” You self-consciously ask.

“Nothing,” Negan replies, his voice cocky and dripping with amusement, “you just look real fuckin' good with my jacket on is all, baby doll.”

You feel yourself blush and it actually feels like your skin is sizzling. Out of habit, you bite down on your lip and flinch when a growl vibrates through the cabin. “Don't- Bite your lip, girl.”

“I-I just… Sorry, I... Sorry.” You're confused as to why on Earth you biting your lip is such a bad thing but you don't ask questions, you just look back out the window and wait for him to stop when he’d have find a place he’d be interested in looking into.
What’s even the point of all this? Because you doubt that he’ll let you take any supply for yourself if you stumble upon anything remotely useful slash edible and it’s somewhere near seven in the morning right now so there’s no need to look for a place to crash either.

*don’t ask questions you know you won’t get clear answers to, spear us to headache, girl.*

A couple minutes of driving have gone by when you spot a really cute house right by the side of the road and jump excitedly on your seat, earning a laugh from Negan.

“Some’ caught your eye there, baby doll?” He asks, clearly amused by your excited little jump.

You squish the tip of your index finger against the window to your side, pointing at the house.

“Look how pretty it is.” You're so close to the glass that it fogs with the warmth of your breath.

“Think we could at least check it out?” You ask, turning to look at him, giving him unintentional puppy eyes.

You don’t even realize that the truck has stopped until Negan turns in his seat to look at you with a smirk on his lips and, at this point, you have to wonder if that's just the way his mouth is shaped.

“F’course we can, doll. You just gotta say please first.”

**oooof course that’s a thing...**

You nervously wiggle on your seat and take a glance back at the house you're now turning your back to. Your shoulders slump and you frown, looking down at the bench-seat you're on. “Please, Negan?”

“Good girl,” he praises with an arrogant and satisfied grin on his face, and he’s half-tempted to ask “please what” but decides not to push too much for now.

With that, you turn away from him, your cheeks burning, and stay silent as he backs the truck up on the road and brings it up the dirt-path leading up to the house, parking in front of the garage door before killing the engine.

The second the heavy vehicle goes silent; you're pushing the door open and jumping off. You bring your backpack over your right shoulder and slam the heavy door shut, Negan doing the same and waiting for you on the other side of the driveway with Lucille in hand, his body a little on edge now.

"Okay, now, I'm gonna go check the place out. You wait for me h-” You can't help the scoff you let out.

“Right, sure, okay. I'm not about to become some helpless, stupid girl just because some guy has decided to insert himself into my life out of nowhere.”

You're both surprised by your sudden outburst but you know that, if it came out, it's because it’s been lingering in your mind for quite some time now.
Negan gives you the exact same look he gave you when you spat on him two days ago back at Hilltop. “What the fuck did I say about misbehavin' and talkin' back?” He asks with the hint of a sneer tugging at his lips.

“I'm going in with or without you.” You can't believe that you're actually talking back at him and he's right there, a few steps away from you. You decide not to question it.

“I don't need you anyway,” you mumble before walking past him and towards the house.

You ignore his distant grumbling and force the front door open with your ax and your right shoulder when you find it locked. You go in the second it creaks open, not bothering to wait for him.

*ain't gonna be telling us what to do out here... ya ass.*

 Slamming your fist against one of the four walls of the foyer, you drop your bag and wait, listening for any kind of noises or movements. When you hear loud grunts echoing through the house, you carefully head further into it, walk past a huge wooden staircase, and spot a walker swaying your way as it stumbles out of the living room.

It's a woman, in a pretty, white nightgown. It's stained with old, brown-ish blood and a little torn. She, herself, doesn't look too worse for wear. Her skin is clearly rotten, her clear blue eyes lifeless and turning a milky white, but she's not missing any limbs and her guts are still in her body. Yeah, you've **definitely** seen worse.

With a kick to the knee, she goes down and you slowly follow on your knees. Taking your butterfly knife out of your jeans, you carefully push the sharp blade through her fragile skull, the body finally going limp, and you slowly get back up, your eyes glued to her for a moment.

You wouldn't be able to say why but this whole thing just doesn't seem to ever get easier for you.

Your ears perk up as you head up the stairs you've passed earlier and hear scratching noises on one of the wooden doors of the first floor. As you get closer to it, you see that it's decorated with a plank of wood painted a baby-pink and the gold lettering on it reads "Heather".

Your throat closes and your face scrunches up.

In your panic and immediately call out for Negan, knowing damn well that you're not gonna be able to face what you know may very well be behind that door. You've seen it before, and you’d give anything not to have to do this again.

“Thought you didn't need me, dolly,” his voice is loud and his tone arrogant as he makes his way up the stairs to you.

“N-Negan, please,” your voice is almost gone, your eyes glued to the door in front of you like it
holds your worst demons and it's about to bust open. “I can't,” you admit in a whisper, trying to control your breathing.

Negan’s brow furrows, confused as to what is it you can't do, but it quickly dawns on him when he hears the noises coming through the white door you're both standing in front of.

“Go on and wait for me downstairs, y/n,” he orders, his voice somewhat softer now.

“You sure you don-” He glares down at you with a tight jaw, silently warning you not to argue with him on that one.

You give a quick nod and head back down the stairs just to look at the dead woman lying on the floor of her own home a few feet from you.

With a heavy sigh, you lean down and start dragging the dead body to the back of the house where there's a nice yard surrounded by a white fence, carefully laying it on the grass and heading back into the house to search the kitchen for alcohol to help you burn the corpse.

After a little while, you finally find a bottle of rubbing alcohol, but you stop dead in your tracks when you hear loud footsteps coming from upstairs and then Negan is walking down the stairs, whistling.

what the hell is wrong with this man?

He comes into the kitchen, walking like he owns the place, and carefully brings his bat down on the island sitting in the middle of the room. As you take a good look at Lucille, you see that the bat is mostly clean, no fresh blood on it at least.

“Wha- What d'you do?”

Negan leans against one of the counters and twirls a hunting knife around his fingers, showing the bloody weapon to you. “Y"know, the usual. Left her in her room though, put her in bed and locked the door,” he explains, fetching a small key out of his back-pocket and throwing it into the ceramic sink next to him.

he actually put her in her bed? that's... a very gentle gesture from him...

As if he can read your mind, Negan chuckles; “Hey, I'm a dick, sure, but I'm not a fuckin' monster, sweetheart.”

“I- I didn't... I never said you were.” He seems taken aback by your words and you take the opportunity to slip away and sneak back out in the yard to finish what you've started.

You slowly pour the flammable liquid on the limp body lying on the lawn before looking through your backpack to get your lighter out. “I hope... I hope that you're in a better place now. You and
your little girl. And... Whatever happened to you two; I’m sorry.”

You flick the lighter open and kneel down to grab the woman's gown, letting the small flame feed on the fabric. Within minutes, the body has caught fire and you slowly turn away from it, letting it burn at its own pace, just to find Negan looking at you through the kitchen's window.

great…

You drag yourself back inside the house with heavy feet and directly go in the living room to let yourself slump on the big, soft couch sitting in the middle of the big room. Right in front of you is a huge fireplace which has family photos sitting on top of it. They look so happy in those pictures…

You try not to think too much about it.

“What d'you say to her, baby doll?” Negan asks as he takes a seat next to you on the couch.

“Huh?” You dumbly ask, tearing your gaze away from the empty chimney.

He chuckles, “I saw you saying some' to her. What was it?”

okay, yeah, that’s not awkward at all. he actually saw you talking to a corpse... didn't have to bring that up but, thanks bud.

“Oh, I, uh...” You sigh, your shoulders slumping in defeat. “Just that I hope that she and her little girl are peaceful now,” you confess in a hushed whisper, nervously looking at him to see him staring right back.

“So, anyway,” You quickly change the subject, “now what?”

“Good fucking question, baby girl.”

oh... baby girl's nice... oh no...

“Wow, thanks for your input. That's helpful information right there,” you sass to try and shrug off your own thoughts.

Negan chuckles as you sink further into the comfy couch, sighing loudly. “So, what's with the whispering?” He suddenly asks and you giggle under your breath, shaking your head.

“Just 'cause you like to be l-loud and-and obnoxious doesn't mean everyone else has t-to be,” you say with a shrug, not really feeling like going in depth about how childhood trauma has gifted you with selective mutism.

Plus, you've already told him way too much and you know for a fine fact that it's gonna come back to bite you in the ass at some point. He just seems like the type.
And it’s not like you haven’t said a thing all this time, it’s actually surprising to you just how much
you’ve spoken those last forty-eight hours.

Next to you, Negan laughs and gives a "fair enough", but he's not that dense he actually believes
that this is all there is to it. He may not be the most educated person when it comes to mental
health, but he knows your constant silence and whispering isn't just you being a quiet person. He's
ready to bet that your constant flinching and jumping when he so much as grazes you is part of it
too.

Still, he rolls with it because it's pretty damn clear that's he's not getting anything else out of you
today.

You start to fidget on your spot on the couch, the silence in the house suddenly clinging to you like
a second skin. “I'm sorry by the way,” you whisper as you bring your legs up to your chest, your
booted feet digging into the soft, rounded edge of the couch.

“What about, darlin’?” Negan asks, clearly confused, turning to look at you. You turn your head to
look back at him, the left side of your face resting against your knees, though your eyes never meet
his.

“About earlier. You uh... I shouldn't- I shouldn't have told you what I've told you... T'was stupid.”

Negan sighs and silence slowly starts take over the two of you again, and you can feel your mind
reeling, suddenly feeling stupid for opening your mouth.

“I lost my wife. Never been the perfect hubby either... Only realized how badly I'd fucked up when
she got diagnosed with cancer and guilt came around to kick me in the balls. I felt like shit.” Your
eyes meet his for the briefest of second before you look away again.

“She deserved better, but she never kicked me out of her life for some goddamned reason. She
ended up dyin' after everything went to shit, ain't a damn thing I could've done to help her anyway
but... Ya know.”

Judging by the deep frown on your forehead, Negan can tell that you're going over his words over
and over again in your head, probably trying to make sense of it all. He patiently waits for you to
crawl out of that headspace, carefully watching your face but not saying a word.

“Was... Was her name Lucille?” Your voice is hushed, even more so than what he's grown used to,
like you're afraid of how he might react to that question.

Oddly enough, he finds that he's not too fond of you being afraid of him like that. Not in that
context. “Yeah,” He truthfully answers, his voice careful and his eyes on you to try and figure out
how you're taking it but you're not letting him see a damn thing.

he gave the bat he uses to slaughter people the name of his dead wife... how the hell are you
supposed to feel about this? hell, you're probably not supposed to feel any kind of way about it... it's his life after all... guess we all have our ways to deal with death

“I've never kissed anyone,” you impulsively confess before you can even process the thought. “My best friend was a dying sixty-three-year-old lady, I have a plushy in my backpack that I've been carrying around ever since my dad gave it to me the day I was born, it's a white lamb. I got my first tattoo at twelve and I... I... I talk a lot when- when I'm nervous 'cause I don't- I don't... I mean- I've spoken more these past two days than I have in- in months and... my throat hurts.”

Your eyes flicker up to see Negan smiling, clearly amused at how panicked you've gotten at his confession. You always seem so controlled that he can't help but relish in seeing you lose a little bit of that composure you seem to crave and always fight to keep.

“You never got your first kiss baby doll?”

_uuuugh. of course, that's the thing he kept out of all of this nonsense you've just spewed..._

“N-No, I guess... I guess I had o-other things to worry about? And- And now... Well, n-nowadays I definitely _do_ have other things to be doing and f-focusing on,” you explain with a shrug and a nervous laugh.

You let your feet slip off the edge of the couch, your heavy boots making a loud thud against the wooden flooring, your legs leaving your chest to rest on the couch once again. Not once do you look, or even slightly glance Negan's way.

You start to nervously pull at your fingers and, before you can even process it, your body is suddenly collapsing into Negan's, your head smooched into his chest, and your cheeks catch fire when you feel the tip of his nose touching your forehead.

“Look at me, darlin',” you feel his chest vibrate against your face as he speaks and you squirm around, trying to get your bearings.

Your hands find his shoulders and push down on them so that you can push yourself away from his chest.

He watches-on as you try to regain some balance and smirks when he feels you flinch on his lap as you shily look up at him and end up face to face with him, the tips of your noses touching and his lips so close to yours it makes you freeze on the spot, afraid that you'll brush up against them if you so much as blink.

On the other hand, Negan has no shame letting his eyes roam your face, taking every little detail in. From the remains of now brown-ish blood splattered here and there, to the darker shade the skin of under-eyes has taken because of your obvious lack of sleep.

He takes everything in and finds himself mesmerized by it all. Your lips especially. He's been
shamelessly staring at them, and nothing but them, for a solid few seconds now.

“Would you be okay with me givin’ it to ya, doll?” He asks, finally tearing his eyes away from the pillow-y flesh to look back into yours.

You swallow loudly, making him chuckle, before biting down on your lip to nervously chew at it. Your eyes flutter all over the place for a moment, avoiding his gaze, before they eventually settle back down and meet the dreaded hazelnut orbs again.

You’re not even thinking as you ever-so-slightly bob your head up and down and Negan’s smirk turns into a full-on shit-eating grin.

“Yeah?” He asks and you nod again, your cheeks smarting from your constant blushing. “Just follow my lead, baby doll,” he whispers, pressing you against him a little bit more.

You don’t have time to regret or overthink when his lips gently crash into yours and you feel like you're about to explode. You panic, not knowing what to do, when you feel one of his hands grab the back of your neck while the other comes to cup your jaw and your lids flutter shut all on their own accord.

You let the thumb he's gently rubbing at the base of your skull sooth you a little and go a little laxer on his lap until you work up to finally giving the pressure his lips are applying on yours back and feel the hand holding the back of your neck give a squeeze, a silent praise and encouragement.

Your right hand leaves his left shoulder then, and carefully goes up to his face, shaking on the way up, to graze his salt & pepper beard with the very tips of your fingers, your touch so shy and soft that he can barely feel it and could've have missed it wouldn't he have been paying close attention to you.

Times ticks by and the small, innocent kiss slowly starts to turn into something more. You flinch and slightly pull back, surprised when his lips part against your closed ones and you feel his tongue run across your bottom lip.

Negan smirks against your lips, amused by your sudden rigidity but, not wanting to completely lose you, changes his plan and bits down on your bottom lip, unable to hold a deep rumble when you jump on his lap and squeal at the sudden and foreign gesture.

Resting his forehead against yours, he gently pulls away from you, taking your lip with him before letting go of it to watch it bounce back into place, the flesh swollen and shinning.

You thought he was going to say something to you, give you the usual, cocky, kind of rude and unnecessary comment but he barely gives you enough time to realize what just happened before he’s back to attacking your lips again.
You let out a little squeal-ish scream, which he swallows, when the hand he has on your jaw goes to your back and, next thing you know, he's pushing you down onto the couch.

He hovers over you, his body weight keeping you pinned to the couch as his tongue slips out again but, this time around, Negan doesn't gently wait for you to get the message, he just pushes his way through your lips and immediately swirls his tongue against yours.

Your eyes snap open, and you hadn't even realize that they'd closed again, as a small, needy noise rings from the back of your throat making him groan and smile into the kiss.

You just moaned. Negan just made you moan, and you can feel your cheeks burning again, embarrassed by the alien noise you've just emitted.

Oddly enough, the embarrassment you're feeling doesn't make you pull away from him, you actually finally start taking a little part in the exchange and shyly brush your tongue back against his.

The small contact puts the leader of the Saviors on edge and you kick your feet between his legs when he harshly grabs both your hands and pins them above your head in his left one, his free right hand coming down around your throat, not really applying any pressure, certainly not nearly enough to even disturb your airway, but the mere weight of something on your throat is enough to send you into fight or flight mode.

He hushes you in the kiss, his right thumb soothingly rubbing your skin, from the base of your throat up to your jaw, and your feet eventually stop kicking on the couch, your legs going lax between his, your body following and sinking a little further into the soft cushions beneath you, letting the man above keep you there with his body weight.

You find yourself finding safety beneath this man. Something grounding and comforting about his weight on you.

Negan lets himself enjoy having you like that for a little while longer until he has to pull back from you, to let you both fill your lungs back up. He's wearing that cocky smile of his as he watches you pant and gasp for air, his forehead resting against yours as he takes you in.

Your eyes are still close, your lips are swollen and shiny, your chest trying to heave but not being able to properly do so because the solid wall that is his chest is keeping it from expanding too far, that's how close he is to you. You look a mess and all he did was kiss you.

Though, if he's being completely honest, Negan hasn't been the kissing type since his late wife, and he's not sure he's ever kissed anyone like that before, with so much greed and need, to the point where the need to breathe becomes merely an after-thought.

“Fucking shit, baby girl...” he pants out. “You look so thoroughly fucked right now,” his nose nudges yours as he watches your lids flutter but never completely open. Like you don’t wanna
leave whatever place you’re in right now. He can’t really blame for you that.

“You’re mine, princess. All fucking mine.” You hum and try to turn your head to the side, but he brings it back to him with the hand he previously had on your throat. “Say it,” he demands.

“A-All yours,” you don't even realize what you've just let out, you're too out of it. Truthfully, your brain simply registered the order and pushed the words out without really processing them nor the meaning they hold.

“Good girl.”

Your body flinches and tries to curl up on itself when Negan drops his head into the crook of your exposed neck, the feeling of something touching the uncharted patch of skin alien to you.

His beard burns as it scratches against your naturally over-sensitive skin but what really gets you is when you feel his bared teeth bite down and nibble at your skin before sucking it in.

Your arms tense as you try to pull your hands free of his, panicked at the feeling of teeth digging into your flesh. Living in the world you do; you can't really be blamed either.

Though, the fight goes out of you when said teeth graze a ticklish spot right below the right side of your jaw, making your hips buck up against his, a needy noise slipping from your mouth when you feel him bite down and harshly suck on the aforementioned spot.

Embarrassed by the new sound you've just made; you try to hide yourself away but can't cover your face up because his hand is still holding yours above your head and his face in your neck is keeping you from moving.

It only gets worse when it dawns on you that you've just rubbed yourself up against him like a damn bitch in heat.

You wiggle around, your eyes screwed shut to avoid eye contact with him, but your body stills completely when Negan harshly grabs your face with his free hand.

“You keep wigglin' around and makin' noises like these, and I won't be able to control my goddamn self anymore, baby girl,” he scolds, the deepness of his voice startling you.

You both go silent except for the small pants still coming from you, and Negan takes his time to enjoy the mark he's just left on the skin right below your jaw.

When your eyes finally flutter back open, he greets you with a sly smirk. You're out of breath, your cheeks tainted a deeper shade than the rest of your face, your eyes a little wild, and your whole body is shaking. He's completely wrecked you and it makes perfect for his ego and self-esteem.
He's never felt so turned on in his damn life, which is kind of odd considering that he's been, and still is, with many women, but there’s something about you. He can't quiet put his finger on it, all he knows is that he's not willing to let go of you, which kind of pisses him off.

He never planned on catching feelings, quite the opposite actually. Not that this is love or whatever, but that's definitely not him not giving a shit either.

He completely zones out for a second, his thumb gently caressing your lower lip and slowly trailing up to your cheek, feeling how hot the blood beneath your skin is.

He slowly comes back to reality with a confused frown on his face. “D-did I- Did I dod something wrong?” You speak for the first time since he's initiated the kiss and, man, your voice is wrecked.

Negan gives a gentle chuckle and shakes his head before stealing a kiss from you. “F’course not, baby doll. Hell, ya did something very fuckin' right actually.”

Your blush deepens and you giggle nervously beneath him, the small noise rewarded with a smile and a kiss on your forehead.

“I don't let people talk back to me, y'know?” Negan suddenly tells you. “That kind of shit pisses me off more than you could ever imagine but... When you do it? Fuck if it doesn't get me rock hard. Hell, I don't let people pull half the shit you've pulled on me those past forty-eight hours without getting their ass beat to a pulp.”

well… that’s kind of… endearing… right? in a… fucked up kinda way… you are the chosen one.

“What about y-your-”

“Hell no, those women don't talk to me like you do either. Hell, darlin', they're not where they are now for no fucking reason. They're weak,” he states with a shrug like he's talking about the weather, “couldn't break an egg if they tried, let alone stand on their own. Takes some balls to do what you do every day, doll.”

“I-I'm not like that,” you feel the need to point out, “I can't just depend on someone, I just... I hate that kind of behavior it's so... easy...” You frown.

“Not that I have anything to say about these women, I don't know them but I don't really wanna to get to either. They just don't... appeal to me... Is that mean of me to say?’”

amber seemed nice...

“No, doll. S'actually a pretty damn nice way to put it considering what we're talkin' about.”

Negan's still laying on top of you, your hands still pinned above your head, and it feels seriously weird to have such a serious conversation in such an intimate position. You're suddenly hyper-aware of just how close you two are.

“I get it though, princess,” he breaks through your thoughts, “you ain't like 'em. It ain't that damn hard to see either, but you know I'm not lettin' you slip away from me.”
“Negan-” “It's not fuckin' negotiable, doll. No matter what happens next? It happens with you working with me.”

“How about I work for you?” “No-”

“Hear me out, please, Negan.” He lets out a frustrated sigh and lets his forehead drop back against yours. “Let's say I come back with you-”

“I like that idea. Let's,” he interrupts with a smirk, knowing damn well that you haven't finished your thought.

“Shush,” you scold though he can see the hint of a small smile tugging at your lips for a quick second. “So, I come back with you but... I'm free to go out whenever I feel the need to, everything I'll find outside I'll bring back to you, promise-”

“Princess.” Negan tries.

“Let me finish,” you cut him off, “I'll work for you, so you'll have treat me like you treat the other people working for you. I wanna sleep wherever your guys sleep and all that.”

“Y/n, doll, you do realize that means no private bathroom and a small bedroom with only a fucking bed and a dresser. Those rooms are a strict fucking minimum, sweetheart.”

“I sleep up in trees, Negan,” you point out. He might be used to whatever luxury he lives in, but you've been living outside, sleeping on rooftops, attics and abandoned cars at times, for years now.

“And I... I don't wanna have to mingle or interact with your... The charity cases you keep around. I don’t want a- any part of... that.” You finish, your voice a little lower and insecure now.

One of his brows quirks up and Negan chuckles at your choice of words. “Oh yeah? Or what?” He asks, just to tease but also curious to see what you'll hit him with. If you find it in you to get all sassy when he's that close to you that is.

You shrug and, for a moment, he believes that's the only answer he'll get out of you until your lips part. “You'll quickly have a fight on your hands, and if you need a bat to do damage; I don't.”

Negan is taken aback by the firmness in your voice and he knows that this isn't you trying to be intimidating and smug, you're just telling him like it this and it shouldn't be the huge turn-on that it is.

“If I agree to all this shit, you'll come back with me? No questions asked?” He asks with a defeated sigh, nuzzling his nose against yours.

“Only if you promise to keep your words to me.”

“You're a tough li’l cookie in business, y'know that?” “Or so I've been told, yeah.”

“Okay. I promise, and I'm a man of my fucking words, doll.”

what? did he just- whaaat?
“Really?” You ask, surprised that he’s actually going with your demands. “Yeah, we’ll start heading back tonight though. I’ll fucking tell my men to let you out when you want but I want you to tell whoever the fuck opens the gate to you how much time you’re gonna spend out, understood?”

“Okay,” you huff, surprised that he actually accepted that. It was supposed to be a test of sorts, a way to make sure you were what he needed. But he actually accepted it?

“Oof, this is bad...” you sputter. He actually accepted that? He wasn’t supposed to accept that?? What in God’s name is happening?

“Abort! Jump off the fucking ship! This is not going according to plan!”

“Okay?”

“Yeah... I’ll get ya a room ready in the workers' quarters... You sure you-”

“Yes, Negan, I'm sure.”

“Promise, princess,” he says, squeezing his digit around yours with a little smirk, clearly amused that you’d want to seal such a serious conversation with such a childish gesture.

You both silently stare at one another for a moment, trying to decipher whether or not this is going well. “Okay...” Negan starts. “Okay. What kinda work d'you want, baby doll? Since you wanna work for me and earn your keep like a big girl.”

“You talking about scavenging, right?” you ask, your narrowed eyes betraying your trepidation.

“C-Can I... Scavenging. I want to go out on supplies runs. I'm really good at it, I swear I’ll-”

“Supplies runs it is then, doll.”

“Really? O-Okay, wha-what's the catch?” You ask with squinted eyes. This is all going way too smoothly.

Negan chuckles at your narrowed eyes. “Doll, I've seen you escape a fucking overran, crappy diner all by yourself,” he explains, “you're probably one hell of a shot with that bow of yours otherwise you wouldn't have it and, goddamn, the way you handle a blade is ridiculously hot, ya could put the fear of God back into a man, y'know?”

This is suddenly all-too-real and you feel anxiety rolling through you as you realize that, tomorrow, you’re gonna have to be around strangers and interact with them and that you’ll have a roof above your head every single night, that you’re gonna have to take showers in a collective shower-room and- God, you’re freaking out.

“Okay, no, calm the fuck down. you'll be able to get out whenever and, fuck it, if it gets too hard or you don't like the way things are going, you'll just bail. plus, who said you'll have to interact with anyone? just do you. it'll be okay, you’ve done harder things, been through worse.

“Hey, you still with me, baby doll?” Negan's voice snaps you out of your inner monologue and you can feel your anxiety slowly die down.

“Y-Yeah... I'm- I’m okay. So... Promise?” You ask, wiggling your pinkie finger above your head for him to reach for it and wrap his own around which he actually does to your surprise and giddy delight.

“Promise, princess,” he says, squeezing his digit around yours with a little smirk, clearly amused that you’d want to seal such a serious conversation with such a childish gesture.
You let silence settle between you two again, both taking in the new information that have been shared and, eventually, you feel the weight trapping your wrists down lift and disappear as Negan carefully lets go of your hands.

There's a huge red mark around both your wrists when you bring them down to slowly rub the soreness out of them and your eyes flicker up to find Negan's.

He quirks an eyebrow up at you, silently inviting you to share your thoughts with the class and you surprise the both of you when you shyly, almost carefully, bring your right hand around his neck and gently snake your fingers in his dark hair, your left hand coming up to dig into his right bicep.

He carefully leans towards you, nuzzling his nose against yours, his eyes fixed on yours, looking to make sure that he's not misreading anything, and you give him a small nod. A silent permission and invitation to capture your lips with his once again, but you're way more open to him this time around.

You push him further down with the hand holding the back of his neck to deepen the kiss, slightly tugging on his hair and making him groan into your mouth as his tongue forces itself into the kiss again, your own immediately greeting it this time.

There's nothing innocent about this kiss; it's needy, eager, greedy and full of frustration and unspoken words and promises. You have no idea what you're doing or where you're going with all this but you know that you've been through the wringer enough times now that you'll figure things out and it'll be okay.

Somehow; you'll be okay.

Chapter End Notes

PS; YOU DO NOT OWE SHIT TO YOUR MOTHER OR ANY OTHER MEMBER OF YOUR FAMILY FOR THAT MATTER IF THEY'RE HURTING AND ABUSING YOU. WHETHER IT IS PSYCHOLOGICAL OR PHYSICAL, ABUSE IS ABUSE AND YOU DO NOT OWE ANYONE WHO'S HURTING YOU IN ANY WAY, SHAPE OR FORM AN "I LOVE YOU" OR ANY KIND OF AFFECTION. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE ANGRY AND DESPISE THOSE PEOPLE FOR HURT ING YOU IT'S A PERFECTLY HEALTHY AND NORMAL THING TO FEEL.

YOU DO GET TO BE ANGRY AND YOU DO HAVE THE RIGHT TO CUT PEOPLE OFF AND KICK THEM THE FUCK OUT OF YOUR LIFE BECAUSE YOU DON'T DESERVE TO BE PUT DOWN AND HURT, ESPECIALLY NOT BY
YOUR OWN GODDAMN PARENTS.
Are you seriously doing this? Is this really happening?

The rest of yesterday went by smoothly... Well, as smoothly as you can operate around a complete stranger.

Kiss or not, you still don't know Negan, don't trust him either. Plus, you've spend most of your day avoiding his gaze because just a simple glance at him brought you back to his lips and then you'd burn with embarrassment when he'd catch you staring, that cocky smirk of his doing nothing to appease your nerves and he damn well knew it.

Now, a day later, here you are; your fingers shaking as you walk as fast as possible, trying to keep up with Negan's pace. You look around and find people falling to their knees as soon as he gets close to them.

what on earth have you gotten yourself into?

Right on your heels are Dwight and Simon, Negan in front, guiding you to your room. You nervously keep shifting your backpack around on your right shoulder, your hand tightly wrapped around your bow, your knuckles white under the pressure, and your heart is beating so fast it feels like you're about to explode.

You finally get out of everyone's sight as you turn into a long corridor which leads to the bedrooms. Negan takes your left hand in his to bring you close to him and opens the door of one of the rooms, carefully putting you in front of him for you to step inside.

Taking a slow step in, you let your eyes roam around the room. It's actually quite big despite what Negan had told you and the bed looks comfortable enough to sleep on, there's a wooden chest with a padlock resting on top of it too.

at least you can keep your shit safe...

There's also a dresser and a bunch of clothes neatly folded on the made-up bed.
The only thing is that there's only two, small, rectangular shaped windows and they're completely out of reach on the wall which gives the whole room an oppressive feeling and you're unsure of how well your claustrophobia is gonna play with that.

“Like I said, baby doll, it’s nothin’ luxurious,” Negan says, looking at you like he’s expecting you to backpedal.

“S’more than I’ve had in- in a long time,” you whisper with a small frown and he laughs and kisses your forehead before smiling down at you.

“My door’s always open to you, princess. Just want’cha to know.”

we’re good.

“M’good,” you mumble, looking down at your hands, your shoulders shaking as you take a deep, shaky breath.

“Alright then, doll. I gotta go take a look around, see what those sorry fucks have been up to while I had my back turned. I'll see you real soon though.”

With that, Negan swiftly swings Lucille back up on his shoulder and walks out, whispering something to Simon and Dwight on his way out before vanishing down the corridor, whistling like all is well with the world.

lucky him.

Simon takes a long look at you and smiles from where he's leaning against the door frame. Your eyes find the nasty bruise on his jaw, the nasty bruise you've made sure to leave there.

“Hey, look, shit happens, yeah? I'm just gonna put what happened on you being scared ‘n all, don't pull that shit again and we'll be all good. S'that clear, pumpkin?”

“You want an apology?” You ask with a raised brow, his attitude getting under your skin. You've barely been there twenty minutes and you're already ready to start swinging.

The man standing in front of you laughs and shakes his head. “Nah, I don't ask for shit I know are completely out of my reach, y/n.”

“Good, 'cause I don't write checks I can't cash, Simon.” There's venom in the way you say his name and it makes his head jerk back on his neck, eyebrows raised.

“Da-a-mn, girl, I knew I liked ya for a reason.” He takes another look at you as you look straight into his eyes, silently telling him that you're not about to put your head down for him which makes his grin grow.

“Alright. I got shit to do,” he announces as he pushes himself off the door frame but never breaks eye-contact with you. “Dwighty boy here's gonna help ya get settled. Catch ya on the flip side, y/n.”

He waves you goodbye and you mutter a “whatever” before plopping down on the right side of the
bed sitting in the middle of the room with a heavy sigh.

You look up at Dwight through your lashes when you feel his gaze on you and find him leaning against the wall in front of you, legs and arms crossed.

A slightly awkward silence takes over the two of you as you anxiously kick your feet around. “I think your scar looks cool... I kinda like it,” you whisper, trying to break that weird tension filling the room.

He lets out a small laugh and pushes off the wall. “You know, Simon told everyone 'bout how you almost broke his jaw and, to be honest, he seemed more impressed than pissed off about it.”

“I- I don't wanna be here...” You admit with a frown, the words slipping out on their own.

“Yeah, I can see that, you're all tense and shit,” he observes, pointing at you like you're the most obvious display of uncomfortableness there is. You guess you just might be at the moment.

“If it can make you feel any better, Negan brought us all up to speed. Told us about your little deal. You get to go out right now if you want, if that's what you need, you just have to tell me how long you'll be gone for and I'll open the gate for you.”

“Th-Thanks but... I think I'm gonna- I'm gonna stick around for today.”

'cause if you leave now, there's no way in hell you'll be coming back, and you need to give this a shot...

A moment goes by where the room weighs heavy with silence. “Alright then,” Dwight sighs out. “You see that little radio on your nightstand?” He asks as he points to the aforementioned object and you nod, looking at it from the corner of your eye. “You can use it whenever. If you need anythin', beep me.”

You give another silent nod and hear him sigh again, footfalls indicating that he's on his way out when he stops by the threshold of your new room. “Your first supply run should be tomorrow. Also, if you're interested, there's a little party goin' on tonight in the rec-room on the first floor.”

You frown at that, the mere thought of being in a room full of people making nauseous with anxiety.

“You don't have to go though,” Dwight explains like he can tell you’re not comfortable with the idea, “Hell, even I hate those, so I'd get you, being the new girl 'n all, not wanting to go and be surrounded by strangers. Don’t sweat it.”

Again, you give him a silent nod, keeping your head down because your eyes are stinging with tears and you don't want him to see them. “Alright then I'll uh... I'll see you later, y/n. Feel free to go and have a look around if you feel like it, or whatever.”

“Thanks, Dwight,” you manage through a tight throat, your muscles straining with the effort of holding your tears back. Though you can't see it, Dwight nods before leaving the room, the weight of your decision crushing you the second the door clicks shut behind him.
You look around the room and let out a little puff of air. You feel lost in those new surroundings and you hate it. You hate feeling vulnerable, no matter how human it is to do so, because it's always the one thing people look for and, not if but when they find it, they take advantage of you for it.

people are the worst... you should become a pigeon or something... dead people are coming back to life; you can totally turn into a bird.

Out of pure frustration, you throw the pillow sitting on the bed against the wall in front of you, tears blurring your vision. There's a scream bubbling in your throat when a knock on your door makes you jump off the bed and you scramble to put the pillow back in its place before carefully cracking the door open with a small sniffle.

“Heya there, pretty girl. Name's Connor,” a tall, dark-haired, green-eyed man stands in front of you, a smile on his face and his hand out for you to shake and, even though you feel kind of creeped out, you carefully wrap your hand around his and shyly shake it.

“Y/n,” you carefully introduce yourself in a whisper.

“Oh I know who you are, hell, everyone 'round here does. The guys kept talking about you. The way you've fucked Simon up is goin' around like a ghost story. People don't usually get to see another day when they so much as try to fuck with one of Negan's golden boys, let alone nail them in the face.”

well that's an introduction 'n a half...

“Jesus Christ, Connor. Shut up, man, would ya? You're gonna scare the shit outta her,” a blonde-haired man interrupts and you actually feel thankful to hear a man open his mouth for once.

You take a good look at the newcomer and, you have to admit that he's pleasing to look at. He's damn tall, easily something a little over six foot like his friend, and he's broad but the softness of his facial features balances him out and keeps him from being too intimidating. He's still imposing though, no doubt.

He's pretty heavily tattooed and it's all black ink, but he has a colored snake tattooed around his neck, its head carefully drawn right below the man's sharp jaw. His sandy-blonde hair is pulled up on top of his head in a messy bun, clearing his face, and your head tilts curiously when you see that one of his eyes is a clear blue and the other is a grey-ish color.

“Hey there, I'm Randall,” the man greets you with a soft smile, giving you a name to put on the face. “Sorry about... that,” he apologizes, playfully pointing at his friend, and you let out a small laugh at the playful banter.

“You love me,” the dark-haired man comes back with a smile on his face and a pout on his lips.
Those two men seem to be a sharp contrast to Negan, and you can’t help but wonder if it’s some sort of game they’re playing with you or if they’re actually who they’re showing themselves to be.

“Hi, I uh... I'm y/n,” you introduce yourself with a small wave, your eyes never settling on one spot.

“I know,” Randall softly tells you and the gentleness his voice carries make you look up at him through your lashes. “As Connor was explaining to you - in his own stupid way - we've all heard about the pretty girl that punched the shit outta Simon and spat on big bad Negan's face.”

You feel your cheeks heat up at that.

he told them? does that mean that he's also told them that he's punished you afterwards? 'cause that's not gonna be an awkward conversation...

“Hey, he actually took it pretty well,” Connor says with a shrug. “Hell, you wouldn't be here if he hadn't,” he explains, and you hear a shift in his voice but don't comment on it.

he sounds so... sad... is that a thing? do people actually still do that?

“Anyways!” Randall exclaims through a clenched jaw, shooting dagger at his friend with his eyes. “We didn't mean to bother you, y/n, just wanted to see hi to our new neighbor and see if you were feeling up for breakfast?”

“O-Oh, uh... I uh... I'm not- I'm not really hungry but... th-thank you, that's- that’s really sweet.”

The two men share a look you don't catch. “Alright then. We'll be at the cafeteria if you change your mind. Don't hesitate, okay? It's down the long corridor to your right once you're out of the dorms.”

“O-Okay. Thank you,” you reply with a nod, looking down at your boots.

“No problem. We both know how it feels to be here for the first time so, if you need anything; we're here... Even though I don't think Connor is the best person to turn to in time of crisis, I'll be honest,” Randall teases, wanting to lighten your mood up a little and he's rewarded with a small but genuine laugh from you.

“Damn man, you're makin' me look like an ass. Not cool,” Connor complains though his voice is playful rather than scolding.

“I think you're making a good enough job of that on your own, dude.”

You shake your head at the men's antics and they both laugh as they start to walk off after telling you they'll be seeing you around.

The two friends keep bickering as they walk down the corridor and the last thing you see before shutting your door is Connor putting Randall in a headlock.
Your forehead pressed against the white, steel door, you try to regain your composure when you feel a knot forming at the pit of your stomach, overwhelmed by the foreignness of your surroundings. Loneliness is suddenly crushing you like it rarely has before.

"Guys, wait," you gingerly call out as you re-open the bedroom's door, both men turning back around when your voice reaches them.

Connor is smiling and Randall looks curious and a little surprised. "What is it, princess?" The tattooed man asks, taking a few steps back towards you so you don't have to raise you voice to speak to them.

"Can I..." You take a hesitant step towards them, your head down and a frown creasing your forehead, your own emotions confusing you a little. "Can I come with you?"

"Hell yeah you can!" Connor's enthused answer makes you jump, and you flinch and squeal in surprise when he runs up to you and you end up thrown on his back quicker than you can blink.

Your body goes rigid because a stranger is touching you and carrying you on his back, but your arms still instinctively wrap themselves around the man's neck to keep you steady.

"Connor-" his friend tries, probably seeing how tense you've gotten, but is interrupted in his effort.

"Promise I won't drop ya," the dark-haired man softly whispers, his head slightly turned to you and you realize that this man might just be trying to show you that him and Randall aren't of the same caliber as the rest of Negan's men.

"Want me to put'cha down?" A small, high-pitched whine comes from your throat, your brain too occupied with trying to process the interaction to come up with actual words for you to speak.

Seeing your clear distress, Randall is about to tell Connor to just put you back down but, before he gets to, he sees you wiggle around and tightening your grip around his friend.

"You're all set?" The green-eyed stranger asks, his face tilted back so he can see you a little.

You give him a little nod and let yourself relax a little though your body stays braced for an eventual drop or impact. You don't know this man and it goes against every one of your instincts to let him carry you, to let him touch you and have that grip on you, so you don't try and force your body to go pliant.

You've already pushed yourself enough those last three days.

Though you've given him somewhat of a green light, Connor can feel the muscles in your legs straining against him and he realizes just how uncomfortable, scared even, you actually might be
with his touch.

Without a word, he shifts his hands further down until they’re at the very dip of each of your knees, just to try and make sure that he’s as far away from your thighs as possible and, though it’s extremely faint, he feels your legs relax a little on either side of his waist at the small change he’s provided.

You brace yourself, waiting for Connor to take a first step, and let out a little scream when he kicks off into a full-on run but then find yourself giggling like a kid on this grown man's back.

You can't help it, the last time someone gave you a piggyback ride was...

Yeah, no, you're not going there today. You already miss them enough on a daily basis, no need to summon their memory. You're already vulnerable enough in this new territory you're in.

Connor is literally yelling in the dorms’ corridor and you really hope that he's not gonna get in trouble for it but it doesn't seem to bother him all that much as he runs around the compound with you giggling on his back and Randall following the two of you, laughing and smiling all whilst shaking his head in false disapproval and shame.

Your ride gets quieter as you get to the cafeteria, but he doesn't put you down, he just wiggles you around and gets in line to get food. People are looking at you and you hate the attention.

The fact that Connor is so damn tall, and you're literally perched on him, leaves you feeling even more exposed to those judging eyes and you feel your cheeks burning. Randall seems to notice your discomfort.

“Connor, man, let her down.” Surprisingly enough, he does, crouching down for you to be able to get off his back. You have to take a small moment to steady yourself when your feet meet the ground again.

“That was fun,” you admit, your cheeks colored a deeper shade than the rest of your face. “Thank you.”

Connor gives you a smile that's filled with a warmth you're not used to, and you come to realize that you've judged this man too fast earlier on. Years all on your own would do that to you, you guess.

“Any day. Hell, last time I've had the chance to do that was with my niece-” Your ears perk-up and your heart clench in your chest when you see his face fall. “Damn... Feels like decades ago. Shit's crazy,” he states with a short chuckle, clearly trying to keep his composure.

Your eyes find Randall’s blue and grey ones, not sure what to say and unsure if you've hurt his friend or not, but the tattooed man gives you a comforting smile to let you know that it's okay.

*those guys are different from the ones in the woods... man, this is weird... almost forgot people could be... well... people...*
You get out of the cafeteria to head back to your room, a headache blooming from all the noise and eyes you've had on you from the moment you’d stepped into the room.

Your body is clearly struggling as much as your mind to process your new environments. You're over-stimulated, on sensory-overload, and you badly need some down-time in a quiet space where you can pace and wiggle around as much as you please without judging eyes making you feel weird about it, but a grip on your wrist stops you from getting there.

On pure instinct, your right hand flies to the waistband of your jeans to get to your knife but Randall's soft voice makes it freeze mid-air.

“Hold on, y/n.” You let your hand drop when he gently releases your wrist and turn around to face him, silently thanking whoever may be listening that it's not Negan you're coming face to face with.

“Wh-what is it?” You ask with a weary frown, Randall's eyes glancing down and catching the way your legs are practically bouncing you up and down. You're thankful he doesn't comment on it, but you feel judged, nonetheless.

“You didn't eat anything, you sure you're okay? You're not hungry at all?” He actually seems genuinely worried about you and, somehow, it doesn't sit quite well with you.

why would he care anyway?

“N-no, Randall, I-I'm really not, p-promise.”

“Okay then,” he lets it go. “Hey, uh... About Connor? I'm sorry if he made you uncomfortable or anythin'. He's a great guy, the best really, but uh... I guess... I guess he sometimes forgets that not everyone's has comfortable 'round people as he is. He doesn't mean any harm though, that much I can promise you.”

Your frown deepens as you think the words over. Again, the thought of something as simple as people being people, Connor being a goofy social butterfly for example, is something that takes a little bit for your brain to process and integrate.

You find it odd how easy it felt talking to the pair of them when you usually wouldn't have been physically able to because your mind often reacts with complete silence whenever you meet someone new, the lack of trust and the lingering sting of past inflicted pain making you clamp up.

It's not that you mind actually being able to speak to Randall and Connor, it's just that the whole mutism mechanism has been a way for your mind to protect you for years now and it's an odd feeling not to have it kick-in for once. The only person it's ever happened with was your late friend Samuel and, God, you don't wanna go there again.

You hate to admit it because it makes you out to be some kind of animal but, in all honesty, it’s a
miracle Connor didn't get himself stabbed when he picked you up, when he touched you out of the blue the way he did.

“Y/n?” Randall's head is slightly tilted when you come back to yourself and you shake your head a little.

“Huh? Oh, uh... I uh... Sorry,” you whisper, frowning when you realize that you're actively wiggling your arms around, trying to shake the overflow of energy you're feeling.

“It's okay, he didn't- He didn't upset me o-or anything, really. He- You're both o-okay in-in my book,” you assure him with a quick smile.

*for now, so, please, for the love of fuck, don't screw this up...*

You see Randall smile at your words, though he keeps his composure and responds with a simple nod. “Alright then. I'll let'cha get settled, get some rest if you need. I'll see you later?”

“Y-Yes... F'course.” *not like we're going anywhere...*

You walk away, pulling on your fingers, feeling like your entire body is buzzing, until you finally reach your bedroom's door and hesitantly reach for the knob before pushing it open and walking in.

The second the door clicks shut behind you, your face scrunches up and you break into tears.

In seconds, your face is shoved into the pillow on your new bed and then you're screaming, your throat burning because it's been so long since you've used your voice at full volume, let alone scream out like that. It doesn't matter, it was already sore from all the talking you've been doing those past three days anyways.

It feels like there's lava coating your throat.

You're not used to all of this anymore. Not used to people walking around everywhere, not used to feeling eyes on you. This whole thing is scaring the living hell out of you and that, in and of itself, scares you even more.

Being afraid scares you because you're not used to it. You've always had to be brave. Brave for your dad when you've had your first brushes with panic attacks, brave for the doctors and nurses the night you've ended up in the E.R after the car accident that made your whole life fall apart, brave for your mom, brave for your dying friend, Luna, brave for the two men you've grown up looking-up to whenever they'd find themselves in bad places and then...

Then you've had to be brave for yourself and that, surprisingly enough, did not come easily to you. As a matter of fact, that has to be the hardest thing you've ever had to do; be brave for *you*.

And, now, it feels like it's all crumbling down and you're helpless to stop it.

God, how you spite that feeling.
A knock on Negan's office door snaps him out of his thoughts as he barks for whoever knocked to come in. “Am I interrupting something boss?” His right-hand man asks, his head peeping through the half-opened door.

“Nah, Simon. We got a problem?” Negan nonchalantly asks with a smirk, sinking further into the brown leather of his big office chair.

“Uh... Well, I'm not sure if it's a problem per say but... Well…”

“Fuckin' spill it already, Simon. For fuck's sake.”

“It seems like li'l y/n just got us a whole week ahead on our schedule, boss.”

“Ex-fucking-cuse the shit outta me but; the fuck did you just say, Simon?” The leader of the Saviors asks, perking up in his chair at the information.

“You know that shitty truck we've been tryin' to fix for a month now?” A nod and the lift of an eyebrow is all the acknowledgement Simon gets. “She fixed it this morning; Cameron saw her getting out of the garage covered in grease. She'd left the keys on the hood of the truck and, when he tried to start it, the damn thing burst to life.”

Negan lets out a chuckle and leans back in his chair, a wolfish grin on his face. “Well, I'll be damned... Ain't she somethin'.”

“Yeah, but that ain't all of it. She cleaned and loaded every single weapon in the armory and, when I checked, the count was there. She didn't steal anythin' and she wasn't supervised. No one knew about it 'til Faith saw her and came to me 'cause she thought she may have been up to no good but, when I got there, she was gone and all the weapons were right where we left 'em. She cleaned the damn kitchen too, that room is so shiny it makes ya squint, and she listed all the items in the storage rooms. Every single one, if ya can believe this shit.”

The Saviors' leader's chest heaves up and down with silent laughter as he shakes in head in disbelief, the grin he wears never so much as diminishing.

“Where's she now?” He asks and Simon shrugs. “Last time I caught sight of her, she was hangin' out with the boys on the main yard.”

Negan feels his jaw clench at that, a feeling he isn't too pleased about making itself known deep in
his guts as he pushes himself up and out of his chair and Simon watches has the leader of the compound rounds his desk to grab Lucille and swings the bat on his shoulder.

Not a single word is spoken as Negan walks by him, out of his office and his quarters to end up outside. His workers kneel as he walks by but he's not paying them any attention, too focused on the ill feeling that has now settled and is burning at the pit of his stomach as he makes his way to the main yard almost as if on auto-pilot, like he's on a mission.

When he finally gets there, his eyes are immediately drawn to you like a locked-on target. You're sitting on top of a picnic table, Connor, Randall and a few other men around you, making you laugh and smile.

He doesn't like that, he doesn't like it one bit, it pisses him off actually, and he hates that feeling.

You're not supposed to have the upper hand, he is. He shouldn't be the one boiling with jealousy, you should.

“Okay, okay, but, get this; that fool right there shot himself in the fucking leg while takin’ the safety of his gun off, like, who the f-”

When everyone suddenly goes deafeningly silent and drop to their knees, you frown in confusion and look around to see Negan standing right behind you, Lucille on his shoulder and that cocky smirk of his stretching the corner of his mouth.

“Fuck off, you sorry fucks,” he orders, his eyes trained on you as he addresses his men.

And they do. They all stand up and run off to whatever they have left to do.

You cross your arms across your chest and look down at your boots, hurt. That was the first time in years you've had a conversation with a group of people, some even made you laugh, and Negan just ruined that for you.

“That was rude,” you whisper with a frown, “calling them that. They work their butts off for you, why would you treat them that way?” To be honest, you don't much care for most of the people in this compound, most of them are gross and creepy but, still, you recognize hard work when you see it.

“Look’atcha, dolly, you're all covered in sweat and grease, lookin’ hot as ever,” he says, completely ignoring your comment. “You've spent your day working your pretty ass off and you're telling me that they're hard-working guys? Nah, don't think so. You're a hard worker, and I'm seriously impressed, which doesn't happen all that often, if ever, baby girl.”

*this man really doesn't know how to give out compliments...*

“Th-thanks but that's n-nothing spectacular. M'just trying to help out,” you shrug off, looking down at your crease-covered hands with renewed interest.
“And I really fuckin' appreciate it, princess. Now c'mon,” Negan’s right hand appears in front of you, “let's go have a nice li'l chat in your room, baby doll.”

Wearily, you take his hand, not wanting to make a scene in front of his workers that are going about their day around you, and follow him as he casually walks past everyone, clearly not disturbed by the fact that everyone is kneeling in front of him. You are though.

Once you get there, he lets you open the door and you both step inside the bedroom. Anxiety grabs you by the throat when the door clicks shut as Negan closes it behind him, effectively leaving you with nowhere to go and you silently stand in the middle of the room, shifting from one leg to the other, pulling on your fingers and biting your lip.

you're so casual when you're nervous, makes ya wonder how people are ever able to tell you're feeling anxious... i'm so sarcastic, i'm hurting my own feelings.

Negan goes to sit on your bed, making himself comfortable, and he pets the spot next to him, inviting you to sit beside him, and you hesitantly do. You decide to ignore the chuckle the man to your left gives when he sees that you've made sure to keep more than enough room between the two of you on the mattress.

“Dwight fucked himself over, darlin','” he suddenly explains, and you frown, not understanding what he's trying to get at. “I see the way you look at his fucked-up face, like it's the cruelest shit to ever happen to someone.”

isn't it up there though?

“He and his- I mean my, wife fucked up and ran away with my shit in their bags, so, when they came crawlin' back, 'cause they always come crawlin' back,” you know that's directed towards you, and you have half a mind to stab him in the face right there and then, “I gave them a choice. Since Sherry's sister, which was soon to be one o'mine, died out there during their little escape, I told them that; either Sherry could become mine to make up for her li'l sis and Dwight'll get the iron, or they could both get kicked the fuck out... And guess what? She didn't even think twice about it.”

oh, come on... no.

“Nah, she played hard to get, tellin' me that she wasn't sure but, three days later? She came knocking on my door and now she's livin' large while Dwight is missin' half of his fucking face. That's just what happens, dolly.”

i'm gonna be sick... what the fuck is wrong with him? poor dwight... that's so fucked up... and what the hell's wrong with that what's-her-face bitch?

You feel your stomach churn at his words, your brain unsure how to process them. “Wh-Why are you telling me this?”

“I don't share what's mine,” Negan states, his voice steady and firm.
“Okay...?” He sighs in frustration, seeing that you're deliberately missing the point. “Don't let me catch you with one of those fuckers, y/n... Unless you're okay with bein' the reason why one of 'em ends up gettin' his fucking face burned to a crisp.”

His words push you over the edge and you get off the bed to stand in from of him, feeling like slapping his face off to the moon but controlling yourself somehow.

“I'm not yours, Negan! I can do whatever I want with whoever I please! If any one of your men gets an iron to the face it'll be your fault, not mine! You'll be the one to blame. I am not property! Get out!” You yell, pointing at the door.

A moment passes where Negan sits still, processing the fact that, though that's not how he wanted it to happen, this is the first time he's heard you fully carry your voice like that, and he already can't get enough. Doesn't matter if it's because he's made you blow a fucking fuse.

In your anger, though, you don't process that small moment and it seems like it all happens in a flash when you find yourself pinned against a wall, your head dizzy with the speed of which you've been moved.

You don't have time to get your bearings and it makes it easy for Negan to bring both of your hands up above your head, keeping them pinned to the wall with one of his completely wrapped around your wrists. His nose is touching yours and you can feel his breath on your parted lips.

When you're finally able to blink the dizziness away, you panic when you feel his free hand wrap around your throat, the grip light, barely there, really, but enough to send your feet kicking.

Your body is reacting to the pressure, no matter how light, the same way it did yesterday but, this time, there's no calming you down with a kiss. Hell, even feeling the weight of his body against yours feels trapping, rather than grounding, this time around.

“Goddamn, baby doll, s'that all a man had to do to hear that pretty voice o'yours? Make ya snap?”

“Let g-go of me, Negan,” you plead through a tight jaw, your arms straining to get out of his steely hold as you instinctively feel the need to claw at the forearm the right hand on your throat belongs to.

“You're fuckin' adorable when you get all mad.”

*shut up, shut up, shut up.*

“Get out of m-my room!” You wiggle around, trying to get out of his grip, but he's way bigger and way stronger than you are. Plus, it's not a fair fight; you're exhausted and he knows it.

Any other day, he's all too aware of the fact that you'd have a blade to his throat by now, no doubt in his mind.

“You're fucking mine,” he snarls through gritted teeth and a clenched jaw. Any signs of cockiness seemingly gone for now.
“Screw you! I hate you, Negan!” He lets out a rather dark, low chuckle at your antics and presses his forehead against yours, completely depriving you of any personal space you've had left, and he can tell that you don't like it.

“You hate me, huh?” He asks with a smirk.

“I hate you,” you affirm, though your voice is shaky. It feels like you're filled with venom and it scares you. “You're the worst kind of man there is,” you seem to deflate for a moment, but Negan knows better and, soon enough, you're trashing and shouting again. “You're disgusting and I hate you!”

You honestly couldn't say where that came from but, in this moment; it feels right. It truly feels like spitting literal venom out of your system.

“Say that shit again, princess,” Negan orders, his voice somewhat softer now, the thumb of his right hand, the one wrapped around your throat, gently moving around to caress your soft skin. He can feel how hectic your breathing is underneath his palm but doesn't comment on it, just silently relishes in the feeling of having your pulse in his hand.

“I hate you!” You shout and he, once again, tells you to repeat the words. “I hate you!” – “Again!” – “I hate you! I hate you! You're gross and I hate you!”

You're both panting at this point, your eyes shining as the fight slowly goes out of you, and Negan watches closely as you try your hardest to keep regain your composure. “You're gross and I hate you,” you quietly repeat, feeling completely exhausted, tears rolling down your face like water out of a broken sink.

You screw your eyes shut, trying to make him go away, trying to forget that he's right in front of you, that his hands are on you, but he's everywhere and you hate how that's somewhat comforting to you when his presence should make you sick to your very core.

You know it's not him specifically, at least not all of it; you're just touch-starved and you find some kind of twisted relief from feeling his hands on you. What you can't make sense of though, is why you both seem to gravitate towards one another the way you do. It’s not that you’re both on different sides of a spectrum; it’s more like you’re not even on the same damn spectrum to begin with.

He's a stranger, one with heavy issues too, and you don't understand why you feel the way you do about him. That never happened to you before and you have no idea what the hell is happening.

“Look at me, princess,” Negan asks, his voice much calmer now, and you shake your head no, tears still dripping down your face, going through your closed eyelids which flutter open when you feel his lips slightly brushing against yours.
“C’mon, doll, stop cryin’. You’re okay, I got you.”

*no, you're not okay. this is not okay. what the hell is he doing to you?*

After trying your hardest to fight it off, you can't hold on anymore and end up letting a loud sob slip out, one that makes your chest heave, your head spin, and your throat ache.

You're scared shitless of the way this man is making you feel. You don't like it; it feels so wrong, but it also doesn't. You're lost and it feels like you're running in circles ever since he's come into your life and that was only **three days ago**.

He shushes you and carefully lets go of your hands so that his left hand can now make contact with your right cheek.

Gently, he wipes away a few tears, and your shaking hands take refuge between the two of you, your hands balling into his shirt because you desperately need something to ground you right now.

You stay like that for a few minutes, both completely silent in the aftermath of the storm, just looking at each other. Negan's thumb absently rubbing at your cheek as you try to calm and ground yourself.

Growing hyper-aware of your proximity with the man, you start to slightly wiggle around against him, gaining his attention suddenly a mission you're dead-set on, and he looks down at you with a small smirk on his lips like he already knows what you crave before you do.

Maybe he doesn't know, maybe he just really craves you and, since his ego is too big to fit in one room, he feels like you crave the exact same thing as him, and he's a hundred percent right even though you'll never admit it to him, or yourself.

With one swift movement, his lips crashes into yours and you squeal in surprise though your hands are quick to leave his now scrunched up shirt to happily find each side of his neck and keep him right where he is.

There's nothing chaste about this kiss; it's pure anger and frustration. It's you trying to take your anger out on him and him trying to get his frustration out on you, there's so much venom in this kiss that it's unhealthy but none of you care. You can't bring yourselves to give a damn, not now.

“F*ckin' shit, baby doll,” Negan briefly breaks the kiss, “I swear to f*cking God, you're startin' to give me some serious blue balls. Ain't shit I want more than you.”

“Except for the women you keep in your closet, right?” You bite back, completely out of breath and patience.

“You think that compares? I needed to get off so f*ckin' badly 'cause of you but I couldn't 'cause all I could think about was that she wasn’t you. None of them are. I left her f*cking room with a rock-hard dick, and I had to get myself off in the f*cking shower. What the hell are you doing to me, baby girl?”
“Wha-” He doesn't let you say anything more, knowing that you probably have no clue what any of what he's just said means anyway - and he's right.

His lips fall back on yours, his tongue forcing its way into your mouth. He groans as he gets to taste you again, and you squeal into his mouth when you feel him roughly grinding against you.

Your hips respond all on their own to the shallow friction and buck back against him, trying to chase the feeling even through your clothes.

Negan slowly pulls always from your lips and his mouth immediately goes down to that specific spot underneath the right side of your jaw, sucking and biting at the flesh, making you cry out in both discomfort and pleasure.

“C'mere, baby doll,” he growls against your skin as his hands find the backs of your thighs, his fingers digging into your supple flesh, before he's lifting you up, your legs instinctively wrapping themselves up around his waist.

He kisses every inch of skin that's exposed to him and you don't even realize that he's been bringing you towards your bed until you fall on the mattress, Negan on top of you. His lips are back on yours before you can blink and his right hand finds its way to your throat again, actually applying pressure down on it this time around. It's not enough to cut off your airway, but enough to have you panting for air.

“You're so fucking pretty, kitten,” his voice is so low and scruffy that it sends a shiver down to your tailbone up to the base of your skull. Every single little hair on your body standing on end, and your skin is covered in goosebumps.

You let out a loud gasp when his hips start to roll into yours, his forehead resting against yours, his eyes staring straight into yours, and you swear you see them get a shade darker when a mewl comes out of your mouth.

That cocky smirk of his comes back on his lips and he lets out a breathy chuckle against your parted lips. “Damn, baby doll. Y'like that? I think ya do. You're mewling like a li’l kitten for daddy.”

You quickly nod your head, your cheeks red from embarrassment, ’cause damn, you did fucking mewl just now, and from the friction the foreign stimulation your body is receiving.

“Use your big girl's words baby,” he asks, and you know it's an order, but you can't. You feel so embarrassed.

Are you even supposed to like what he's doing to you? Is it normal for you to?

stop questioning it and just go with it, as long as he doesn't do anything you don't want him to do, it's all good.
Negan doesn't seem satisfied by your silence, and he presses his hips harder against you, literally forcing the answer out of you. "Y-Yes! Yes, Negan, I- I like it. M-More, please!"

If there was a fire near you, you sure as shit would gladly jump into it; that's just how embarrassed you are right now.

"My li'l kitten’s so needy. S'okay, daddy ain't going nowhere. I’ll give ya want’cha need, baby girl.” You’re not sure whether that’s a threat or a promise.

You swear you can feel something hard poking at you as Negan lets out a loud groan and presses harder against you. "'M'ind if I try some' here, doll?"

You're too much of a mess to think what he's just asked you through and just limply bob your head up and down, your hips canting up to try and meet his in the middle but his weight is keeping you pinned below him on the bed.

Your entire body jumps when you feel his left hand dip into the waistband of your jeans and your right hand shoots down to grip his wrist, your small nails digging into his skin, but he doesn't seem to mind.

When your panicked eyes find his though, his hand freezes and he gives you some time to process where he's heading, and time to object to it as well.

With a shaky breath, you loosen your grip on his wrist but keep your hand there, just in case, because you don't know where he's about to take this whole thing but you want to be at least feel like you have a little bit of power over it.

"N-Negan...” You call for him in a whisper when his hand breaches the waistband of your cotton boyshorts. “Negan?” He feels you tense beneath him and stops his hand once again, letting you get your bearings.

He can't lie, he really wants to just rip those damn jeans off of you, put your panties down and take a look at his girl but he knows he's already risking a broken nose at the moment, so he’s not gonna push his luck.

Still, having his fingers resting on the ridiculously soft skin of your pubic mound is a feeling he knows he'll use whenever he'll need to get off from now on. He doesn't need to see, just feeling the warmth seeping through your skin onto his is out there with the most erotic things he's ever felt.

When he feels you relax and sees the timid nod you give him, he lets his hand dip lower but only until his index and middle fingers are hovering above what he knows to be the hood of your clit. He won't go any further down today.
Your grip on his wrist immediately tightens when the pad of his pointer finger comes down to rest on the flesh protecting the most sensitive part of your body, and Negan feels his cock throb painfully in the confines of his pants when your back arches off the bed the second he gives the tiniest rub on the fleshy hood.

You've never been touched before and your body seems to be relishing in finally getting the attention you had no idea it craved as you grew into a woman. Nothing to be ashamed of, you just never paid attention to it because you didn't know what that feeling you'd sometimes get was.

In all honesty, you have no idea what he's touching but, by fucking God, is he touching it. “Y'feel that?” Negan's voice breaks you out of your haze and you whine and nod your head. Yeah, you most definitely are feeling something for sure.

Your body is squirming below him, trying desperately to get friction from his finger again but he moves away to deny you and you almost sob at the loss.

You have no fucking idea what the hell is happening to you, you just know that you need him to touch you there again because it feels like you might explode if he doesn't.

“She's touching right there,” he explains and you cry out when he presses his finger down although, this time, the pad of the digit doesn't land on your hood but a little lower, directly on your clit, and it feels like you've just shoved your fingers into a power outlet.

“I'll take some time to show it to ya proper real soon, baby girl, get you in my room and spread you in front of my mirror... Fuck... For now, though, we're skippin' the class and gettin' straight to hands-on practice.”

You're soaking and it's making it easy for Negan to rub the pad of his finger smoothly against the sensitive bundle of nerves. He doesn't miss the chance to notify you of that.

“You're soaking, sweetheart.” You don't know what it is you're feeling drip between your legs and it scares you because all you can think about is that you've just went on yourself.

“Hey,” Negan gently calls for your attention, and when your eyes find his, he can't help the cocky smirk when he sees how glossy and blown your pupils are, “s'okay, y/n. It's normal, don't worry about it.”

Your eyes search his for a little bit and then your body is sinking further into the bed, your back completely arching up and off the mattress when he brings his middle finger to the party, the pads of both digits now mercilessly massaging your clit.

“Yeah? That feel good, baby girl?” He asks with a growl, and all you can give him is incoherent gibberish, but he takes it because it does wonder for his ego.

You gasp when Negan's right hand gives your throat a squeeze. He knows you've had completely
forgotten it was there and that's him taking special care to remind you.

Pushing your head ever so slightly to the side, he dips his head down to suck at the left side of your neck he's exposed, right below your left ear, and your hips jump at the contact which only encourages the man hovering above you to tighten the suction until he knows for certain that it'll leave a bruise that will remain for days.

“Put your feet flat on the bed, darlin’,” he demands, and your body responds to the order all on its own. In a blink of an eye, your still booted feet are firmly planted on the bed on each side of Negan's body and he pushes your legs further apart, as much as he can without your jeans tightening too much and restricting his movement between your legs, before re-focusing his attention on moving the pads of his fingers on the now swollen bundle of nerves eagerly waiting for his ministrations.

The ruthless leader of the Saviors beams with pride and cockiness when you cry out and bring your free hand down on your mouth. With your legs spread a little wider, your clit has been forced out of hiding and is now completely exposed to Negan's restless fingers.

“Yeah, that's it, kitten, lemme really get at that clit,” he growls against your skin, biting the sore and already bruised spot he's been working on one more time, before kissing and licking at it to appease to sting he’s left behind.

You don't know what to focus on anymore, there's so much going on, it feels like he's everywhere all at the same time and it's becoming too much for you to take.

You feel your belly twisting and tightening and start to panic, not knowing what this very much alien feeling is and what to make of it. Negan seems to feel you tense below him.

“S'okay, baby girl, let it happen. I got you. You're safe, doll, I promise,” he hushes you as his right hand leaves your throat to gently pry your left one away from your mouth and keep it down on the mattress next to your head.

“N-Negan, wh-”

Before you can ask him what the hell is happening to you, your legs start to shake, your breathing becomes erratic, and you're once again aware of the fact that he's still grinding himself against your thigh, something you'd completely forgotten about the second his fingers made contact with your skin.

He's all over the place too, it seems. He's panting and groaning, his eyes dark as they stay trained on yours. “Let go for me, y/n. Let daddy see how pretty you cum.”

And, just like that, you're letting out a bunch of curse words you didn't even know were part of your vocabulary, and your eyes fall shut, your stomach feels odd as a flash of pure pleasure rips through your body, and you're vaguely aware that you're screaming, for what you're not sure.

“Fucking shit- Fuck!” Negan's groans reach you through your haze.
You whine and your lids flutter open when you feel Negan’s fingers still carefully caressing your now over-sensitive clit a few more times to make sure he’s gotten everything he could out of you.

His breath is heavy and fast, and he lets his head drop in the crook of your neck. The second his right hand frees your left one, you bring it up and tangle it into his hair, pushing his head further into your neck, suddenly needing him as close to you as physically possible.

Your right hand is still gripping his left wrist though your hold on it has loosened now.

You both stay silent, fighting to regain your composure, both feeling boneless, weightless, no more heaviness left in the air of your room.

Reluctantly, Negan slips his hand out of your boyshorts and jeans but lets it rest on your right hipbone where your shirt has ridden up as to not break contact with you.

“Wh-What.... Negan.... What just happened?” You ask in a whisper, your eyes closed, the fingers on your left hand playing Negan's raven hair.

“You’ve just made me cum in my fuckin' pants, that's what just fuckin' happened, baby doll,” he explains and plants one last kiss on your neck before bringing his head out of it, balancing himself on his right elbow to peer down at you as you stay laying on the bed, relishing in the way his left hand is rubbing soothing patterns on the skin around your right hipbone.

“And, god damn, I just gave you your first orgasm, sweetheart.” You feel your cheeks heat-up once more at that, still unsure of how to process the new experience. “Kinda sucks that it happened like that but, hey...”

His eyes narrow a little as they roam over your face, and you have no idea what’s going through his head until he speaks up again, “You're good, doll?”

“Y-Yeah... Yes,” you assure him, your voice hushed, and he chuckles, his hazel orbs finding yours.

“You back to whisperin' now, princess? Though we've had a breakthrough there, not gonna lie,” Negan sees you cringe at that, clearly not comfortable with being made aware of your regression, no matter how small.

“S'okay, y/n. M'just teasin'.”

Again, Negan might not be the most aware person when it comes to mental health or anything even remotely related to emotions, really, but he's not stupid. He knows he's asked a lot out of you in the spam of three days and, in all honesty, he can't say he'd even dared to imagine that you'd let him near you like that when you clearly don't trust him yet.

He might be a dick but he’s not an oblivious one.

Without a word, Negan's left hand leaves your hip, and he chuckles when you keen at the loss of the contact, but it all fades to background noise to him when he sees the pads of his fingers still
somewhat glistening and finds them sticky with the evidence of your arousal.

You flinch when a low rumble comes from the man's chest, and your eyes widen when you see him bring the pads of his fingers up to his mouth, his eyes finding yours as he sucks them clean.

You watch the scene unfold and feel like you should be grossed out and scold him for putting whatever he had left from his trip between your legs into his mouth, but you find yourself completely mesmerized as you look-on.

Negan doesn't miss the way your thighs flinch like they're begging to clamp down against one another and give your core some friction, but you won't let them.

Looking at your face though, he can tell that you're more confused than anything and clearly not picking up on the renewed arousal your body is clearly showcasing. You're so oblivious to your own body, it's almost laughable. *Almost.*

“Like fuckin' honey ‘n’ whiskey.” His voice is something between a purr and a growl and it makes your heart beat that little bit faster.

Negan lets out a chuckle as he watches realization wash over you. He's just tasted you, that was all you on his fingers. You let out a small gasp and your cheeks start heating-up again.

You don't know what you're supposed to say in this situation, so you do what you do best; be polite. You can't never go wrong with being graceful, that much you know. “Th-thank you.”

“Thank me? Pleasure’s all mine, darlin’.” You know he's teasing but he's not mean about it, just amused by your demeanor. “I really needed that shit. Fuckin' hell, I want more, but I won't push you into anythin', okay? I need you to know that, baby doll.”

It should be common sense that one should ever push anything, especially not anything of sexual nature, upon another. Nonetheless, you appreciate him making it clear and not leaving anything for you to ponder over.

The sound of the plastic clock ticking on your nightstand is almost deafening as Negan brings his left arm up and over your right shoulder before settling the other over your left, completely caging you in underneath him now.

“Just remember that you're mine, all fucking mine, and so is that li'l pussy of yours, honey. S'all mine.” His filthy mouth makes your blush deepen and you simply nod before bringing your legs up to wrap around his waist, your limbs moving out of pure instincts.

“Thatta girl, that's the ticket,” he praises with a smirk and then dips his head back down to brush his lips against yours, not kissing but keeping you on that ledge

He growls when the hand in his hair greedily brings his head even closer to yours, your noses mashed against one another, and you're really starting to get comfortable with that sound, one might even say you've grown fond of it. One might be right.
It feels like sparks fly when your mouths finally collide again and you giggle into the kiss, making Negan smile against your mouth.

well, shit... this is nice...

6:15 PM //

The sound of your bare, wet feet softly slapping against the concrete floor is the only thing to be heard in the dorms' hallway.

You're fresh out the shower and your steps are hurried because the only thing covering your nude body is the black towel wrapped around it, and you're not really comfortable with that - at all.

You almost had a breakdown in the showers when you realized that you've had forgotten to take fresh clothes to put on and you had left the ones you'd been wearing on the ground before getting in the shower, sure enough; they were soaked when you got out.

Hence why you're now holding a mess of balled up, soaked clothes.

Your mind is still reeling as you walk back to your room. You’d thought a long shower would help you clear the fog the "moment" you've shared with Negan this afternoon had created in your mind, but it doesn't seem to have done the trick.

As a matter of fact, you're still feeling this uncomfortable aching between your thighs. It's like the ghosts of Negan's fingers remain even though your sensitive skin is now burning with the rawness the loofah you've used to harshly scrub away at your flesh has left behind.

"Hey, y/n!"

whoooooo the fuck talks to someone only covered by a fucking towel! are you fucking kidding me? who wants that kind of conversation?! like; hey, gerald, i'm naked under there. what's up!

You slowly turn your head to see Dwight running up to you, and your cheeks catch fire when he comes to an abrupt stop a few feet away from you, his eyes widening then frantically looking everywhere but in your direction.

at least he has the decency to be as uncomfortable as you are.

“Oh- Oh, shit... Sorry, I didn't- Uh... I didn't see that you were... I mean...” You’d have giggled at the way he seems to completely deflate and the way the good side of his face turns a deep crimson if you weren't so damn flustered yourself.

“I'm sorry,” is what he ends up settling on.

“So okay. Wh-what's up?”

"Just real quick, wanted to remind you about tonight's party that's all,” he tells you with a shrug,
his eyes barely looking up to meet yours. “Okay, I'm gonna... go... now... Yeah- Uh... See ya around.”

With that, Dwight awkwardly walks away and runs off to God knows where whilst you make a run for your room and lock the door behind you the second, you're in like there's a demon on your doorstep.

You let your heartbeat slow back to normal before pushing yourself away from the door, your hands still gripping your soaked ball of clothes and towel in a death-grip even though the only windows in the room are way too high-up and small for anyone to catch a glimpse of you.

Still, you don't feel safe enough in this place to let yourself relax like that.

With a sigh, you let your soaked-up clothes fall on the carpeted floor of the room with a wet thud and readjust your towel as you look around, completely at a loss.

“Okay, I just- I just have to show up real quick at this stupid party and I'll be done with it, right? Just... Like.... Hello, I'm a thing now, and leave. Easy right?”

You let out a long, loud, frustrated grunt and go to fetch some clothes when you spot a set of baby pink satin pajamas sitting on your bed as well as a pair of white, fluffy slippers slightly hiding underneath your bed.

Reaching out, you touch the clothes and they feel so soft and silky in your hands that you quickly drop your towel at your feet and grab the silky baby pink shorts to put them on but stop when you spot a lingerie set right below it.

You curiously inspect the items. The set is white satin and lace, there's a bra and a pair of panties but they seem... uncomfortable to you.

Truth be told, you've never seen a thong, you were only thirteen when the world got turned on its head, therefore, you've had no interest in freaking lingerie. Boyshorts and cotton panties are all you've ever known.

Hell, you were sixteen by the time padded bras, or just bras with clasps on them, became a thing to you. It's always been sports bras before then.

With your right index finger, you curiously lift the flimsy piece of satin up and let it hang in front of your face, your eyes narrowed at it like you're judging the damn thing.

It's all white satin with white lace framing it all, and your frown deepens when you finally take the underwear properly in your hands. The satin is so smooth, but you just can't see how this thing can possibly be comfortable to wear.

Your cheeks turn a deep crimson red when you turn the thong around and see just how thin the piece of fabric is; it's basically a string.
“How... Why...” How can something like that be comfortable and why would anyone want to wear it are the questions trotting in your head, but you're too perplexed by your new discovery to bother with words.

You're pretty sure that you look just about as graceful as a baby deer as you step into the underwear and pull it up your legs, your face scrunching up and your cheeks burning when you realize just how uncovered your butt is.

The feeling of the string nestled between your cheeks makes you cringe, and you briefly wonder if you're doing something wrong because nothing about this feels right to you.

With shaky hands, you make a grab for the un-padded bra still waiting on the bed and easily slip it on. The silky fabric feels heavenly on your skin but you're not sure how you feel about the way it makes your nipples painfully tighten.

You're used to them easily reacting whenever they so much as brush against something, but they've never feels so uncomfortably tight like that. The barbells going through them only amplifying the feeling. Though, after a bit, your body relaxes a little.

You give a sigh of relief and close the front-clasp of the bra before turning to look in the mirror standing next to the dresser against the far wall of the room.

Now, your reflection isn't someone you're friends with, you hate the girl staring back at you with every fiber of your being but, right now... You're not getting that knot in your stomach.

It's surprising because, even on a good day, you have a hard time not hating the way you look fully dressed, yet, here you are; standing in nothing but white satin and lace, and finding yourself only able to focus on the way it flatters those curves you usually hate.

You even find yourself walking up to the mirror and stop in front of it, a shaky hand shyly reaching out to drag the very tips of its fingers across your reflection. You really wish you could love that girl; God knows she deserves it.

With a pained sigh, you turn your back on the girl in the mirror and walk back to your bed to grab your pajamas.

After you've pulled the silky baby pink shorts and the soft camisole that came with them on, you're quite literally covered in satin and it's a weird feeling. You're not used to the fabric. Cotton, wool and synthetic stuff are your go-to’s.

What's the point in wearing "fancy" clothes when they'll end up covered in blood by the end of the day anyway? Your clothes are comfortable, and they can take a beating; that's all you need. You don't need to feel like you're wearing a cloud, that's superficial stuff.

superficial stuff feels nice... but, yeah. nah.
Your eyes find the soaked clothes still laying on the floor and you make your way around the bed to unfold the drying rack leaning against the left wall of the room before going back to pick the dirty clothes up.

Silently, you hang the water-heavy pieces of fabric to dry on the rack, hoping your jeans will be good to go tomorrow morning.

_pro’ly not._

Minutes later, you've pulled your favorite white, knee-high socks out of the chest you also keep your backpack, supplies, and bow locked in. You're quick to put them on and slip into the white, fluffy slippers hiding under your bed before running out of your room only to end up colliding against a solid wall of a chest.

“Shoot! I-I'm so sorry, I wasn't looking wh-”

“Hey, y/n, it's okay,” Randall's voice cuts off your ramblings. “Wow- Look at'cha... You look amazing,” he compliments as you step away from his chest, allowing him to take a good look at you.

“Th-Thank you, Randall... You uh... You look good t-too,” you admit with a shy smile.

“Why, thank you, my dear. I, indeed, do look pretty fucking good tonight. Yes, indeed, I do,” he expresses with a godawful British accent, and you swear you'd almost forgotten what laughing like you are now felt like.

He lets out a small chuckle and watches as your laughter dies down. When you look back up at him, his eyes are already on you, and you timidly shuffle on your feet, unsure of what to say or do.

You flinch when Randall swings his right arm over your shoulders before he's gently nestling you against his side and, to your surprise, you don't tense up against him. Your body stays lax and you relish in the soft squeeze his hand gives to your right shoulder as walks you two out of the dorms.

“Since work ends at six, the guys and I usually get together to have a chat and some beers. Wanna join? Oh, wait, sorry…” He clears his throat; “Would you care to join us for a tea party, m’lady? Also, ain’t no tea to this party, darlin’, only beers and a bunch of disgusting hillbillies,” he finishes with his British accent making your shoulders shake with contained laughter.

“Why, yes, it would be my pleasure, sir,” you surprise yourself when you play into his little game.

“Hm, yes, very well.” Your e/y orbs find Randall's blue and grey ones, and you both crack up under the other's stare. Your chuckles are echoing off the walls of the gigantic compound, but you don't care whether people can hear you at the moment.

_can we keep him?_

With a sigh, you let your head fall against his chest as you both keep on walking and Randall has to suppress a grin when he feels your head against him.
He knows you're probably not thinking too hard at the moment and that's the only reason why you're letting him be so close to you. Either way, he doesn't want to jinx it.

You both end up outside on the main yard where you all were earlier today, before Negan came to collect you, and you blush at the memory of what happened in your room afterwards.

"Yeah, that's a thing now... what the hell is going on with you? I mean, your life's always been messy as shit but damn! That's not messy, that's fucked up."

"If Negan catches you snugglin' with his girl like that, you do realize he's gonna chop your dick off, right?" A woman's voice snaps out of your thoughts and you tense against Randall's side, an anxious knot forming in your belly.

"She ain't his, she's a worker here," the tattooed man tells her and it's odd to hear his voice so serious. Surely enough, there's not even the hint of a smile when you peer up at him to check his expression.

"No fucking way, seriously?" You slowly nod your head and tear your eyes away from Randall's moving jaw to look at the woman.

She's sitting at the table with the other men; she has dark hair which she's wearing in two tight braids on each sides of her head, brown eyes, and her skin is a pretty shade of dark brown.

She's wearing ripped, washed-off, blue jeans with a simple white shirt which bears a few stains of old, dried blood here and there. She's intimidatingly beautiful.

"Yes, I uh- I just work for him, nothing else. N-No offence but I r-really don't want anything to do with his crap... Sorry... Didn't mean to curse," you apologize to which a man in the background promptly says; "no sweat up our asses, darlin'."

The woman you're speaking to lets out a small laugh and gets up from her seat at the table to come greet you, extending an hand out for you to shake. You reach out with a shaky hand to gently grab hers, your grip so soft it surprises her.

She gives Randall a look you don't catch before looking back at you and giving you a smile that most definitely catches your attention, and you eagerly give her one back. "It's really cool to meet you. I'm Faith," she politely introduces herself.

"Nice to meet you, Faith. I- I'm y/n."

Though her eyes are soft, you can't help but feel judged when they look you up and down. The outfit you're wearing not exactly hiding you, and you're now hyper-aware of that fact.

Without even realizing it, you press yourself closer to Randall who's still standing right there, his arm still draped over your shoulders and, once again, you relax a little when he gives your shoulder
a small, reassuring squeeze.

Faith notices you squirming, and her eyes immediately flee your body to find your face again. It wasn't her attention to make you uncomfortable.

“I don't mean to rude, at all, but... How are you not one of Negan's bitches? Pardon the language but I don't really have any other words to describe those parasites.”

You feel the chest of the tall man beside you shake with silent laughter at his comrade’s words. Seems like Negan's “wives” are a hot topic to be laughed about among his workers.

“He asked me but uh... I declined, I... That's not what I do,” you admit with a frown and a small shrug. “I work for what I have, I don't just sit around all day and wait for things to kindly fall into my lap. S'not how things work... Shouldn't be.”

“Well, I can already tell ya we're gonna get along wonderfully you and I, kiddo,” Faith tells you and give her a small smile, silently telling her that you appreciate her warm welcome.

She gives you a wink and turns around to look at the men sitting at the table. “Hey, scoot over ya bums, let the girl have a sit.” And, to your surprise, they do.

The people at the table shuffle around to make room for you and you can already tell Faith is quickly gonna become someone you'll be able to go to.

You're already in awe of her.

Randall gives you a soft nudge and your head snaps up to look at him, your eyes questioning, but he simply walks you both to the table without a word.

You take a sit next to Faith, smiling when you find Connor sitting right in front of you on the other side of the table, and Randall comes to complete the table as he sits next to you, a smile on his face.

The small hair at the nape of your neck stand at attention when the Savior leans down to speak into your ear. “Just squeeze my arm if it gets to be too much and I'll sneak you out of here, alright?”

Your bottom lip wobbles a little and, though you're quick to stifle it by biting down on the abused piece of flesh, Randall catches it.

You're not used to people giving a damn about you, and it's even weirder because you don't know this man and he doesn't know you. You’re strangers to one another and, it's not that you think people are bad, even after all you've been through, you still wholeheartedly believe in the kindness of strangers but... That's a whole new kind of kindness and your brain doesn't know how to process it without going to dark places.

The survivor in you wants to brush it off, but the abandoned little girl wants to get lost into the
affection and finally let someone lift all of that damned weight off of her sore shoulders.

The only response Randall gets is a quick nod.

You look around the table, watching as people, men and women, interact with one another, go back and forth with discussions over bottles of beer, and you suddenly realize just how out of place you are. Well, no. How out of place you feel.

You itch to grab for Randall's arm and have him get you out of here, but you can hear him talking and laughing next to you and decide against it.

Instinctively, you bring your hands to your upper-arms, hugging yourself to try and feel a little less exposed, and start to nervously shuffle around on your spot on the bench.

ugh, sitting on a wooden bench with bare thighs wasn't the brightest idea, y/n. you're gonna get splinters in yo ass.

You jump a little when your shoulders are suddenly covered by a jacket and immediately turn your head to your right to look at Randall, already knowing he's the one who covered you and, sure enough, he's down to a tight black shirt.

The sun is almost already down, and the temperature is gonna drop even lower in a few.

“Randall-” You start, your hands going up to take the jacket off and hand it back to him.

“Here, pretty girl,” Faith interrupts with a smile as she hands you a beer which you politely decline. The smell of it alone is enough to make your stomach churn.

“Hey, you alright?” She asks, seeing the sudden discomfort on your face as memories of your abusive mother poke their heads out.

“Y-Yeah... I'm okay, really. Thank you.”

“Of course, honey. We gotta be here for each other, it's important, especially nowadays.” You're not gonna argue with that.


“Y/n, this bitch over there is Arat, she's awful,” Faith introduces the other woman with a laugh.

“Yeah, I'm a real bitch,” Arat laughs and extends her arm out, slightly pushing Connor to the side for her hand to be able reach yours. “Nice to meet you.”

“It’s nice to meet you, too. I seriously thought all the women here were... Well... Y'know...” You trail off with a shrug.

“Hell no, there's more of us, fighting and being our awesome selves,” the curly-haired woman declares with a proud smile.
“Damn, Arat, your ass is literally in my fucking face right now. I mean, shit, if you want me just say so, don't put your ass in my fucking face, s'fucking rude.”

“Connor, you fuck, I swear to God,” she tries to sound serious for a minute but ends up cracking-up along with him.

You watch the interaction with a small smile and, this time around, you're not startled when you feel Randall left arm wrap around your shoulders. You let yourself appreciate the comfort for a little bit, your hands gripping each of the jacket’s lapels to hug it closer to your body.

“So, honey, I've heard you've actually cleaned the whole damn armory,” Faith says, “I'm sorry I told Simon about you being in there, didn't know you were one of us. Seriously, that's on me.”

You're confused at her confession because; not only had you no idea anyone had seen you, but also because she sounds extremely remorseful, like she's afraid she might have gotten you in some trouble.

“No need to apologize, I haven't seen Simon all day,” you try and reassure her, and you can see her shoulders dropping a little.

Makes you wonder just what kind of punishment Negan and his goons inflict on people for them to be so damn tense at the mere thought of it. “Hell, I didn't know anyone had seen me.”

Once the air has been cleared, you start to make chit-chat with everyone, Randall's presence helping greatly, and you have to admit that being with people isn't actually half as bad as you were afraid it'll be. You actually feel kinda... Good?

Things are going pretty well... At least for now; you've learned not to get your hopes up by now. You know better.
Reflection

Chapter Notes

[UPDATED JUNE 3. 2019]

TRIGGER WARNING: THERE’S A PRETTY GRAPHIC SELF-HARM SCENE AHEAD, PLEASE PROCEED WITH CAUTION! I’M ALWAYS HERE IF YOU NEED TO TALK, PLEASE DON’T SUFFER ALONE.

8:00 PM //

You’ve skipped yet another meal tonight and you know just how unhealthy it is, but you just can't put anything in your stomach. Between the anxiousness coming from the fact that you’re in a new, foreign environment, and the uneasiness you feel from all the people you're not used to having around, it feels like your body is gonna reject everything you'll give it anyway so what's the point?

the point is you didn't eat anything today nor yesterday and your body is trying to recover from all the shit you've put it through, and it can't fucking do that if you don't fucking feed it properly... any questions?

You let out a deep sigh and quickly plaster an awfully fake smile on your face when you hear Connor calling after you. The man is completely out of breath when he reaches you and you wonder just for how long he's been running around the place, looking for you.

“Y/n! Shit… hold up-” he gasps, bending forward with his hands on his knees as he struggles to catch his breath. “Jesus… I think I'm dying.”

The plastic smile you've been wearing melts off and is replaced by a shy but genuine one. “I'm so old,” Connor wheezes and that's when you can't help but give a small laugh.

“Are you alright?” You ask and, though he can tell you're smiling, the hint of genuine worry in your voice makes him breathlessly chuckle.

“Yeah, sweetness, I'm alright... Just about ready to shit my pants but...” “Ew,” you grimace though the smile stretching your lips isn't fooling anyone.

“You love me,” he teases with a boyish grin and your cheeks heat up under his gaze.

“Anyway!” You almost jump when his voice suddenly booms in the empty and, previously silent, hallway. “Wanna join us upstairs? I mean, like, at the party? It's shitty and it's really just people getting wasted and talkin' shit but it makes for a little entertainment... I guess.”

“I dunno, Connor... I-i'm not much for... Well... Y'know.... S'just that being stuck in a room with a
bunch of drunk people doesn't really appeal to me.” You can see that the gears turning in Connor’s head as he takes your words in.

“Okay, how 'bout; you come with me, just to see, and you can run off if it's too much. No questions asked, no arguing, you'll be able to leave whenever you want. Hell, we could even hang out if you don't feel like goin' to bed and whatnot.”

You look at him for a second and slowly nod to his proposition. You wouldn't be able to say why but you trust that he'll keep his words. He hasn't given you any red flags so far, plus, worse come to worse, you'll just punch your way out of the damn room.

would be the first time.

With a soft smile, Connor carefully grabs your left hand and leads you around the compound. You’re grateful that you’ve slipped a cardigan on before dinner to cover up, especially your stitched-up forearm. You've been able to keep your injuries hidden so far and you’d like to keep it that way.

You follow the man up a flight of stairs which leads to the first floor where the rec room the party is taking place in is situated, you also spot the infirmary on this floor and take a mental note of its location.

The green-eyed man leads you into the room already filled with people and gives you a reassuring look when he feels you tense and tug at his hand before leaning down a bit to face you. “Okay, so; the music is shit, the alcohol tastes like piss - but it does the job, so no one complains - and there's a lot of sweaty morons in this room... Welcome to my world, sweetness.”

You let out a small laugh and look around the room when you spot a big window on the wall facing you. You abandon Connor to quickly walk over to it, trying your hardest to ignore the eyes you can feel on you on your way there, curious to see what you’ll be able to see from there, and a tiny smile appears on your face when you spot Dwight outside. He must be on watch tonight.

why do you feel so bad for this guy?

“Damn, don't you look mighty fine, princess.” You jump, startled, when you hear Negan's voice right behind you, effectively scaring the crap out of you.

You slowly turn around to face him but look down at the floor, not wanting him to see just how red your cheeks are. He's not too pleased that you're fleeing his stare though. “Yeah, you look fuckin’ adorable, baby doll,” he pauses and gets closer to you, way too close for comfort, before whispering in your ear.

“Ya like what I got'cha?” You immediately know that he's talking about the underwear and you're now hyper-aware of just how much it must show that you're uncomfortable whenever you walk. Luckily, no one's made a comment on it... So far.

“Th-The...” you lower your voice so much that Negan has to lean down to hear you, “the p-panties you-you gave are weird.” You don't see it because your eyes are glued to your fluffy slippers, but
you hear his lips part in a smirk near your left ear.

“**Weird how, baby girl?”** At this point, you're pretty sure you could cook a freaking steak on your cheeks. “**Th-They... They don't c-cover my... my butt. Th-They're kind of un-uncomfortable, Negan.”**

He chuckles right into your ear and you swear you feel it vibrate in your throat. “**S'it really uncomfortable or are ya just freakin' out 'cause you never wore a thong before, doll?”**

**thong... well that's... a new thing that we know now... yay?**

You frown and let your chin fall against your chest, wanting nothing but for the floor to swallow you because you honestly don't know what to say. You feel him eyeing you, his gaze so heavy on you that it's almost suffocating.

From your slippers up to the white cardigan framing the camisole hanging loosely over your upper body, there's not a single thing Negan doesn't pick up on and, for some reason, the knee-high socks you're wearing make his cock stir in his pants. You look the perfect picture of innocence in baby-pink satin and white cotton.

There's just a bit of skin peeking out between the hem of your socks which end above your knees and the hem of your shorts which end mid-thigh, and his fingers itch to reach out for it.

“**Thing is, only I'm supposed to be able to see you when you look like that, baby girl.”** You look up at him then, startled to find him right there when you do, your nose almost bumping into his.

**this man has a thing for disregarding personal space huh.**

“**I can't have those horny fucks seein’ your pretty li'l body like that. I can't have you walkin' around in shit that only I'm supposed to see you in, we clear?”**

“**B-But... Those... Those are p-pajamas, Negan... I-I mean... I don't—**” You sigh, frustrated that you can't form a proper sentence in front of him.

“**Yeah, but you look ridiculously fuckin' hot in torn and fuckin' gross clothes, so just imagine what'cha look like when you're wearing pretty, clean little clothes, darlin'. Let's just say that you're fuckin' lucky that I'm somehow managin' to keep myself on check 'cause if it weren't for ya, I'd already be fucking you on that damn pool table.”** You feel your stomach tighten at his filthy words, your cheeks burning, and you loudly swallow around the knot in your throat.

You hear him chuckle lowly and then he's slowly walking away to go to the infamous pool table, inviting the people in the room to play with him and some come running. At this point, you don't know if it's because they're scared of what he may do if he's left hanging or if they're just that desperate to get on the man's good side.

**either way, it's pathetic...**
High-pitched giggles resonate in the room and you slightly turn your head just to spot a couch filled with a bunch of fully grown women giggling like preteen girls.

*jesus fucking christ on a stick...*

You quickly understand who they are, and you can feel your face turn into a grimace at the sheer sound of their shrieking laughs and voices. It seems like they all have loud, obnoxious, high-pitched voices and you don't think you've ever felt so damned embarrassed for someone like you are for them right now.

Your eyes briefly met Amber’s and the look she gives you is somewhere between confusion and a silent apology, like it’s her fault you’re here and her “friends” are being obnoxious.

“*Ladies, no disrespect or anythin' but, would ya pipe the fuck down for me?”* Negan asks them somewhat politely, a cocky smile on his lips, and an avalanche of giggles and apologizes all directed towards him ensues.

Your eyes roll so hard they say hi to your brain when he gives them a quick wink before resuming his game. You legitimately feel like you're about to throw up and actually have to put your hand up to your mouth to keep yourself from doing so right there and then.

On shaky legs, you walk over to the pool table where Connor is playing with Negan and some other men. You make sure to avoid Negan and walk as far away from him as possible, and quickly make your way over to Connor.

The man greets you with a goofy grin and you can't help but give him a tiny one back. You know he's about to ask you what's up when you push yourself on your tip-toes to reach his left ear, your hands resting on his shoulder for balance.

“I'm going,” you quietly let him know, “thanks for trying though, that was very sweet of you and I really appreciate it, Connor.” You really want to give him a kiss on the cheek, but don't risk it, afraid to create unneeded drama, especially when you can feel Negan's eyes gunning you down from the other side of the pool table.

Afterwards, you quickly get out of the room, any previous discomfort the thong you're wearing may have been causing completely disappearing, and all but run down the stairs. You make your way through the compound, running as fast possible to get outside because it feels like there's no air for you to take-in anywhere in this damned place. It feels like the walls are closing-in on you.

You're out of breath when you finally reach the main-yard and, the second you take air into your lungs, your body lunges forward and folds in two, your hands on your knees as bile runs up your throat and, before you know it, you're emptying your already damn-near-empty stomach onto the ground, missing your white slippers from only a few centimeters before breaking down in tears.

You're tired, you feel vulnerable; and the urge to crawl onto a hole and curl-up on yourself is very
“Shit, y/n... Hey, what's wrong?” Dwight's inquisitive voice reaches you and you swear you wish that damn hole would just open beneath your feet.

"that's just great! yeah, why the fuck not! come on over and look at how much of a fucking mess I am! great fucking time for all the family!

You let out a loud sob and your body starts to shake. You're too tired, everything hurts so bad for you right now and it's perfectly understandable when you've been through all the things you've been through, but you don't seem to be able to acknowledge that, you would with someone else but with you? You can't. It doesn't sound right.

"D-Dwight, I... My belly hurts.” Your stomach is burning like hell because of the acid that just came out of it when you threw up, you've eaten close to nothing today and had a barely sated stomach beforehand so all you threw up was acid mixed with small residues of whatever food you've had those past two days.

You can taste blood in your mouth, and you know your throat must be fucked to shit right now. “Come with me, y/n, I'll take you to the infirmary, yeah?” Dwight calmly suggests though you can tell he's uncomfortable. You can't blame him, you'd feel weird too if a stranger just puked in front of you.

"No!” You panic, making him stop dead in his steps, frozen a few feet away from you. "P-please... C-Can I just... Can I just s-stay with you, p-please?"

"You're gonna fuckin' freeze out here, y/n, and you... You just fucking threw up, something's going on with you and-”

"Please, Dwight. I just need some air, I swear I'll be good.” Your voice is so low, he almost doesn't catch it, but when he does, he can tell that something is wrong and that it doesn't have everything to do with the state that your body's in.

"Okay,” he breaks with a sigh, “you can stay with me if you want.”

You don't really think about it and hug him tight, burying your face in his chest and mumbling a “thank you” into it. He's taken aback by your display of affection, but quickly shakes it off and carefully wraps his arms around your smaller, shaking body.

"No problem,” he whispers like you’ll run off if he speaks too loudly.

A few minutes later, you're sitting on the hood of a big truck parked near the fence, Dwight leaning against it as he keeps an attentive eye out for any movement outside, but you can tell that his mind is somewhere else and you're pretty damn sure you know where -or on who- it is.

For some reason, it irritates you. “She doesn't deserve you to miss or dwell on her, Dwight,” you
state out of nowhere.

“Excuse me?” He asks, looking up at you, clearly confused by your student outburst.

“Sherry, your ex-wife? I really don't wanna stick my nose where it doesn't belong, but you deserve better and someone has to tell you that. And if that someone happens to be me, someone you barely know and barely knows you, then so be it,” you tell him with a shrug. “She abandoned you. She's a coward and she hid from her responsibilities and ran to another man's sides when you needed her the most. Who does that? Not someone who truly loves and cares for you, Dwight.”

“I-it's not like that, y/n. It's complicated and-”

“Like hell it is.” You jump off the truck and go to stand in front of him, your body still shaking, “You did what was best for her and her sister, you did what you did because you loved her and she threw you into the fiery-pit when it backfired... That's not how things work, okay? Take it from someone who grew up with people like her around, all they ever do is take and take but they'll never give you a thing, not even a small thank you 'cause they don't give a crap, Dwight. They just don't. I saw her there, in an ugly puke-green dress,” he chuckles at that, “painting her freaking nails and gossiping with her friends, giggling like a moron at absolutely nothing while you're out there, working in the cold, paying off her debt. How's that fair? How's that love? I mean... I... Am I just s-stupid? Do I just not... I don’t understand...” you trail off, slowly but oh-so-surely losing your bravado.

There are tears in your eyes, your vision is blurry, and you can barely see him. You're really upset, and you know that it's not really about him. This whole thing is opening up wounds you oh-so-badly crave to forget about. Seem it's unlikely you ever will.

Dwight lets out a nervous chuckle and scratches the back of his neck before looking at you. He doesn't seem angry at all and you're glad that he isn't because he could've gotten pissed at you for getting involved. After all, this is none of your business and you really shouldn’t get involve in any way, shape or form into whatever drama those people have going on.

“Why do you even care, kid?” He asks with genuine curiosity, no sarcasm or venom in his voice.

“Because you're hurting and it's not fair,” you whisper with a frown like it's the most obvious thing in the world. Sure, you barely know the guy and your first encounter was messy, but you have a heart... An hyper-empathetic heart, which you know plays a big part in all this.

It's not that you wouldn't have cared otherwise, just that you care a whole fucking lot right now. No doubt way more than you should.

“You're not a bad person, Dwight. She's got you disfigured and ran into another man's arms, the same man that burned half of your face. It's just... There are so many bad things happening around us, you know? Why shouldn't you be able to enjoy the good ones because you're too busy thinking about and missing a person who’s not even worth it.”

“I'm not a bad person?” He lets out a humorless chuckle. “Are you shitting me? I'm the reason Negan is in your life right now, I dragged you into this shit... I could've let you run away after you punched Simon... Fuck... I fucked it up for ya, y'know? You're still alive but... I mean... Look
around us, what kind of life is that? I mean, I don't mean to sound ungrateful, y'know, 'cause we do have a roof above our heads and food in our stomachs but... At what cost, y'know? I'm not a good person, y/n. I'm a thief, a killer. I'm a fuck-up, too.”

“I don't believe there's such a thing as a bad person, there’re just... just people who do bad things sometimes and... it doesn't have to define you. You shouldn't let it define you.”

Dwight is looking intensely at you like he’s trying to decipher whether you’re serious or not but he can tell you mean what you’ve said just by the way you’re avoiding his gaze and nervously fidgeting on the spot like you’re bracing yourself for an insult or something. He’s about speak-up when Randall's voice interrupts him.

“Y/n!” The tattooed man trots up to you and Dwight, “There you are. Shit, you scared the livin' hell outta me.”

You frown a little at that. “R-Randall? Wh-What's going on?”

“Nothing, nothing,” he quickly reassures you before looking between you and the other Savior, “Sorry if I'm interruptin' something, I just... I've been looking all over the place for you and... Shit, sweetheart, you're shaking like a leaf.”

He's right, you are shaking a whole lot, your lips are turning a shade darker while your skin is slowly losing some pigment, and you can't feel your fingers anymore, the cold and your fatigue numbed you completely.

“Randall, take her to her room,” Dwight orders though he keeps his voice friendly, unlike someone you've come to know. “She needs to get some rest and warmth.”

“Yeah, f'course man.” Randall gets closer to you and you let him pull you to his chest. “You need anythin'?” He asks his comrade.

“Nah, I'm good, thanks though.” “No problem.”

You smile a little at the exchange between the two men. They're so unlike what you’d expected them to be. “C'mere, honey,” Randall croons as he carefully grabs your waist before lifting your shaking body up to his, and you let him.

You're cold and tired, your belly still hurts, tears are still threatening to spill from your eyes, and your head aches like a bitch. Fighting his hold is the last thing on your mind, especially when his body warmth is spreading over to you.

He wraps his arms around your frame before walking back inside, stopping to look down at the spot on the ground you threw up on a few minutes ago and softly kisses your temple as he heads inside the compound, walking towards your bedroom to put you to bed.

Carefully, Randall opens your room's door, trying not to make too much noise for the people that
are already asleep in the other rooms. He walks in, closing the door behind him before heading towards your bed.

Keeping his movements gentle, he sits you down on the mattress and slips your slippers off your feet, before lifting the warm blankets covering the bed. “Alright, get it there, munchkin, you need to get warm.”

*munchkin... wow, s'been a while since we've heard of her, huh?*

You listen to him and crawl under the thick blanket, letting your head rest on a soft pillow before looking up at Randall with a shy smile. “**Better?**” He asks, reciprocating your smile.

“**Y-Yes, thank you, Randall.**” “**Hey, it's no problem at all, really,**” he says with a warm smile before carefully leaning down. You flinch and shy away when his lips hover over your forehead, and you both stand still.

When he feels you relax beneath him, he bends the rest of the way down to press a soft kiss on your forehead, your eyes fluttering shut at the tenderness he's showing. All this time spent all alone, you almost forgot just how long it's been since you've had someone care for you and to receive the affection you've been receiving the last three days is odd but clearly doing something for you.

It's weird, really, because you don’t know these people. You don’t know Randall, you don’t know Connor nor Faith, Dwight nor Negan, and you didn’t know Jesus and Harlan, but still have little to no problem interacting with them.

Maybe the circumstances; which are that civilization has fucking ended and the dead are coming back to live, make it so people get closer to one other quicker than they used to. You’re not sure if there’s a fucking science behind all that or not, that’s just how **you** explain it.

“**Sleep tight, y/n,**” Randall bids you goodnight, his lips still right against your skin as he speaks, “**my room's right next to yours, the one to your left, just knock on the wall if you-**”

“**Stay, please?**” You don't know why you've said it, why it slipped out like that but, by golly do you hate yourself for it.

A blue eye and a grey one look down at you with a mix of surprise and confusion swirling in them as yours start to fill-up with tears once more. A single one rolls down your cheek before you can do anything to keep it at bay.

You don't want to be alone. You're scared. It's been so long since you've had to sleep in a room all by yourself. When you're out there, there's always the sounds of the dead roaming around, and you got so used to it that you're scared to sleep in complete silence now. Especially in an environment you're not used to.

“**You- You sure, y/n?**”
Please, I-I can't... I don't... I'm scared... Randall, I'm scared.” You turn your head into your pillow to stifle the loud sobs racking through you, your body shaking along with them and your migraine getting worse with every single sob.

“Hey, shh, it's okay. Y/n, you're okay. Don't worry, if you're sure you don't mind my company, I'll stay with you, I promise.”

“Please,” your plea is muffled by your pillow, but it still reaches its target.

Without a word, Randall carefully kicks his work-boots off his feet before taking his shirt off, looking at you to make sure that you're okay with him being shirtless but he's not able to make eye contact with you since your head is buried in your pillow, loud sobs making your body shake under the blanket.

You look up when you hear him moving around and see him sitting down on a chair next to your bed. Your left hand slips out from underneath the blanket to reach out and grab one of his wrists.

“With me, please?” You ask, and you know you're not really being clear about what you're asking him for, but he gets to gist of it still.

“I- Look, I'm perfectly fine with that, sweetheart, but I don't want you to feel uncomfortable,” he explains, his eyes glued to where your hand is weakly tugging at his wrist to try and pull him out of the chair and bring him to you. How you both seem to have clicked right-away is a fucking mystery to him when all he'd heard about you before you came to the Sanctuary was how closed-off you were.

“You won't,” you timidly reassure. “Please?”

god this is getting to be pathetic... what the hell's going on with you, woman?

Randall gives a nod and slowly gets up off the chair, his heart tightening in his chest when your trembling hand doesn't leave his wrist, like you're afraid he'll vanish if you let go. Pants and socks still on, he carefully climbs into the bed next to you before bringing the blanket over his body and making sure you're properly covered as well.

Like a moth to a flame, you're immediately drawn to him and curl yourself up against his tattooed chest. He's a little startled by the sudden display of affection, but the way you're clinging to him lets him know just how bad you're craving comfort and reassurance right now. You may be strangers to one another but he's more than willing to play the part if that's what you need right now.

Carefully, because he wants to make sure you don't pull away, he rolls onto his left side and brings you closer to him, snaking his left arm beneath your pillow where the right side of your face is resting. When you don't flinch or try to pull away, he gently kisses the crown of your head and brings his right hand up to rest it on the left side of your head and softly play with your hair, trying to reassure and soothe you when he feels you gently shake with silent tears in his hold.
“Shh, it's okay. You're okay, y/n, you're safe, I promise,” he croons, keeping his left hand soft in your hair.

“I'm scared, Randall,” you confess in a whisper, shame evident in your voice.

“It's okay to be but, I promise you that you're safe right now. I swear.” You don't answer him, just push yourself further into his chest, desperate to feel any kind of comfort.

His right hand slips from the side of your head and goes to cup the back of it to keep you close to him, his thumb rubbing soothing circles at the base of your skull as he tries to get you to relax a bit.

“You need to sleep, y/n. I'm right here. I'm not going anywhere, I promise, but you need to rest.” Randall explains and, with a sleepy hum of acknowledgement, you slowly nod your head as you feel your eyelids getting heavier and heavier until you can't fight off the urge to sleep anymore.

14th January;

6:15 AM //

Your eyes slowly flutter open and you sleepily mumble as you emerge from your slumber, your head aching already. It takes you a second before you’re able to get your bearings and a sharp currant of panic runs through you when you feel the body you’re lying on before the events from last night come back to you, though it doesn’t exactly relax you per say.

You let out a small yaw and feel Randall’s chest vibrate against your head. “Well, that's the cutest noise I've ever heard,” he teases, his voice rough with sleep.

Though you probably should, you can’t seem to move away from this man you barely know, the warmth his body is providing coaxing your laziness right out. “Morning, Randall,” you shyly greet him, slightly embarrassed at the way you’ve clung to him the night before.

“Morning, y/n. You sleep okay?” He asks with a taint of concern in his voice.

“Y-Yes.” You slowly sit up on the mattress, stretching and looking up at the two small windows on the wall in front of you. The sun isn’t even up yet. “Thank you.”

You both stay silent for a minute, you looking down at your hands as Randall props himself up on your headboard and watches you, only seeing your outline in the very dim light bathing the room. “I'm sorry,” you finally say, “I shouldn’t have… I- I don’t know what happened, I just… I’m s-so sorry if you felt forced to-”

“Hey,” the tattooed man interrupts, “I didn't feel forced to do shit, okay, y/n? I stayed 'cause I wanted to, end of the story.” With your back to him, Randall can see just how tense your shoulders are. “Hell, I can't recall the last time I slept that well ever since everything went to shit,” he adds, smiling when you let out a small chuckle and whisper a soft “yeah” under your breath.
With another yaw, you turn around to face Randall, crossing your legs and nervously fidgeting with your fingers, unsure of what to say or where to put yourself. Truth is; you don’t understand what happened to you last night. You don’t understand that need you felt to have someone there, someone you don’t even know.

You can’t understand how you actually slept with a stranger in the same bed as you and without your knife under the pillow and your fingers on it.

Your immediate thought is that you’ve shown weakness, that being surrounded by walls will make you weak and it’s dangerous, that you shouldn’t be here because you’re not strong enough to keep the survivor in you alive and strong in a comfortable environment; you’ll go soft again and that terrifies the ever-livin-shit out of you.

“W-Why are you here, Randall?” You suddenly ask, a frown creasing your forehead.

“I told you I-”. “No,” you interrupt, “I mean- Why are you here.”

He seems taken aback by that and clears his throat. “Oh... Well, ya know, didn’t have much of a choice, really... Connor and I, we were with a group but uh... Negan’s guys got the jump on us on day and... I guess the rest’s history,” he vaguely explains, and you leave it at that, not wanting to cross a line.

“I’m sorry, shouldn’t have asked,” you whisper, feeling bad for getting personal.

“Hey, s’all good, no need to apologize,” he reassures with a smile.

Sighing, you let your head drop to look down at your fingers, twisting and pulling on them. You don’t know what you’re supposed to do now. When you’re outside, it’s easy, you don’t have to think about anything; you just do.

But, here, you can’t do your own thing, you have someone to answer to and you’re not too sure what to do with that nor if it sits well with you. You don’t want to become someone’s bitch, you’d rather be six feet under and yours, than alive and well but someone else’s.

“I can hear ya think from here, princess,” Randall says as he slowly slips out from the warmth of the blankets. “Ugh- Holy balls, I so regret leaving this bed,” he grunts as he stretches and yawns.

You look-on with a small smile. “Aw, poor little guy, having to get outta bed in the morning,” you gently tease, though it is somewhat amusing to see someone complain about such a normal thing. You vaguely remember how grumpy you used to be in the morning, but that’s a thing of the past.

The tall Savior turns around and looks down at you with a quirked-up eyebrow and an amused smirk crooking his mouth. “Oh, so that’s how it’s gonna be, huh?” His tone is playful but the way he’s regarding you makes you giggle nervously and squirm on your spot on the bed.
“Yeah, looks like it I'm afraid,” you somehow sass back, half of you afraid that he might take this the wrong way and get angry.

“Alright, missy,” he declares before walking up to the bed again, making you squeal and crawl to the head of the mattress to dive straight under the blankets, giggling like a child.

“Oh no, no, I don't think so, lil lady,” Randall taunts and you feel your toes curl with nervous excitement when the blanket is flown off your body, exposing you to him.

You let out a small, high-pitched squeal, which you’ll die before admitting-to, as he bends down to grab your waist and flings you up on his shoulder. You feel your right hand twitch and your muscles lock-up for a brief second at the contact, but Randall is being careful of where he puts his hands and that tension quickly passes.

“What’s that you were sayin’, princess?”

“R-Randall- P-Put me down!”

“Apologize,” he demands though his voice is more teasing and playful than it is commanding.

“Never. Y-You suck,” you chuckle, your hands firmly planted on Randall’s bare back to give you some leverage.

definitely not shamelessly pawing at this man. not at all.

You’re thrown back on the bed, and you don’t have time to blink before Randall is climbing on top of you to assault your body with tickles, and you completely break below him. “Randall! D-Don't- Please- S-Stop- Randall, I-I’m gonna p-pee myself- Fu-u-dge, stop!” The man smiles at your almost slip-up.

“Apologize to me, y/n,” he demands again though, this time, there’s no doubt about his playfulness with the boyish grin he’s sporting.

“I-I'm sorry!” You cave, twisting beneath him to try and get away. The hands on your belly and sides finally stop moving and Randall smiles down at you, clearly happy with himself. “See? Easy.”

With a huff, you shove him off of you and get off the bed to walk towards the door of your room, before looking back at him with mischief in your eyes. “Sorry that you're such a prick,” you say with an all-too-assured smile before opening the door and bolting for the showers, knowing damn well that he won't follow you there.

“Yeah, run you li'l shit. You gonna have to come out of your shower at some point,” Randall calls behind you, leaving your room whilst putting his t-shirt back on and walking back to his own with a smile on his face.
You let out a giggle when you walk in the showers and step towards one of the cabins before Faith's voice interrupts you. "Hey there, sweetpea! How you doin'?" She asks as she comes up to you with a smile.

"Hi, Faith. I'm alright, thank you. How 'bout you?"

"Slightly shit-faced but, other than that? Pretty good," she replies without missing a beat and you can't help but give a little chuckle at her optimism.

You’re both about to step into your own cabins for a shower when Faith alts you again. "Hey, in all seriousness," her tone makes you frown a little, ‘I meant what I said yesterday. If you need anythin’, I’ll be more than happy to help. Those people? They don’t have a clue, but I know how much it can suck coming into this kind of environment when you’re used to being out there all on your own.”

This is only the second time you’ve interacted with this woman, yet you can tell that you both might be a lot more similar than you thought and that’s a somewhat reassuring thought. She seems so down to Earth and kind, yet you wouldn’t want to get on her bad side.

You whisper a “thank you,” unsure of what else to say but it’s seems to be enough because she takes it with a smile and a chipper “of course, honey,” before you both step into a cubicle of your own to finally take that shower you’ve been seeking.

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After an interesting conversation with Faith through the showers’ walls, which was really just a contest for the worst puns in the history of humanity, you finally find the courage to turn the warm water off.

Reaching for your pajamas, you put them back on before stepping out of the cabin and head-off to your room to get changed.

Closing the cold, steel door of your room, you shut your eyes and take a deep breath before making your way to the rack where you’ve put your clothes to dry the night before and grunt when you find your jeans still soaking and the t-shirt still damp.

You quickly open your locked chest to pull your backpack from it and dig in to fetch an old Def Leppard shirt from the very bottom of it. You never really used it because it was a gift from one of the people you loved the most. He’d brought it for you when you were only five and you couldn’t put it on because it’s a double XL, “[…] s’the only one they had left […] couldn’t let it slip away from my favorite girl […] don’t worry, munchkin, ya’ll grow into it […]” is what he’d told you and you can’t help but smile at the memory.
You remember vividly how you’d discarded his words and put the shirt on anyway only for it to turn into a gown on your tiny body. You remember looking up at hazel eyes and exclaim “s’a perfect fit!”

Shaking your head, you look into the drawers of the old dresser next to you and rummage through until you find a pair of plain, white cotton panties and a, just as plain, padded, grey bra to put on before slipping your old t-shirt on, giddy to see that it’s more of a fit nowadays, though it is still very much floating around your frame.

“Yeah… that's more like it,” you whisper to yourself with a smile.

You tug the black, Def Leppard shirt and your butterfly knife in the pair of loose and torn denim jeans you also took out of the dresser, rolling the pants’ legs in for them to reach your ankles, and slip into your black combat boots with a sigh of relief.

Last night was the first night since the outbreak you’ve wore actual pajamas instead of sleeping in your clothes, and you're not too comfortable with that yet. You just got used to sleeping fully dressed with your knife in hand and you don’t really want that habit to fade, you’re a survivor, not a house-cat.

one step at the time y/n... one step at the time.

With a deep breath, you take your bow out of the wooden chest before shoving your pajama set in it and locking it again. You take a minute to compose yourself and frown against the thought of going for breakfast soon.

you don't have to eat a whole meal, okay? it's okay, just take a small bite of something and that’ll be that.

Just when you're about to walk out of your room, a knock on your door makes you freeze. “Yes?” You wearily call out, your right arm recoiling back to reach for your knife at your waist, but you manage to keep it at bay for the moment being.

The door opens and your breath catches in your throat when you see Negan's head peeking inside the room. “Mornin’, doll,” he greets with a smirk.

“M-Morning, Negan,” you timidly greet back, fighting the urge to let your head drop down as you shift uncomfortably from one foot to another. This man has a way of agitating you.

With a grin, Negan walks inside the room and closes the door behind him before taking a few steps forwards, Lucille resting on his shoulder. You take a look at him, he's dressed as usual; leather jacket covering a clean, white shirt, black pants and combat boots, the only thing he's not wearing today is his red scarf.

“How d'you sleep?” He asks, though you feel like he’s trying to get at something and you’re
nervous to know what **that** is exactly.

“**G**-Good... **Y**-You?”

“**P**eachy, thanks, doll,” he politely answers and it’s insane that you’re afraid of just how calm he seems.

*that’s not how that’s supposed to work but... okay.*

The leader of the Saviors looks at you for a solid minute before leaning against your door. You can't get a read on what’s going through his head and, you won't lie; it kind of scares you a little.

“**A**m I gonna have to fuck you in front of the whole compound for you to understand that you don't get to go to any other man but me, sweetheart?” He bluntly asks and you slightly recoil at his words.

Your head finally drops, and your hands start to shake which queues you into pulling on your fingers. You're completely at a loss and you don't know how to handle the situation. He's clearly referring to Randall and you don't know how to rectify that. Plus, you’re not too sure how you feel about this man constantly laying claim to you.

“I-I don't- l- I got scared, l-last night,” you confess, trying to clear the air. “Then you come to me, baby,” he explains like it’s the most obvious thing in the world which makes you bitterly mumble “you seemed pretty busy to me,” under your breath, and you hear Negan chuckle. Clearly, your words have reached him loud and clear.

“**L**isten, doll, Randall's a good kid,” he pauses and comes close to you, practically crushing you against him, “don't make me kill him, baby girl. He's actually pretty damn useful, I need him alive, am I fuckin’ clear?”

**is he fucking serious?**

“Oh, fuck off,” you somehow find the balls to spit out, getting more and more aggravated by the minute.

Negan flinches at your words, clearly not expecting them, and you can’t help but feel some sense of pride at that. “**Ex-fucking-cuse me?”** He asks, his brow furrowed, and his eyes narrowed at you.

“You're full of crap,” you let him know, “and if something happens to Randall- If you kill him? It'll be all on you. I'm not yours, Negan, get over it already.”

“You were saying otherwise yesterday if I recall, princess,” he maliciously points out, and he's right.

The asshole is actually right, and you fucking hate it, it pushes you over the edge and you can't stop the venom from flowing out of your mouth. “**Look, Negan, I mean no disrespect but- I'm not**
your wife, and I'm not just gonna accept the fact that you literally want everything that moves and breathes! Last time, you said that you didn't know why she pulled up with you even though you weren't good to her, well, she pulled up with your shit because she loved you, 'cause that's what you do when you love someone,” you explain with a frown, slowly but surely losing your nerve.

“You… You were loved, Negan. Do you know even realize how precious that is? The only person that ever loved me died and left me all alone! I- I can't, Negan… I can't play this game- I can't - I don't want to.”

You expect him to have an outburst, to hit you, even bash your head-in right there and then, but he doesn't say anything, he doesn't move, he just looks at you and you know that whatever's gonna happen now is gonna be much worse than him beating you to death.

*please don't go there, please don't go there, please don't…*

“What? What did you expect, huh?” His voice is cold enough to freeze Hell over. “You thought, what? That I'll fucking change for you? That there's a happy ever-after to this shit? It doesn't fucking work like that, doll, grow the fuck up.” You recoil at that, your jaw clenching against the up-coming waterworks.

“It ain't my fucking fault if you never had the balls to put an end to your mom's shit, and it sure as shit ain't my fucking problem to deal with the aftermath!” You flinch and swallow a whimper when his voice suddenly booms. “You're not my fucking problem, I'm not looking for a charity case to adopt right about fucking now so I suggest that you get over your li'l abused orphan that no one fucking loves and gives a fuck about past, 'cause that's how you end-up in hands like mine, doll.” His words, no matter how poisonous, ring all-too true to you.

“You really think Randall gives two shits about you? Nah, the boy just wants to get in your pants. You've known him two fucking days, y/n, grow the fuck up. No one's ever gonna give a shit about you like I do, sweetheart.”

“That's not true,” you weakly counter, his words stinging more than any smack to the face could ever.

“Yeah, it is, you're just too chicken-shit to see it through,” Negan insists before turning his back to you and slamming the door behind him as he walks out of the room.

You can't breathe, your entire body is shaking, and your vision is blurry with the tears filling your eyes. You can't help the sobs coming out of your mouth, you've been hurt before but that's beyond hurting, you can't put words on what you're feeling right at this instant.

You don't know what's real anymore, you start to seriously doubt Randall's attentions, you start to doubt your own emotions, you start to wonder if you're not actually overreacting when it comes to your past, if Negan isn't actually right, and it hurts just to think about it that way.

The one person that fucked with your head and made you doubt and question everything you felt and thought was your mom.
Back then, your old neighbor truly helped you to stop doubting perfectly valid things such as your emotions, she’d always tell you that; “*No matter what anyone says, no one gets to tell you how you should feel or react [...] it's your emotions, they belong to you, they make you who you are so you should always embrace them and let them come and go [...] let them be, they're here for a reason.*”

It was so hard for you to accept that when you grew up with a mother who kept on telling you that whatever you felt wasn't valid or justified, but you slowly got there and, right now? It feels like Negan just destroyed all of the really hard and tiring work you've been doing on yourself for years, and that fucking **stings.**

It hurts that a single person is capable to crush you like that, it hurts that a single individual can make you feel like you're nothing but what you've been put through. It hurts that someone can just destroy someone else's fragile foundations with no remorse whatsoever. It just fucking hurts, and you regret ever telling him about yourself, you regret letting this man see you so vulnerable.

You've tried so hard for so long, and he crushed all of it in one, small second. He destroyed all the efforts you've put towards a healthier future you; he fucking destroyed the little self-esteem you've been able to build yourself with broken pieces.

You're not sure how you’ve ended up here, in this situation, you're not sure what you expected from him either, all you know is that you didn't expect him to spit on you like that after everything that's transpired between the two of you in such a short amount of time.

You can’t believe you’ve let this man have your first kiss, you gave let him give you your first brushes with sexual intimacy, and you opened-up to him when you felt the most vulnerable.

*Yeah, in the span of three fucking days...*

You let out a nervous laugh through your tears, trying to snap out of the state you're in, but you can't. You can't bring yourself back down to the present, you feel numb and everything just happens so fast. You come back to your senses as a sharp pain shoots through your body and you look down, knowing exactly what you're about to see but you just **have** to see it and, surely enough, there it is.

Your left arm is covered in sharp, deep cuts and fresh blood is pouring down from it to drip onto the carpet below, but you don't care, you're too out of it to. The stitches in your flesh have all snapped open beneath the blade of your knife, and the cuts they've been holding closed for the past two days have re-opened.

*j ust... just look for a sweatshirt to wear or- just- something with long sleeves...*

You ignore the sting of the cuts on your forearm and shakily tug your knife back into your pants after carefully taking your shirt off, and head towards your dresser to quickly put a grey hoodie out of it, it's way too large for you but you don't care, you actually like it better that way.

You hiss in pain as you put your left arm into the sleeve, and quickly put the hoodie over your head
before putting your messy hair into an even messier bun on top of your head. Your eyes are probably red-rimmed and swollen, and your nose is runny; you don't have anyone to impress.

Trembling still, you reach inside your bag to pull your ax out and sheath it in one of your jeans’ belt-loops before hesitantly walking out of your room. The walls around you feel suffocating and you’re craving some fresh air and a more opened space.

You barely have your door closed when you spot Randall standing at the door of his own which just so happens to be right next to yours, his head low. You freeze and he does too though he doesn’t turn to look at you.

“Randall?” You hesitantly call out, your voice hoarse from your previous sobbing, and you have to clear your throat against the scratchy feeling.

The Savior slightly turns his head towards you, but you can't see him because he's still looking down at the ground. You’re suddenly terrified that he may have heard what’s just transpired in your room with Negan and take one step closer to him.

“Hey, y/n,” the blonde man finally responds but his voice is off, and you frown at the sound of it.

“A-Are you okay?” You ask in a hushed whisper. “Yeah, you?” It’s his turn to ask and you loudly swallow. No, you’re not doing too hot, your head is spinning from the blood you can feel yourself losing, but he doesn’t seem too good either.

“Randall, wh-what’s going on?” He lets out a loud sigh and, finally, slowly brings his head up to look at you.

You physically recoil and tears you thought you’d already cried come rolling down your face as you eye the multiple bruises and blood-stained patches of skin on Randall’s face, there's blood still oozing out of a fresh cut on his right cheekbone.

You take a few steps back as sobs leave your mouth. “I-I did this,” you whisper between your cries, “Randall... Randall, I-I'm so s-sorry.”

“Hey, no, c’mon, you didn't do shit, y/n. He-” Randall tries to get through. “Oh my god- R-Randall, you-your face- Randall, your face,” you ramble, his words not reaching you in your distress.

“Hey,” he goes to try again and puts his hands up when he takes a small step towards you and you take three away from him.

“D-Don't,” you plead, putting your hands in front of you to keep him at bay. ‘I'm- I'm so sorry, Randall, I'm so sorry.”

“Y/n, it's not your fault,” Randall insists, trying to break through that hard bubble you’re putting up around the walls already surrounding you.
“Yes!” You exclaim with a cry, “Yes, it is! Of course, it is! Look at your face. Oh my god, Randall- Look what I did. I-I did this- I did this to you.” At this point, you’ve breached passed the state of distress and moved on to being completely frantic.

Your ears are ringing, and you reach up to cover them with the palms of your hands, fighting off the urge to curl up into a ball on the ground. You feel like you’re about to pass out, everything is too much, and you cry out when you feel arms wrapping tight around you.

“Y/n, c’mon, sweetheart,” you flinch at the pet name. “Hey, it’s okay. You’re gonna be okay, it’s all gonna be okay,” the man holding you tries to reassure you, but you’re too caught up trying to break-free of his grip to register anything.

You don’t even realize that you’re being moved until you suddenly feel a cold breeze on your tear-soaked face and blink to see that you’re in the main yard where Negan's men, and Negan himself, are getting ready to head out on the supply run that you're supposed to go on today.

You look around and don't even realize that Negan is watching you from a distance. He knows he fucked up big time, and he didn't mean to be such a fucking dick to you, he just got sting by your words and his knee-jerk reaction was to be the biggest bitch in the room.

“Hey,” Randall’s voice coaxes your eyes to him, and you’re greeted with a small smile. “There she is,” he softly coos, and you nod, completely at a loss with the sudden change of scenery.

“Randall…” The way you call his name makes the man crumble a little and, before you know it, you’re back in his embrace, your face mashed against his chest, but, this time, you welcome the tight hold instead of fighting against it.

“I'm so sorry, Randall,” you brokenly whisper in his chest. “I'm sorry. I'm sorry. God, I'm so sorry,” you repeat like a broken record and Randall gives you a squeeze to try and keep you grounded.

“What exactly are you sorry for, huh?” He asks against the crown of your head. “I got my ass kicked, so what? Ain't the first damn time, sure as shit ain't gonna be the last. Shit happens.”

“Alright, you sorry fucks! Get your asses in the trucks and let's get this fucking show on the road!” Negan orders with a shit-eating grin on his face.

You reluctantly get out of Randall's grip and walk with him towards one of the big trucks when you’re literally dragged away from him and to the side by one strong grip on your right wrist. “You're ridin' with daddy today, baby doll,” Negan whispers in your ear, and you know that’s not an invitation but an order.

You don’t fight him on it, you can't. You can feel blood dripping down your arm and you know that the only thing keeping everyone else from knowing what's happening to you are the tight ends of the hoodie's sleeves, and how thick the fabric of the sweater is, which makes it harder from the blood to show through. It will eventually though.
Your head hurts and you can’t shake his words off as he drags you to his truck and puts you into your seat, moving you around like you’re some kind of rag doll, before closing the door on your side and getting behind the wheel, honking to signal Simon to start the engine of his truck and, as soon as he does, the gates open and Negan gets on the road first, Simon in the middle and Dwight is closing the line on his bike.

"a charity case" "no one gives a shit" "grow the fuck up"

10:15 PM //

All the trucks come to a stop when Negan orders them to park into a small avenue after hours of driving, and you quickly jump out of the truck as it stops, grabbing the opportunity to get away from him. You felt like crying the whole time he’s been driving, and you know that if he so much as talks to you even once you’ll end up tearing up again, and you’re sick of crying because of him.

“Allright,” Negan exclaims, clapping his hands, “y’all know the fucking drill, grab whatever the fuck you find and bring it back here, keep your fucking eyes peeled and stay together. You got that, or do I have to fucking repeat that shit?”

A collective “no, Negan,” resonates and small groups are being made before going inside the abandoned houses sitting around as Negan and Simon stay put. As for you, you barely make it around the truck, when a cough grabs their attention and they turn to look at you.

“Move your ass, girly. Get to it,” Negan pushes, too busy with his bruised ego to realize something’s wrong.

“Negan, I don’t think she’s feeling too hot,” Simon observes with a frown when a walker interrupts the conversation and, as he draws his gun out and Negan gets a tighter grip on Lucille, they both frown when the creature pays no mind to them and heads directly for you, the smell of the blood freshly seeping from your wounds luring him to you like a moth to a flame.

You struggle to keep your eyes open as you slowly reach for your ax but you’re not fast enough and the walker is on top of you in a fraction of a second. With a grunt, you fight it off and finally succeed to shove the blade of your weapon in the right side of its face, stabbing the walker multiple times around this area, making a mess as you find yourself not being able to stop.

You keep on bringing the sharp, heavy blade down on the now limp, dead body lying beneath you, taking all of your anger, sadness and frustration out on it.

“What?!” You speak through a clenched jaw as you look up at Negan and his right-hand man, which are just standing here, watching you.

thanks for the help, dickheads...
You slowly get back on your feet but quickly lean down as your head spins and you’re overcome with the urge to throw up. Which you do, right next the dead body lying on the ground.

“What the fucking shit, doll…” Negan trails off and you look down to see that there's blood on the ground, a lot of it, and it's all yours. You just threw blood up, you can taste it in your mouth, but you don't have time to dwell on it when a gloved hand comes down on your mouth to cover it.

“Well, hello there, darling, I'm counting on you not to throw up in my fucking hand,” a foreign voice instructs straight in your right ear.

You panic when you hear multiple footsteps creeping up behind you as well, not taking the slightest bit of comfort in the fact that Negan and his men are here with you. You don’t trust them enough to blindly believe that they’ll get you out of this. Hell, they didn't fucking move a muscle when that walker tried to take a chunk out of your throat just then.

“Name's Jason,” the stranger greets, his mouth still right next to your ear though he's now addressing everyone else, “nice to meet you guys, you all look like a bunch of happy assholes but I'm afraid that I'm gonna have to piss on your parade and take a bit of your happiness away today.”

“You do realize that you're not walking out of this alive, right?” You hear Negan state and you decide to open your eyes.

You see Simon with his gun drawn out as well as Dwight who's now standing tall behind Negan with a crossbow, and there's almost a bunch of Negan's men standing there, guns in hand. You spot Randall and Connor and see the panic in their eyes as they aim their guns, ready to open fire.

“Such a pretty thing you got there,” the man covering your mouth says, his mouth still way too close to your ear, “I think I'm gonna bring her back home, what'cha think baby doll?”

You try to kick him with your feet but you're still losing a lot of blood and your body is practically limp by now. “Oh, my bad, darling, my hand is on your pretty little mouth,” he mocks. “Here, go ahead now, tell me what you want,” he taunts as he puts his hand away from your lips, but no sound comes out of your mouth.

“Huh? What's that? I’m not hearing a no, what about you guys?” His men laugh, and it feels like the sound is wrapping itself around your throat.

“Let go of her and I might let you and your sorry sacks’o’shit live. Don't get your hopes up, though,” Negan says through a tight jaw.

“Easy there,” Jason smugly coos, “I just want the girl. I got plenty of women back home, but I need me a li’l princess too, y’know?” He pauses and looks down at you. “And, I mean, shit, look at piece of ass you got there, man. She yours?”

“Yea, she fucking is,” Negan answers without missing a beat and, you know that it should be the least of your worried right now but, you don’t appreciate being spoken of as if you’re not there. Especially not when you’re being treated as a piece of meat.
“Really now? You don't come across as the kinda man that'd be right for her,” Jason taunts.

“Who the fuck d'you think you're talking to, kid?” With a quick glance his way, you can see just how aggravated Negan is getting by all this.

“Chill, just trying to get some info, that's all,” the strange man behind you shrug offs, clearly taking the piss at this point.

Your breathing is getting faster and your whole body starts to shake against the stranger's body. You don't know what to do, you're getting dizzy and tears are still running down on your face, they just keep coming.

“Well, I'd stay a li'l while longer and make chitchat, but I have to take the princess back to the castle, plus, to be perfectly honest here, you guys are kinda dicks, y'know? You should work on that.” How has this man not been shoot yet is beyond you.

Just as he turns his back, gunshots start to ring through your ears, but he just walks calmly away, holding you tightly against him, and you really want to kick around and get out of his grip, show some sign of life; but you can't.

It feels like you're slowly tuning-out, everything goes black as you're somewhat gently laid into the backseats of a car, and the last thing you hear is this Jason-man's voice ringing through your ears.

Back on the road, Negan gives on last swing down on a man's head and groans as he turns around to harshly grab the only survivor from the rival group, and drag him to the back of Simon's truck.

“Here's what's gonna happen now,” the leader of the Saviors addresses his men, “we're driving this piece of shit back to the Sanctuary and beat some info out of his stupid fucking head, I'll get rid of him when I'll know what I need to fucking know. Simon, you're coming back with me. Dwight, pick some men and go have a look around the area, see if you can find any more of these dickheads.” On orders, everyone gets to their tasks without a word.

Negan's pissed. He's beyond pissed. Someone just fucking stole his princess from him, someone just literally took her from him and the last thing he said to her was some pissy, unnecessarily rude bullshit. He looks around to look at all the dead bodies lying on the floor, there's blood everywhere. Blood, guts and exploded heads.

“C'mon, boss, the sooner we get this asshole to talk, the sooner y/n'll be back safe and sound,” Simon snaps the leader of the group out of his thoughts as he walks to his truck. He's worried as
well. Oddly enough, he actually really likes you, though the ache still in his jaw would disagree. He likes the fact that you're not scared to talk back to him, he loves your attitude.

“Fuckin’… Hang in there, baby girl,” Negan whispers to himself before going inside the truck but he changes his mind and tells Simon that he'll ride in the back with his new friend because he doesn't want to waste any time on getting directions that'll lead him to you.

He swiftly swings Lucille back on his shoulder, the bat covered in fresh blood and bits of flesh, as he composes himself, trying to look like he's not about to lose his fucking mind after what just happened and opens the giant back doors of the white truck, getting inside as his new captive curls himself into a corner.

Negan smiles and closes the doors behind him, banging in the inside of the vehicle to signal Simon to get going, and the truck starts moving as he slowly gets closer to the man cowering in front of him. “Hi there, I believe I didn't introduce myself properly, so; name's Negan and this,” he swings his bat around, “is Lucille, and she's awesome.”
### Burning Fire

Chapter Notes

[UPDATED JUNE 7. 2019]

TRIGGER WARNING: THERE'S SEXUAL ASSAULT IN THIS CHAPTER, NOTHING GRAPHIC HAPPENS BUT THERE IS NON-CONSENSUAL TOUCHING AND UNDRESSING SO, PLEASE, BUT CAREFUL IF YOU STILL WANT TO PROCEED.

AS ALWAYS, I'M HERE IF YOU WANT TO TALK OR JUST NEED TO VENT. PLEASE DON'T HESITATE, I'M RIGHT HERE WITH YOU.

ALSO THERE'S TALK OF LEUKEMIA IN THIS CHAPTER SO, AGAIN, IF IT SOUNDS LIKE SOMETHING THAT MIGHT BE TRIGGERING FOR YOU, PLEASE PROCEED WITH CAUTION.

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11:48 AM //

“This is such bullshit,” Connor grumbles through gritted teeth, “she's out there, stuck with a fucking psycho, and we're out here looking under the fucking leaves! What the hell! How'd he even get away with her? How the fuck did we let that shit happen??”

“Calm the fuck down, Connor. You're pissed, I get it-” Randall tries to calm his friend down.

“Pissed? Nah man, I ain't pissed, I'm just struggling to understand how we're fucking armed head to toe, but when a random prick shows up and goes for one of us? Ain't shit happen! He had his fucking hands on her, man! And you pricks didn't do shit about it, not until he fucking walked away oh so fucking casually with y/n in his arms. What the fuck?!”

Connor’s angry voice booms and echoes throughout the woods, and Randall as to push him against a nearby tree trunk to get him to calm down a little. “Hey, c’mon, man, cut it. I'm having a hard time too, okay? But if you want her back, you're gonna have to fucking keep quiet and pay attention to what's happening, we clear?”

Green eyes flash against a grey and blue one. “You saw that shit, y'heard that shithead as well as I fucking did, Randall. How can you be so fucking calm?! I don't even want to imagine the shit he's gonna do to her 'cause he looked, and sure as shit talked, like a fucking psychotic rapist. Y'all saw the way he was looking at her and you didn't do shit, so don’t you tell me to fucking calm down!”

It’s complete silence then; no one dares to say a word because they know Connor is right. They didn't do anything, they stood there and dumbly waited for Negan to give the order to shoot which he never did, so they just watched it all happen.
“Yeah,” the black-haired man scoffs, “y'all full of shit. C'mon, let's walk through the fucking woods, we can even sing campfire songs if y'all feel like it. Welcome to CandyLand, assholes,” Connor bitterly spits out before shoving his friend away and heading further into the woods; anger and worry a dangerous mix on him.

“I'm going to kill you, you know that, right?” Is the first thing you say as finally you come to, your voice hoarse and your throat achy.

“Well, look who's awake!” Jason exclaims, looking back at you in the rearview mirror with a grin. “You're a li'l grumpy, I get it, I’m not much of a morning person either, princess.”

Ignoring the man, you try and get your bearings, your body gently rocking with the moving car as you lay still in the back. “Hey, stop the car, asshole,” you grumble as you sit, a little woozy from blood loss.

“Language, darling,” the stranger’s voice drops, “such a pretty girl shouldn't letting such mean, ugly words out of her mouth.”

“Get fucked, you sorry twat. You think I give a single shit what you think about my fucking manners? Well, I got news for you, asshole, I couldn't care less... You dickhead.” You’re pretty sure you’ve sworn more in this single sentence than you have in your twenty years of life.

“You're pissed 'cause I took you away from your group? ’Cause if that's what you're giving me attitude for I get it-” “Shut the fuck up, you don't know shit,” you rudely interrupt him, not wanting this stranger to think that he has any rights to try and undermine the way you feel about what he's doing.

“Goddamnit, c'mon, throw me a bone here, girl,” he pleads like you're a child throwing a tantrum and not someone he took like property.

“Oh, you want a bone, uh? How about my knuckles breaking your jaw? Huh? How 'bout that for a fucking bone?”

The car abruptly stops, lunching you forward, and you just about manage to smack your left hand on the front seat to hold yourself in place and avoid falling on the footwell. You hear Jason unbuckle his seatbelt and get out of the vehicle, angrily slamming the door behind him, before yanking your door open and grabbing your wounded forearm to drag you out of the car.

“Let go of me, you sorry fuck!” You cry out, the pressure of his hold on your injuries making them throb angrily.
You manage to break from his grip and your right hand immediately flies to your jeans to pull your bloody butterfly-knife out, pointing the sharp blade right at him the second you get a steady hold on the weapon.

“Easy there,” he coos, his hands up in a disarming gesture, and you swear your forehead could sink into the frown creasing it.

“Easy?” You repeat, blinking incredulously. “Are you fucking kidding me?! You dragged me out here, you've been treating me like a toy! Who the fuck are you and what do you want from me?”

“I'm Jason-” “Don't play with me,” you cut him off, “you know damn well I wasn't asking for your fucking I.D.”

Jason chuckles, clearly amused by your attitude, but you're not, at all. As a matter of fact, you'd say that you're beyond pissed. You didn't need this shit today, not after what happened with Negan, not with the state you're in.

“Like I've explained to your boyfriend back there, I just want you to be a part of my li’l family, we have a shitload of fun, y’know. If anything, I’m making you a service.”

boyfriend?

“Boyfriend?” You dumbly repeat and Jason scoffs. “Yeah, I thought so. The dude with the baseball bat? He said you were his, but you're not, are you?”

i technically am, actually... pretty sure.

“S'complicated,” you mumble, not feeling like airing your dirty laundry out to this stranger. “I'm sure it is,” he replies with a roll of his eyes.

“Mind your fucking business, and answer my damn question. It's the last time I ask, then I start piercing holes in your stomach.”

“Damn, you ain’t scared of shit, are you? Alright, then,” he steps closer to you and you really want to take a step back, run away, scream, but you don't. You don't want to show him any sign of fear or weakness, “I've had my eyes on you for a while now, y/n-”

“Yeah, that's not creepy at all,” you point out with a disgusted grimace on your face.

Negan is a very forward man, no doubt, but, oddly enough, you never find it creepy coming from him because he has that charisma to him and knows how to carry himself. Jason though, is creeping the shit out of you, and he seems to notice.

“D'you have any idea how many times I’ve watched you do your thing out here? You're seriously impressing with that bow of yours.”

You actually start to feel around your body at the mention of your bow, looking for it, and it suddenly dawns on you that your backpack and your weapons have been abandoned on the spot
when Jason took you away from the Saviors. Your ax must've slipped away from you too because you can't feel it hanging by your right hip.

"Were you stalking me? What the fuck!"

"Not stalking, just makin’ sure you were a right fit is all," he casually explains like any of this is making any kind of sense whatsoever.

"What are you so pissed about exactly?" Jason asks when he sees the knuckles on your right hand turn white around the grip they have on your knife. "I'm offering you shelter, food, warm water and electricity, so, why are you fighting me?"

"I don't know, something must be seriously wrong with me to turn down such an opportunity," you reply with a bite, tired of always being made out to be the irrational one lately.

"Everyone has needs, baby, and I'm all about helping you fulfill them." You recoil at that, suddenly getting a feel for where this guy's head is at. "W-What?"

"C'mon, don't tell me you don't need to get a good fuck, I mean- Maybe that's why these dudes really didn't want you to be taken away from them, you their little bitch?"

You're shaking, your aching body starts to burn from head to toe, and you can't think of anything to say. You seriously start to wonder if you've done something horribly wrong while you were asleep for people to treat you like shit today, or if it's just not your day.

You flinch when Jason pushes you flush against him but don't dare to make a move. All the anger in you is starting to make your blood boil but you ignore it. There's no way you're dying today because you couldn't control yourself, even though you can feel your hand getting ready to shove the blade of your knife straight up his throat. It'd be so easy to do in the position you're in...

"C'mon, we still have a little way ahead of us," Jason says before dragging you back into his car and shoving you carelessly into the backseat before slamming the door close and getting behind the wheel.

He locks the doors of the vehicle, smiling at you before putting the keys in the ignition and starting the car as tears blur your vision again.

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"I swear, man, I don't know anything about that chick!" The cry echoes all around the room to fall in Negan’s uninterested ears. “Simon, do your thing,” he coldly orders, getting about fed-up with
With a nod, Simon closes the pair of thick scissors he’s been holding down on the ring finger belonging to the tied up hostage, pushing down on them to cut the small member off, making the young man cry out in pain and wiggle around in the steel chair he's trapped on, as his amputated finger falls to the ground beneath, blood pouring out of his hand.

“FUCK!” The way the scream echoes of the walls is almost deafening but neither of the two older men so much as blink against it.

“You’ve already lost three fucking fingers there, buddy,” Negan points out. “I'd fucking start talkin’ if I were you. I mean, not that I'm complaining, y'know? Watching you shit yourself and cry like a little bitch is actually pretty damn entertaining.”

They've been at it for four hours now; there's blood on the floor, on Negan and Simon's clothes, the man they're questioning passed out three times, and they barely have a clue as to where you are which only serves to piss off and anger Negan even further.

“Jason… Jason said he spotted a pretty girl in the woods weeks ago but I- I had no idea it was her, I had no fucking idea, man!” The young man explains between heavy heaves of his chest. “He only described her to us, we had no concrete idea of what she actually looked like! C'mon, man, I'm trying to fucking cooperate here!”

“Where'd he take her,” Negan demands, completely uninterested by the man’s attempt to plead his case. “I-I can't tell you that, man, you've already killed half of us!” Is the wrong answer.

“You only have two fucking fingers left on your fucking hand, which one do we get rid of next? Thumb or pinkie?”

“Fuck, no, please! Wait! It's an old factory! It's hidden behind a forest, no one can spot it from afar, that's why he-” “The old candy factory?” Simon cuts him off.

“Yes, that's where we live, he- I think he's gonna put her down in the basement, that's what he said he’d do at least… He- He said that he knew she'd put up a fight, so he's been putting some shit down in the basement for when he'll get to her but- I swear I don't know what he-”

“Shut the fuck up,” Negan stops the man’s frantic ramblings and slowly straightens back up to his full length, making himself even bigger than he was crouched down in front of his scared hostage, before speaking to Simon, his eyes never leaving those belonging to the young man sitting in front of him. “You see where that is, Simon?”

“Yes, boss,” the seasoned Savior shortly replies, about ready to be done with this whole thing.

“Good, then go get some fucking guns and tell your men to get ready. We're goin’.”

Not a word is spoken, just a look between the two men. “Be right out,” Negan says, and Simon gives a sharp nod of his head before leaving the dark room he's been in for now four hours straight now, running to get things ready.
“Please, I- I'm sorry about your girl but- I don't have shit to do with it,” the young man pleads, clearly understanding where this is heading.

“Remember Lucille?” Negan asks with a wicked smile as he swings the wire-covered-baseball bat right in front of his hostage's face.

“F-Fuck, man, c'mon, that's fucked up!” “Damn right it is,” the leader of the Saviors admits, though it is without an ounce of guilt in his voice, he even gives him an amused chuckle before violently bringing Lucille down on the man's skull, killing him instantly, but he keeps swinging, letting his anger out until he finally calms down; blood and bits of flesh covering his face.

“Daddy's comin', baby doll,” he grunts, fresh out of breath and patience.

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You’re thrown into what looks like a dirty, old basement, falling on your knees and wincing in pain as your skin rips open against the hard ground. “I'm gonna let you calm down for a few minutes, get your bearings, yeah?” Jason explains.

“I'll be right back, sweetie, you be good, okay?” He asks, crouching down next to you on the floor.

“Please… Just let me go, it- it doesn't have to be bad- I can't-” You try, but he cuts you off. “Shh, t's-okay, baby, nothing bad’s gonna happen, not as long as you behave.”

oh no... oh no... this is so bad... that's so fucking bad...

You flinch when Jason kisses your forehead before walking away and out of the basement, leaving you on the cold, hard ground, your knees bloody and already bruising.

Looking around, panic overtakes you when you realize just how confined the room is. You're locked in a small, cold, dark room, and there's nothing you can do to make it better. You hate that you find yourself hoping that Negan will show up to save the day, and you quickly shake the thought off.

you don't need him. you don't need saving.

You usually don't need to be saved, you always find a way but, right now, it seems almost impossible for you to get out of this situation. You can feel blood still oozing out of the deep cuts in your forearm and decide to take a look at them.

With a grimace, you slowly roll the left sleeve of the grey hoodie up your arm, whining in pain when the fabric rubs against the opened wounds, and a shocked gasp escapes you when you see just how bloody your arm is.
“Oh, god...” you choke out, your face scrunched-up and your hands shaking. The door of the basement opens again, letting some light shine in the room, and quickly closes, drowning the room back in darkness.

Whimpering, you push yourself up against the wall behind you when you see Jason walking towards you, stopping to kneel down and look at your shaking frame on the ground, stuck between him and a wall. You can feel tears rolling down your cheeks as it dawns on you that you didn't have time to roll your sleeve back down to cover your cuts and he's now eyeing them with a quirked-up eyebrow.

don't...

“That's fucked up,” he unnecessarily points out and pauses to look at your face, watching closely as you break right in front of him. “Feels good to cry your little heart out, sweetheart?” Jason asks, pointing at the tears streaking your cheeks. “I bet it does.”

shut up, shut up, shut up, shut up!

“How long's it been since your last meal, beautiful?” You don't answer him, you can't. You're completely frozen, nothing feels real to you right now. “Alright then,” he sighs, exasperated, “you don't want to talk? S'fine, you'll come around, they always do, and you're no different. I just have a feeling about you,” he sing-songs and chuckles before giving you a pet on the head, dropping a bottle of water next to and walking back out of the basement, slamming and locking the door behind him.

The loud sound makes you flinch, and you curl yourself up against the cold, hard wall behind you, bringing your knees to your chest to put your head in your thighs, oddly soft sobs leaving your mouth as tears get soaked-up into the denim of your jeans.


You start when you hear the wooden door of the basement creak open and heavy footsteps walk down the staircase as you blink unconsciousness from your eyes. You have to do something, you know that, and you don't like to kill but it doesn't feel like you’re gonna have much of a choice.

Your shaky right hand reaches for the knife tucked in the waistband of your jeans and carefully grab it. You keep your movement swift and silent as you pull the weapon out, keeping a firm grip.
around it, your knuckles turning white under the pressure.

*it's okay, you don't have a choice anyway...*

You slowly nod your head, taking in what's about to happen in a short instant, when you get violently kicked in the ribs. With a grunt, you roll on the ground, your knife dropping out of your hand, and you whine in pain as you curl-in on yourself to hold your sides.

“**Bad girl, y/n,**” Jason scolds through gritted teeth before kicking your knife away from your reach.

“**Wh-What do you want f-from me?!”** You ask through gasping breaths. “**You, it's as simple as that,**” he states like it is that simple, yet his words are enough to make your blood run cold.

“**I'd rather die than to let you touch me.**” Your voice wavers as you speak, unable to find any ounce of bravado now.

Jason chuckles before shoving the tip of his hard boots straight into your stomach, making you choke on your own breath and send you into a coughing fit. “**Well that's too bad, 'cause I don't plan on killing you anytime soon.**”

You're about to snap when he grabs your shaking, weakened body, and lifts you up like you don’t weight a pound to carry you to the dusty, dirty bed sitting in a corner of the basement. Panic starts to kick in again and you start wiggling around, trying to get out of his grip, but he still succeeds to effortlessly throw you down onto the mattress with a smile on his lips to boot.

You feel like you’re about to puke.

“**Alright now, I think I deserve a little fun out of you after all the shit you've put me through, it's only fair after all, ain't it, sugar?**” He taunts, looking down at you like a piece of meat hanging from a hook.

“**P-Please, don't,**” you whisper, and you try so hard to get away from him, but he just grabs your ankles and brings you right back to him every single time. He keeps dragging it out like a cat playing with a dead mouse, and you feel like you could scream and cry you're so frustrated.

“**Damn,**” he looks at you, spotting the tears and panic in your eyes, “you're a little virgin, aren't you? God damn, it just keeps on getting better and better, doesn't it, beautiful?”

A chocked sob comes out of your mouth when you feel his hands crawling underneath your sweatshirt and apply pressure on your swollen ribs. “**D-Don't touch me- You can't do that,**” you try, like he’s the kind of man that gives a shit about boundaries.

“**Why the fuck not?**” Jason asks with a smirk, clearly enjoying how much you **hate** his attention. “**Because- Because I d-don't want you to!**” You let know him. Again, like he’ll take a no.

“**You're adorable.**” Of course, he wouldn’t fucking care.
well, fuck you too buddy...

With a huff, he puts his hands out of your hoodie and you're about to let out a relieved sigh, but choke on it when you feel his hands sliding your jeans down your shaking legs. “Look at those chubby little thighs.” His words make you flinch and, if he notices, he doesn’t say a thing about it.

A moment passes and then his hands are back to your hoodie. You don’t even get to register what’s happening when he pushes the hem up and right underneath your breasts, his eyes locking on to your belly.

“Damn, aren’t you a chubby little princess. Look at that tummy,” he coos though his words make your eyes screw shut and your bottom lip wobble until you can’t hold your sobs in anymore.

The situation was bad enough as it was without having him talking about your body and looking at it.

You move your hands down to try and grab your top to pull it back down and cover your exposed skin back up, but he harshly slaps them away. “Stay.” he grits out, clearly getting annoyed.

get annoyed all you fucking want, bud, you ain’t the one getting violated.

“P-Please - Just - Put it b-back down, please,” you plead but it obviously falls in deaf ears. Jason hushes you and then proceeds to do the complete opposite of what you've asked of him; taking your hoodie completely off.

“No, no, no! Give i-it back!” You cry and try to reach for the piece of clothing, but he insultingly easily pushes you back down with a push on your shoulder.

The man completely ignores you and you start to wonder if he even hears you anymore. He looks so fucking out of his damn mind. You quickly push your legs together and cross your ankles tight when you feel him pulling at your panties, trying to shove them down like he did with your pants, but you're not going down without a fight.

fuck that.

“Fucking hell! Cut the crap, girl, you don't want to piss me off, believe me!”

“Go to Hell! I said no!” You remind him, just to let him know that what he’s trying to do will put a certain label on him since you have not consented in any way, shape or form to it.

“I don't give a shit what you've said, I don't give a single shit what you want either!” He makes clear and you get the feeling that it might not be the first time he’s forced himself on someone. Or you're just that fucking unlucky this man blew his fucking fuse on you. Either way; this is on him.

“[…] he doesn't give two shits […]” “[…]he just want to get in your pants […]” “[…] that's how you end up in hands like mine […],” Negan’s words come back to you and hit you right in the face,
hurting you more than the man on top of you ever could.

You're angry. You're angry because you realize that the only reason why you're so panicked is not because there's a man touching you without your consent right at this instant... No, you're scared to disappoint Negan. What is he gonna think of you? And why the fuck does it hurt to think about him thinking little of you?

You're lost, you like him more than you should, and it angers you because he's hurt you just as much as the man on top of you is, yet it's him on your mind right now, and you can't help but feel like going back to him.

imagine being that self-destructive...

Anger is eating you alive, you've taken so much shit and never made a beep about it for so long, maybe this time is the one that'll break the glass for good. “I said no!” You cry out when you can still feel him insistently pulling at the cotton of your underwear.

Your eyes fall on your knife which is laying on the floor a few feet away from the bed, and you could scream you're so aggravated.

Nothing is going your way; it just keeps on getting more and more difficult for you to fight back. But you're your biggest weapon and you know that. People are always underestimating you because you're shy and look innocent to most, but the things you can do, the damages you can inflict with your bare fists edge between scary and impressive.

You're brought out of your thoughts when you feel Jason's hands wandering inside of your thighs and it's like something inside of your head breaks. You swing your left, clenched shut fist up, and let it collide into his jaw.

The man above slightly loses his balance and raises his hand up to touch the spot you've just punched, and it feels like you're losing all control you've had over yourself so far as you push him down on the mattress and pummel his face with punch after punch. You're straddling his waist as your fists keep on coming down on his face which is quickly turning into a bloody mess under your ministrations, but you can’t stop yourself; it’s like you’re entranced with the sight.

“I said no, I said no, I said no!” You keep on repeating like mantra, your punches never slowing down as you let your frustration, your sadness, your panic and all of your anger out on him and, while most of these emotions are towards him, you know that some of them are here because of Negan as well.

You slowly come to an halt as you run out of breath and take a long look at him. He's barely breathing, his face doesn't look like anything anymore, and you slowly get off of his body, sighing when you realize that you're in your underwear, your jeans down around your ankles. You quickly tug your pants back up around your waist and scan the room, looking for your grey sweatshirt.

“You fucking brat,” you hear Jason mumble with difficulty, but you shrug it off as you spot your hoodie laying on the floor, a few centimeters away from your butterfly-knife. You quickly put your top back on and grab your weapon before turning around, carefully looking at the man lying on the
mattress.

He looks like he's about to die right there and then. “Go ahead, girly, finish me off. S'what I get for puttin' a roof 'ver your head.”

“This what you get for trying to push yourself on me,” you correct him, discarding the way he’s just tried to guilt-trip you for his disgusting behavior. “This what you get for treating me like property.”

Walking up to him, you get a firm grip on your knife as you reach for the waistband of his pants to take his gun away, checking the magazine before loading it and cocking the chamber.

“Yea? Like what’s his fuckin’ face treats ya any better.” You frown at that. “You look fuckin’ miserable, girl. I’m a monster but I bet the first thing you gonna do is run straight back to him,” he chuckles, “stupid little bitch. S’all you’re good for-”

“Shut up,” you cut him off with a tight jaw before shoving the blade of your knife right beneath his jaw, stabbing into the flesh of his throat.

You watch him gasp for air, choking and gasping against the blood coming up and out of his mouth, some splashing on you, and he writhes for a few seconds before his body goes limp on the old bed.

Adverting your eyes, you find your right hand gently petting your left forearm where your deep, bleeding cuts lay, and you let out a small sigh.

you'll take care of that later.

You slowly nod your head, agreeing with your own thoughts, before walking away from the bed and slowly heading up the wooden staircase. Carefully making your way towards the door that kept you locked in this place for what feels like ages. You push it open with your right shoulder, not caring about the noise you're making because you already know that you're winning this war anyway.

“Hey! What the fu-” You don't let the man guarding the door of the basement finish his sentence as you quickly shove your knee into his stomach, swiftly taking his radio and gun off of him, before literally throwing him down the stairs.

You watch as he falls down into the basement and can't help but flip him off before closing the door and locking it. “Have fun, asshole,” you mumble under your breath, past the point of feeling any kind of guilt. You know that Jason is bound to wake up at some point since you didn't damage his brain, only cut his throat and seriously fucked up his face.

Smashing the man's radio on the ground, you put his gun in the back of your jeans. You've only escaped for a minute and you're already armed with two guns and took two men out; not bad.

Walking further down the long, cold corridor leading to a big door, you stop when you hear screams and calls for help coming from the basement. “That was quick,” you quietly note. “Guess Jason never wastes time when he has the opportunity to fuck someone's day up. At least he’s
consistent even in the afterlife.”

You ignore the man's screams and slowly push the heavy door in front of you open. Your eyes get hit by sunlight and you have to take a few seconds to readjust though you quickly get out of whatever building you're in when you hear footsteps coming your way.

“You think Jason's done with her already? I wanna have some fun with that piece of ass too,” a man comments and you feel your throat tighten.

*what kind of place is this?*

“Yeah, no shit, man,” another agrees.

*let's hope their mamas are dead ‘cause imagine hearing your son speak like this.*

They both sound gross and it only urges you on even further to get the hell out of this place.

You walk slowly, making as little noise as possible, and stay against the walls as you look around to try and find some kind of escape route, but you’re not having any success so far. You stop when you spot a huge gate and feel your heartbeat getting faster. This is it; this is your ticket out of this hell of a place.

“Fuck, guys!” A man comes running out of nowhere. “He- He's fucking dead. Jason's fucking dead!” He explains, to the men you can now see guarding the front gate, completely out of breath.

*telltale…*

“What? Hold on man, you're shitting me, right?” One of them asks, clearly having a hard time treating the information.

“No, dude! The little slut ran away, we can't fucking find her. She fucking killed Jason, Tom too!”

*okay, no, technically; jason killed your “tom” friend.*

“ Fucking… What the fuck?!”

*meh, they were bound to see the mess you've made at some point anyway, right?*

You see the men guarding the gate loading their guns as they frantically scan their surroundings.

*yea... fear me... ya cocks.*

“Check the whole fucking compound! You guys stay right there, she might come through if she's not already gone, ain't no way she's getting out of here in one piece,” one of them orders as they all go their own patrol route whilst three armed men stay at the gate.

You look around, spotting one of them further away from the two others guarding the gate so you slowly get closer to him, checking your surroundings one last time before literally jumping him from behind.
You quickly plaster your left hand over his mouth before dragging him out of sight and shove the blade of your knife in his head, it proves to ask for more force than it does with walkers, their bones being weakened, it's way easier to shove something through them, it isn't the case with living beings and that slight resistance you feel is a reminder you always hold-on to.

This is a person you're killing and, no matter the circumstances; it should never be an easy thing to do. “One down,” you whisper to yourself, trying to get a momentum going before going back to your previous spot, you check for anyone who may have spotted you or realize that they're missing a buddy by now... No one.

You let out a small sigh before tightening your grip on your weapon when you spot a man coming a little too close to you. For a second, you're tempted to get out of here guns blazing but you know that the chances for you to get wounded in this scenario are way higher than if you stick to your quiet ways.

With a swift kick to the man's calve, he stumbles, and you finish pushing him down before climbing on top of him and slitting his throat wide open, getting covered in blood in the process but you don't care right now.

You get back up and grab the man's rifle before running towards the only standing man left still guarding the gates. You don't think about it, just take a handgun out and shoot him straight in the head. You know that you only have a few seconds before his friends come running so you quickly push the heavy gate a crack open, just enough for you to slip through, with the small amount of energy you have left in you and run as fast as you physical can the second you do.

You don't look back, just run. You don't know where to, but you don't care; anywhere is better than this fucking place.

You hear gunshots behind you and a bullet ends up entering your back, right below the right side of your ribcage. You want to stop and scream in pain, but your feet just keep on running forward and you’re thankful for that.

After hours and hours of running; you finally stop, completely out of breath. Your body is in so much pain, it feels like you're about to pass out. You’ve been pulling at random cars’ doorknobs for a while now when, finally, one opens.

You hastily throw your newly-acquired riffle in, and quickly climb into the comfortable backseats, escaping the bunch of walkers that have been following you for God knows how long, some of them joined the party when they smelled the fresh blood pouring out of your body you assume, you're not sure, all you know is that there's a lot of them by now and you can’t run anymore.
“Shoot- Oh, this is bad, this is really bad,” you observe as you twist your body around to peek at the huge blood stain at the back of your hoodie. “Oh... my dude.”

You whine as you push your hoodie up to your bellybutton a little too hastily in your attempt to see if there's an exit point on your belly but see none. “Fuck... It's still in me. The bullet's still in... Craaaaap...” With grunt, you let yourself fall into the comfortable seat that you're sitting on and wince in pain when your fresh bullet wound makes contact with the soft, yet hard, seat.

You look around the car with sleep-heavy eyes and see that the windows are tainted, it's really spacious whatever car it is, and the seats are all leather. You spot some old, dried-out blood on the driver's seat but that doesn't really surprise you, and there’s “RANG ROVER” engraved in the middle of the black leather covering the wheel of the car.

You catch a few walkers walking right by you through the car's windows, their vision is really bad so the fact that the windows are tainted is really a plus, all you have to do is stay quiet. But you can't.

Before you know it, you find yourself laughing softly as tears roll down your face and you turn into a laughing and sobbing mess in a matter of seconds. It feels like you've reach that point of your life; that point where your body is telling you enough, where your mind is telling you to stop pretending everything is always alright, where you realize that you need rest and some fucking care for once, and it’s all overwhelming, especially in the state you’re in.

You never thought that you'd reach this point yet; here you are, having a breakdown in an abandoned car, dead -but still somewhat alive- people walking all around you but somehow not paying attention to you, your body beaten and bloody, and your mind tired and out of positive thoughts.

It feels like you're slowly dying on the inside and you can't let that happen, you just can't. You're all you have; all you ever had and ever will have. You've lost a lot of people, you refuse to lose yourself too.

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FLASHBACK – A YEAR BEFORE OUTBREAK;

16th January 2009 //

“Luna, no cigarettes, you don't need this,” you scold as you walk into your neighbor's living room and find her smoking on her balcony. It's raining outside and you can see the steam from her breath and the smoke from her cigarette interlacing into a cloud in the cold air.
She turns to look at you, her eyes a soft, calming green, and she's wearing a genuine smile on her crimson red lips. "Hello, darlin'," she gently greets you, her voice a little rough from years of smoking.

"Jeez, get inside, you're gonna freeze out there," you explain as you softly grab her arm to pull her inside with you, before gently sitting her down on her big, black velvet, couch.

"How was school today?" Is the first thing she asks every single day. "Oh, well, y'know... School," is the lie you tell her every single day.

Giving her a small smile, you start throwing some wood in her chimney to start a fire. "How about you? How was your day?" You ask as you sit down next to her on the comfortable couch, kicking your knee high boots off. "Same old, same old," she says, looking at the fire slowly coming to live in front of you.


"It isn't, my darling." "Which means that... It's gonna get worse?" "It is," she simply replies, and you don't know how she's not losing her mind when you're barely holding it together.

Luna has been diagnosed with leukemia four months ago and you've been looking after her ever since, she's been your best friend for seven years now. Despite the huge age gape there is between the two of you, you can't imagine a better friend than her.

She took care of you when your dad died and your mom became abusive, she was right by your side when your mother committed suicide, she's all you have left and, soon enough, she'll be gone too.

"Aren't you- Are you scared?" You ask and frown a little when Luna gives a soft laugh.

"Oh, darlin', no, of course not," she gently coos. "I'm seventy years old, I'm fully happy with the way I have lived my life. I'm ready to go," the woman explains.

"Wh-What about me?" Your voice cracks as you swallow your tears. You don't want to seem selfish but it's hard not to panic at the prospect of never seeing this woman you love so much and dream to become alike ever again.

She looks at you and gently brings her soft hand to your right cheek, wiping away the single tear that escaped your eye. "You? You're gonna be just fine, my love. You're so strong, and I'm so proud of you. I know you might think that you'll be all alone when I'll be gone, but you won't; because you will always have yourself. You are, by far, the best company anyone could ever ask for," she pauses for a second to examine your face, a few raven-black strands of hair framing her bright, apple-green eyes.

"You've been through so much crap, honey, I know it's unfair and if I could take it all away, believe me, I would without a second thought, but it happened, and this is where you're at now.
You're so strong, you're the prettiest girl this world ever had the chance to carry, you're so sweet and you care so much. I'm not the one who kept you afloat all these years, you've carried the both of us. You gave me the opportunity to do things I never thought I'll ever be able to do again, and I cannot thank you enough for that.”

“I love you, Luna,” you remind her with a wobbly bottom lip and tear-glazed eyes.

“And I love you too, so much, y/n. You'll always be my little princess, no matter what,” she promises before gently hugging you to her.

“Honey, can you make me a promise?” Luna softly asks. “Anything,” you nod against her chest.

“You may be too young to understand now but, I need you to promise me that you'll never let anyone mistreat you again, especially no man. Darlin', you’re only twelve, but I want you to keep on growing knowing that, when the day will come, you’ll deserve to be treated like a queen and nothing less. And... Promise me that you'll never lose who you are, and that you'll never anyone make you apologize for their mistakes again, just like I’ve taught ya.”

“I promise, Luna,” you seal the deal and look up at her with a sad smile on your lips and tears running down your face. In a repeated routine, her pinkie finds yours and vice versa before she tightens her hold around you and gently begins rocking you back and forth, humming a soft tune in your ears.

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14th January 2017;

6:26 PM //

“I promise,” you whisper to yourself as you feel your body slowly falling into a deep, well-deserved sleep in the backseat of the car you’ve found refuge in.

The groans of the dead outside make you feel somewhat safer as blood keeps on pouring out of your opened wounds. You don't know how you'll wake up in the morning, or if you'll even make it ‘til sunrise, but it's out of your hands anyway so, might as well rest for a while.
Fairy Lights

Chapter Notes

[UPDATED JUNE 12. 2019]

PS: God, I got war flashbacks while re-writing this chapter. I remember just how much I've struggled to write it the first time because I was in the middle of a mean writer's block and, GODDAMN, that was painful. I couldn't really save it but I gave it my best shot. Hey, listen, glitter on crap doesn't make it less of a crap at the end of the day, ladies and gents and non-binary friends.

ANYWAYS! Hope you're all having a great day/night. Y'all stay safe and, as always, I'm here if you need to talk.

15th January;

6:20 AM //

The birds are happily chirping and the sun is slowly rising, the sky a soft pink as you slowly start to emerge from your deep sleep, grumpily mumbling in protest. “Ugh, nooo”, you whine the second you start to get conscious of your body again. With a groan, you turn on your stomach on the backseats and shove your face into the leather covering the seats.

“Everything hurts and life is Hell,” you sleepily proclaim.

well that's negative.

You let out another groan when you hear walkers roaming around outside the car. “Really? Y'all don't have somewhere to be or something? Come on, dudes,” you drag out as you slowly rise from your laying position to sit down, not without difficulty.

Your body is starting to catch up and pain starts to kick in again, reminding you just how lucky you are to have made through the night and wake up to the slowly rising sun.

get this bullet out of you, seriously, it's gonna get infected. it's a fucking miracle that you woke up this morning so don't you go and play with fire any more than you already have.

Twisting your body to the right, you gently pull your blood-soaked hoodie up to your mid-back to take a look at the fresh bullet wound, and it’s not looking too good. Blood is still oozing out of the entry point and the impact seems deep which implies that the bullet is gonna be a bitch to take out on your own, and it sure as shit is gonna hurt like hell.
Ever since the outbreak; you got stab, shot and seriously beat up, but it doesn't get any less painful or scary to you every single time you get injured. It won't be the first time that you'll have to pull a bullet out of your body, and you know just how much it hurts when it's not done precisely. This one is in your side and you're not sure if you’ll even be able to work at the angle you’re at.

You let out a defeated sigh and start to nervously play with your hands. You’re unsure why you’re feeling so vulnerable. You feel gross, too. You’re grossed out by the fact that a man saw your body and commented on it, you feel even more insecure now than you normally do. You can still feel his hands on you and, now that the adrenaline of your anger and fear as worn off, you’re left feeling nauseous as it finally hits you just how close that man was from violating you.

The realization weights heavy and your throat clicks as you swallow around the knot forming in the middle of it.

Without conscious thought, your arms wrap themselves tight around you in an attempt to give you some of the comfort you so desperately crave and need. You feel so alone, and you really wish you weren’t right now. You don’t know what to do though. You can't just go back to the Sanctuary, you can't go back to him, not after what’s happened. Plus, being away from him is exactly want you wanted, right?

“T hey didn't even try,” you whisper to yourself with a frown and tears filling your eyes as you recall yesterday’s events. No one did anything, they just watched and let that psycho snatch you away. Not like you ever thought those men to be grade-A human beings but… Shit, that is some level of indifference.

You feel stupid for even trusting Randall and Connor so blindly.

Weird to think all that happened in a single day. An awful morning followed-up by a kidnapping which you were out of by the end of the day. What even was yesterday? Seriously. You're not sure of anything anymore, you're completely lost, a mess of emotions and none of them seem good.

You don’t really have time to ask any further questions though as you're literally dragged out of your thoughts when the back door of the car you've found refuge in swings open and a strong grip drags you out of the vehicle.

“C'mere, you li’l bitch,” a man, you’ll take a wild guess and identify as one of Jason’s guys, barks.

“Let go of me, you dickhead!” You protest, kicking your feet and wincing when the bullet wound in your back gets dragged against the leather of the car as your hoodie rides up and bares your flesh to the seats below.

Seems like Jason’s dogs went on a hunt for you and, well, it appears one of them has found you. The man throws you on the hard ground, making you cry out in pain as your sore back hits the road.

“You really thought you could get away after the shit you pulled!? Hell no, girly, it don't work like
that!” He spits, standing tall above you as you lay on the ground. “Doesn't,” you correct, apparently not caring anymore.

\textit{you did not...}

“What?” He asks, blinking a few times like he’s not too sure what just happened. “Look, man, if you're gonna give me a speech about how my actions have consequences and whatnot, then, for the love of God, do it right,” you tell him, tired of stupid people doing stupid things and justifying them in even stupider ways.

“Are you fuckin’” He doesn't get to finish his sentence when the blade of your knife goes through his ankle, pushing through the bones and making him lose his balance and fall next to you on the road.

The man can’t even catch his breath when you pull the blade out of his ankle and climb on top of him. “I’m done with you assholes!” Your knuckles are white around the handle of your knife, and everything feels unreal for an instant, you don't have any control over your movements, all you can do is repeatedly bring the blade of your weapon down on the stranger’s throat.

Somewhere in your head, you register that he's already dead by now, but you don't stop to check, you don't stop for a goddamn second. “I'm done! I’m done! I’m done!” You keep on repeating, your eyes screwed shut and your breath erratic as tears stubbornly slip from beneath your closed lids and race down your tired face.

Your ears are ringing so loudly that you can't hear anything, and you can't feel your body anymore, yet everything hurts so bad. “I'm sick! You all made me sick!”

“Y/n! Hey!” Two strong hands grip your waist to try and get you off the dead body you're still stabbing into. The somewhat familiar voice reaches you through the buzzing in your ears, but you still can’t seem to keep your hand from swinging down.

“Let go of me! Let go!” You cry out and wiggle around when your body is lifted from the ground and trapped between two strong arms, your own cleverly stuck to your sides to prevent you from swinging your knife around.

“It's me, baby doll. It's me. It’s okay, you're okay. Relax,” Negan's voice coos straight into your ear and that's all it takes for you to break. “There she is,” he praises, and you sob and nod, trying to reassure yourself that you are, in fact, here. “Shh, it's okay, you're okay, baby. You're safe, I promise.”

You hide your face in his chest, crying your heart out as he brings your legs up to his waist, carefully lifting you up. “It's okay,” he keeps repeating, trying to keep you grounded. “I'm here, baby girl. I'm right here,” he reassures, and you anchor yourself to him. He smells of fresh blood, sweat and leather, and your eyes close, your head unconsciously pushing further into his chest. You hate to admit it, but you feel safe in his arms.

You slowly come down and everything turns to black, but you're pretty sure that you've heard
Connor and Randall's voice before you fell asleep in Negan's arms.

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A loud scream of pain rips through your throat as your eyes pop wide open and your back tries to
arches away from the striking pain but a firm grip keeps you in place. You don't know where you
are or what's happening, all you know is that; your body is having none of it.

"Keep her still, Paul," you hear a familiar voice softly but firmly order.

is that doctor carson?

"Y/n, kiddo, it's me, Paul," you hear through the ringing in your ears. "You're at Hilltop, doctor
Carson is trying to fix you up, but you have to stay still. Think you can do that?" Jesus asks and
you whine and mumble incoherently, confused. You're lying on your left side, your hoodie off,
leaving your top-half exposed, and you can feel Paul's hands firmly yet gently keeping you from
moving around on the hard, cold surface you're on.

"Alright, y/n," you hear Harlan behind you, "it's gonna hurt real bad for a quick minute, and I'm
truly sorry, but it is important that you stay still so that I don't hurt you any more than necessary,
Alright?" The doctor explains and you squeeze your eyes shut when you finally catch up on what's
happening. They're taking the bullet out.

You give a silent, sharp nod and harshly bite down on your lip, keeping your eyes shut as you feel
Jesus' hands falling into place on each side of the wound to spread it open. You feel like screaming'	il your lungs start to bleed when he pulls; the stretch hurts so bad. You let out a choked cry as you
feel the surgical tweezers dive into the wide wound to go and get the bullet out.

"Fuck- wait!" You protest, immediately stilled when you try and buck away from the source of
your pain. "Paul- It hurts!" "I know, kiddo, I know," the man hovering over you whispers. "Hang
in there, you're doing great. It's almost over, I promise."

You try to take a deep breath and keep telling yourself that you've felt this before, this isn't the first
time, you're okay, but you're shaking all over and it feels like your throat is completely closed-off,
keeping you from drawing breath. You don’t even think to fight it when your body shuts itself
down, the pain getting too much for it to handle anymore, and you let yourself fall back into that
unconsciousness that seems so damn warm and inviting now.
Your eyes flutter open and a small yawn comes out of your mouth as you slowly come to. Your body is so sore it feels like you've been ran-over by a really persistent truck.

“Hey there, welcome back.” Your head snaps to the left when you hear Jesus softly greet you and your eyes get teary when they find him. You don't know if it's because you're happy and relieved to see him, because you feel horrible for leaving him to deal with Negan when you ran away, or just because you're fucking exhausted and just about anything could make you cry right now.

“I… I'm sorry, Jesus- I'm s-so sorry,” you choke out, your nose scrunching up as a few tears slip away from you. You don’t see the man frown and get up from his chair until you feel the dip in the mattress next to your left calve.

“Sorry?” He repeats, clearly confused. “What on Earth do you have to apologize for?”

Carefully, you sit up on the mattress you've been laid on to look around and let out a small laugh when you realize that you're in the same cabin you were in a few days ago. Jesus seems to understand your amusement and gives a short chuckle.

“Seems like every time you wake up in this bed, you're injured and lost,” he notes, looking at you from his spot on the mattress, quietly noting how you don’t seem bothered by his presence this time around.

“Yeah,” you agree with a nervous laugh. “My everything hurts,” you sum-up with a little smile though Jesus can tell you mean that.

You both give a sigh and you take a minute to just close your eyes and get your bearings, frowning a little against the pulling you can feel in your back and in your left forearm when you go to run your hand through your messy bed-hair.

Looking down, the sound of your throat clicking is deafening in the otherwise quiet room when you see that the cuts on your forearm have been stitched-up again and your skin is tainted with an orange-ish antiseptic liquid.

Your hands shake and you suddenly forget about the throbbing in your right side as your eyes flicker up to find Jesus watching you, his eyes on yours, not on your arm. “What happened, y/n?” He gently asks, clearly giving you room to decline or take his invitation for discussion.

“I… I don't want t-to talk a-about it,” you whisper, frowning against the shame you can feel slam into you. You don't want to talk about it. None of it.

“What about that bullet wound?” Jesus carefully asks, clearly not wanting to trigger anything that won’t play well with the state you’re in. He examines your face and sees your eyes drowning in tears. “Y/n,” the way he says your name makes the first tear drop, “you have a broken rib, doc said your throat was burned and you have handprints all over your body, wha-” He stops when you
let out a sob, tears now freely running down your face as your body shakes with panic, pain and sadness.

You don't want to talk about what happened. You don't. You don't want to remember it either. Without you even noticing it, your shaky hands fly up to your ears to cover them up and you shut your eyes tight, hoping that it'll all just go away.

Your body flinches when you feel Jesus’s hand touching your blanket-covered-knee and you quickly bring your legs up to your chest, your ankles crossed tight as your cries get out of control. You don’t mean to be rude; you just don't have any control over your reactions right now. You don't want to be touched. Not anywhere, by anyone. “I-I'm… I’m s-sorry,” you choke out, rocking a little to try and calm down.

“Don't be, it's okay, y/n,” Jesus gently sympathizes. “Do you want to be alone? It's okay if you do, I'd understand.”

You silently shake your head, your eyes slowly opening again. “N-No. Please, d-don't leave me alone,” you quietly plead, your hands slowly falling away from your ears only for your fingers to fidget with the blanket covering your legs.

“Alright, as long as you’ll have me, I'm not going anywhere,” Paul says, greeting you with a warm smile when you shyly look up at him through yet lashes.

You give a small smile that almost immediately crumbles when your, slowly calming but still a little frantic, mind points out; “what about negan?”

“P-Paul?” You hesitantly call out, not sure whether you’re really about to ask about the very last person you should be thinking of about right now.

“Y-Yes, y/n?” “Wh-Where's... Where's N-Negan?” You quietly ask, embarrassed and frustrated with yourself but you remember him being there this morning, how safe you felt in his arms, and you can’t help but wish he was here now so you two could clear the air because it feels like you’re suffocating whenever you think about the things he’s said to you yesterday.

“He said he had some stuff to finish... Don't know what though,” Jesus explains, and if he’s judging your priorities; he’s not letting it show. “He said he'll come get you at... Well, in about fifteen minutes, actually,” he smiles and gestures to the watch around your right wrist with a nod of his head. “Nice watch,” Paul points out with a playful grin.

You frown a little at that until your eyes follow his and find the piece of jewelry on your wrist. “Oh,” you laugh, shaking your head at your own obliviousness. The watch is a little bloody, but it’s still ticking and showing perfect time and date. “Yeah, it's alright,” you coyly tease. You love that watch.

“Alright? In this economy?” He huffs, though the smile on his face isn’t fooling anyone. “Try luxurious, young lady.” That actually gets a giggle out of you and Jesus beams a little at the sound and chuckles along.
A small moment passes where you both keep quiet until Paul scratches his beard and juts his chin out towards you. “Sorry for putting you back in that hoodie, by the way,” he points out and, for the first time since you’ve came to, you look down and see that you are back into your bloody hoodie.

“I brought you some fresh clothes so that you’ll be able to get out of that thing before it goes rigid and traps ya,” he jokes though, honestly, some parts of the cotton are already kinda stiff with the overwhelming amount of blood it’s had to soak up. Still, you give a small laugh.

“Jesus, I can’t walk away with your clothes every time I come through here,” you tell him, honestly feeling bratty for the clothes those people already lend you the first time around. “Is that a challenge?” The bearded man asks with a raised eyebrow and a chuckle before getting up from his chair to walk towards the small dresser, grab a piece of clothing laying on top of it, and make his way back to the bed.

“This isn't mine though, it's Negan's, he left it here when he dropped you off,” Jesus explains as he gently drops the white t-shirt on your covered thighs with a smile. He tells you that he'll be back when Negan'll be here and leaves the room to let you change in peace.

*he left one of his t-shirts for you to wear?*

You feel your cheeks turn a bright red at the attention but quickly get slapped back down to Earth when his words come ringing through your head again. Never would you have thought someone could hurt you like that again. *Boy, were you not prepared.*

*stop dwelling on it. he's not, so why should you?*

With a huff, you grab the shirt and slowly get out from under the thick blanket you fell asleep under and let out a groan of pain when your feet touch the ground. Your legs feel like cotton one second then it’s all pins and needles the next.

You've always had a hypersensitive body, ever since you were a little girl. Someone can accidentally graze your skin in the slightest of ways and you’d feel it as if that person just full on grabbed you, and you sure are paying the price for that sensitivity right now.

Your entire body is buzzing in discomfort, your ribs so sore they feel soft, and it's hard for you to breathe. It feels like someone is pressing down on your chest every time you try to take some air in and a cry of frustration leaves you when you realize that you can’t even take a small step forward without your body begging for you to stop, and there’re tears running down your face again.

You're a mess of emotions. You're sad, angry, frustrated, you feel ashamed, you feel small and helpless and it’s fucking you up because you’re the kind of person that always “I can do it on my own”-her way out of situations. You could have both your arms and legs in a cast and you’d still freak out if someone tried to help you lift a fork and insist that you can do it all on your own with no problem at all.

You're like Negan in a lot of ways, you just both have way different ways to show things and express yourselves, that's what truly makes the two of you so different at the end of the day.
The door of your room slowly opens, and you freak a little. You don't want anyone to see you like this, not able to even take a simple step without crying out in pain.

“You're not supposed to be out of bed,” Negan's voice echoes through the small, quiet room, and you push your head even further down, finding the ground beneath you to be of great interest all of the sudden.

grounds are fucking fascinating- what?

“Yeah, well… I am,” you stubbornly mumble.

great observation skills. impeccable as always.

You watch him move through your lashes and see him carefully leaning Lucille against a wall, the bat dripping blood, bits of flesh hanging from it too, and you feel a shudder going down your spine but you're not if it's all just fear and you’re not sure what that implies either.

Negan takes a step in your direction and you take one back only to miserably fall to the ground, sobbing and letting a quiet cry of frustration out. “Don't!” You plead when you see him moving towards you, most likely to help you back up. “Don't… Don't t-touch me, I-I don't… I don’t n-need you.”

okay, so; that’s a fucking lie... touch me, fucking throw me around the damn room, i don't fucking care, just help a girl the fuck up.

“Doll, c'mon, don't be-” Negan tries. “I-I'm not y-your doll,” you cut him off, looking up at him from the ground with tears rolling down your face.

Your nose is stuffed and runny, and your cheeks red and puffy, and the man standing above you will at least admit to himself that he absolutely fucking hates seeing you like this, especially knowing that he’s the cause for it.

“M'just- How'd you p-put it? A fucking ch-charity case, a-a poor abused o-orphan that needs to… to get over herself,” you spit his words back at him, hurt, and try to get back up on your feet only to keep on falling back down because your legs can't support you anymore.

You're exhausted both physically and mentally. So, with a frustrated cry, you stop fighting and let yourself fall back to the floor, putting your face against the squeaky linoleum flooring, sobs flowing out and shaking your body along.

The sound of the door slamming shut makes you jump, and a fresh wave of tears invade your eyes. He just fucking walked away. He didn't even say as much as a sorry, not that you expected him to... But then why does it hurt so bad?

The door creaks open again and you're about ready to curl into a ball and disappear, when you hear Connor's voice. “Y/n, what the hell-” he stops when he spots you on the floor. The green-eyed man rushes towards you and carefully crouches down to speak to you.
“Hey, you're not supposed to move all by yourself, toots. Here, let me…” Connor trails off as he reaches out for you to help you get back up but quickly halts his movements when you scramble away from him, tears flowing out of your eyes like water out of a broken sink.

“No, no, no, no! P-Please… Please don't. D-Don't touch me, p-please-” The sound of the Savior gulping echoes in the room as he takes you in, his mind conjuring all sorts of fucked up things as he tries to get a grip on what could have happened yesterday for you to be so fucking terrified.

“Okay… Okay, I'm sorry,” Connor apologizes and carefully puts his hands on his knees to silently let you know that he won’t touch you. “What about Faith? Would you let Faith help you?” He asks and you slowly nod your head and look at up him through tear-soaked lashes. You feel horrible because you can tell that Connor cares, but you can't- You just can’t.

“Alright, I'm gonna go get her,” he softly tells you, carefully standing back up to his full length. “I'm s-so so-sorry, Connor,” you whisper, pushing the balls of your thumbs against your eyes, your fingers pressing into the top of your head.

“Hey, stop that. I just want you to be alright, y/n,” he explains, and the softness of his words make your stomach twist. “I'mma go get Faith,” He lets you know before running off and leaving you to your own device, on the floor.

faith and connor are here... who else is there? why are they even here?

You don't have time to blink when there’s a soft knock on the door and Faith is silently coming in, closing the door behind her and turning to you with a gentle smile. “Oh, baby girl, what'd you do?” She asks, worry in her voice.

Faith quickly gets to you and grabs your body as carefully as possible and actually manages pull you up without hurting you. She gently sits you down on the mattress of your bed and pushes hair out of your face. “You had me worried there, missy,” she says with a small smile, her eyes roaming over your face, relieved to see you somewhat well. Alive at least.

“How 'bout a warm shower? How’s that sound?” She proposes and you give a little nod. “G-Good. Thank you.” You try to give her a smile but fail miserably. You're too tired to even muster a fake a smile.

Gently rubbing your cheek with her thumb, Faith gives you a reassuring smile and carefully lifts you up and you let her walk the two of you to the bathroom. You feel like a damn child and you’re ashamed to have this woman carry you around, even though you know that you can’t walk at the moment.

Closing the door behind her, the dark-haired woman carefully sits you on top of the sink, mindful to keep distance between the small of your back and the faucet. “Alright, I, young lady, am a professional nursing machine so, be ready to get taken care of,” she says with a smile, clearly trying to lighten your mood a little.

“I... I think I can sh-shower by myself, Faith,” you whisper with a frown, looking down, your
cheeks red. “Girl, c’mon, you can’t even walk,” she points out with a raised eyebrow before her expression turns into one of genuine concern. “Hey, look,” she starts, her voice softer, “I’ve seen some shit when I used to nurse back in the day, I’ve washed really old people and, let me tell you; they do not give a shit, they’ll fucking piss on you if they need to go while you’re cleaning them.” She stops when she hears a giggle coming from you.

“Oh yeah, I see how it is, old people pissing on me is what it takes to put a smile on that face, uh?” She asks, acting offended though it’s clear she’s amused.

“I’m sorry,” you manage through your laughter. It seems like a valve has opened and your anxiety, stress and pain are all pouring out and mixing with your amusement.

“Don’t be, honey. It’s good to hear you laugh like that, totally worth getting peed on,” she jokes, and you shake your head and look up at her with a smile when you’ve calmed down.

After a little while, Faith carefully helps you down from the sink and out of your jeans and hoodie; your cheeks are red, and tears are coming back to blur your vision the second you shed the first item of clothing.

“Y/n, hey, look at me.” A gentle finger beneath your chin tilts your head up, your eyes meeting bright, hazel ones. “There ain’t no judgment here, girl. You’re beautiful- You are,” she insists when you screw your eyes shut and shake your head. It’s hard for you to not feel inadequate compared to her.

Faith is built, she’s not thin but all muscles, her jawbone is sharp, and her cheeks hollowed beautifully. She looks like she’s been freaking carved while you’re on the softer side. You’re fuller than her, have bigger thighs and hips, and your tummy is soft. You find your arms too strong and, God, you hate that you cannot seem to get rid of the soft pouch on your belly.

In reality though, years of running and fighting every single day have definitely shaped you as well; you just don’t see it. Yes, your tummy is soft but below that softness lies a hardness that lets you handle getting beat to shit. Yes, your legs are thick and they move, but they also carry you through each day and get you to exactly where you need to be every single time. And, yes, your arms are strong, but they’re also filled with hardened muscles.

All the things you hate about yourself are also things that make you capable, things that push your through each day.

Faith silently watches as you struggle with yourself and finally come back to her with a small shake of your head. You perk up when you see golden-brown orbs looking at you and give a nervous little laugh. “Shower’s ready for ya whenever you are, hon,” she lets you know, her voice as soft as her smile.

“Th-Thank you, Faith,” you faintly thank her, and she nods. “Here,” she walks you behind a wooden divider for you to strip out of your underwear. “I’m right here, don’t hesitate if you need anything, alright?” You silently nod and the female Savior gives you a smile before leaving you to undress.
As you do, memories of the day before come running back; the way he touched you, spoke of you and looked at you, you remember every single little detail and it makes you want to cry and puke right there and then, but you keep it to yourself, not wanting to alert Faith, and wrap a towel around your bare body before shyly calling out for her to come and get you.

god, this is so embarrassing...

After Faith helped you inside the cabin and you’ve thrown your towel up and over the glass protecting you from her eyes, you let out a deep, satisfied sigh when you step under the spray and the warm water hits you in the most delicious way possible. Throwing your head back, you let all the grim covering you get washed away by the hot water and Faith starts to make conversation to keep the two of you busy, but it quickly turns into something more than just simple chit chat.

“Hell, I ain’t never seen Negan that angry and worried about someone, and I’ve known him for years,” she absently explains. “Years?” You ask without thinking, your curiosity peaked.

“Yeah, we uh…” she laughs, “we used to teach in the same school.” You frown a little a that.

“Wait- Wha- I- Negan used to- What?”

“Yeah,” Faith laughs at your confusion. “He used to be a coach and, lemme tell you, ain't no kid ever talked back to him, the mere mention of the man was enough to make 'em fall in line. He was really cool, though... Yeah... Shit's changed, I guess.” You can hear the nostalgia in her voice and wonder just how far back those two go.

“What,” you clear your throat a little. “What did y-you teach?” You ask, both curious to know and wanting to deviate from Negan because it doesn’t seem like she likes to reminisce on the man she used to know, and you can’t blame her. If he really did change a lot, it must be hard for her. After all, you know what that’s like; seeing someone change for the worst right in front of you.

“I was a science teacher, was a substitute for French classes as well. I used to be a part-time nurse too... Y'know, that's when I got pissed on,” she explains with a laugh and you smile under the spray of the shower. It always amazes you to learn about people's past because there's always that one person that surprises you and Faith is definitely it.

“Wow,” you whisper, “that's really i-impressive.” You hear the woman laugh outside of the cubicle. “It kept bread on the table,” she shrugs it off. “How 'bout you, hon, what'd you used to do?” She asks with a smile, happy that you two finally got the chance to have a real conversation.

“I uh… Just... Y'know, school n'all,” you quietly mumble, and Faith can tell that you don't want to talk about it, so she leaves it alone and patiently waits for you to finish your shower while making stupid jokes to brighten your mood up a little.

6:30 PM //

Faith has just left your room and went back outside, saying that Negan wanted her to tell him how you were doing, she also told you that he’s the one that sent Connor after he’d left you on the floor earlier-on, just to make sure that you were taken care of. And now, you’re sitting on the mattress where she left you, anxiously waiting for Negan to come and bring you back to the
you sure you can't run?

The shower helped a whole lot, your body is clean and hurts a little bit less, you're still really sore and can't take a full step on your own without crying out in pain but you're clean now at least.

Sitting here, you can't help but feel small, and the fact that you are wearing Negan's t-shirt doesn't really help. That thing is way too long for you, it falls right at the top of your knees, completely covering your thighs. You’re not a tiny girl, but you guess that you’d underestimated just how big Negan’s clothes would look on you.

Slowly lifting the piece of clothing off your thighs, you take a long look at them. In all honesty, you have pretty legs; your thighs are chubby, you don't really have a thigh-gape which you used to love when Luna was still around but; now that she's gone, you don't see yourself in the same light anymore. She's the one who taught you how to love yourself, she’d spent most of her time telling you how pretty you were, that she loved how naturally beautiful you were even though you never saw it; you still don't.

Unconsciously, you start to grab at the full flesh of your thighs, pulling on whatever you can get a grip on and scratching your nails on the soft, giving flesh, tears blurring your vision. God, you wish you could crawl out of your body.

When the door of the medical bay opens, you scramble to cover your thighs back up, your eyes snapping up to the door just to see Negan standing there, Lucille on his shoulder and a cocky smirk crooking his mouth.

look at that handsome, stupid asshole...

You have to admit that you kind of envy him sometimes. He always seems so carefree, as if nothing bad ever happens, as if he isn't guilty of anything, like he's never done no wrong, and you wish you could do that too sometimes. Maybe not to this degree but… Yeah.

Negan walks over to you and you yelp when he carelessly lifts you up to hold your body flush against his. You're not wearing any pants since Faith told you that she'll help you out with putting some on before he came to pick you up, but there clearly was a change of plan, and you can feel the cold leather of his jacket rubbing against your inner thighs, making you blush furiously. You hate the effect he has on you just like he hates the things you make him feel.

“Ready to head home, baby girl?” He asks, his lips against your temple, though you know he's not taking a no for an answer.

like that even means anything...

You silently nod and wiggle around nervously in his arms, not comfortable with him touching you, especially not when you don't have any pants or bra on. “Y'know, I seriously am starting to love seeing you in my clothes, darlin','” he comments before planting a kiss to your temple, making your entire body twitch at the contact.
Without another word, Negan carefully walks the two of you out of the room and makes a b-line for his truck, completely ignoring the people around. It's cold out and your cheeks redden when the ice-cold air reminds you of just how bare to the world you are right now.

You spot Jesus from afar and want to say goodbye to him. You want to hug him and tell him just how thankful you are that you've met him but you can't, you're stuck in Negan's strong grip and all you can do is wave back at him when he flashes you an apologetic smile and waves you goodbye.

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FLASHBACK - JASON'S COMPOUND:

14th January;

4:47 PM //

Negan's hands are tightly wrapped around the wheel of his truck, his knuckles white and Lucille sitting right beside him. All the vehicles have come to a stop a few miles away from the gates which his girl is trapped behind.

Grabbing his bat, he forcefully opens the door of his truck, his feet firmly hitting the ground as he jumps out, and all his men bring their attention to him at the sound of his boots making contact with the road. Dwight's group has caught up and rejoined, Faith and Arat are there too.

"Dwight, take some of your men, I want you to find and bring every single one of these sorry fucks to Simon, Arat and Faith. I want you guys to get those fucks in line and keep an eye on 'em. Randy boy, Connor and I are gonna go get y/n, we'll fucking tear this goddamn place up if we need to but we ain't going home without her, we clear?" Negan barks, out of patience and full of anger and frustration. Overall not in the mood to make unappropriated jokes or come up with ways to insult his men.

A "yes, boss," resonates among the Saviors before they make their way to the big gate of metal and force it open, their weapons loaded and ready to kill. They're greeted with guns to the face but Negan, as usual, shrugs it off and smiles, showing off bright, pearly whites.

"Why, hello there. I believe you fuckers have something of mine and, oh boy, am I pissed!" Negan greets, past the point of caring for subtlety.

The men in front of him all look confused for a second but are quick to understand what he is talking about. Who he's talking about. "Yeah," one of Jason’s men speaks up, "that li’l slut ran off, killed five of our men too! She better be fucking dead 'cause if she ain't, we sure as shit are gonna change that.”
Negan can feel his blood boil under his skin, not okay with people threatening his baby. At all. What sucks the most though, is that he realizes now that those men, the way they're speaking of you? The way Negan sees seem? That's exactly how you must see him and that fucking stings because he knows it's justified. He's said much worse to you. Much, much worse.

Gritting his teeth, he's not sure whether he's pissed at himself or you. Actually, yes; he is, he's just not used to feeling like this. Thank God, Faith seems to notice that the leader of the group is struggling to get it together and takes charges for him.

With a simple order from her, her men take Jason's down and line them up on their knees before doing as Negan told them and Randall and Connor stand right behind the guy, looking at each other, unsure of what to say or do without getting smacked.

“Allright!” Negan suddenly snaps out of it, the unexpected outburst making the two men at his back jump. “C'mon, let's go get the li'l one back,” he says, his cockiness back in business as if the little moment of absence he's just had never happened.

“Let's,” Connor complies, not really feeling like questioning anything his boss ever does, walking up to Negan's side, Randall silently doing the same.

They head into the small community, paying no mind to Faith, Simon and Arat as they force men down on their knees in front of them and take their weapons away.

“Yeah did that?” Randall asks with wide eyes as he spots and points at a dead body lying on the ground, the puddle of blood around it still somewhat fresh. They can smell it from where they're standing.

Intrigued, Negan decides to get closer to take a look at the body. It's a man, shot right between the eyes. He's about to say something but gets distracted when he spots some more blood on the ground, behind a thick, white, brick wall and signals for Connor and Randall to come with him with a simple twist of his fingers.

As they get around the wall, their eyes widen when they find two other bodies, both bearing a really wide cut to the throat, blood still oozing out of both severed jugulars. Negan immediately recalls what you'd told him back at Hilltop. “[...] all I'd have to do is sink my teeth into your jugular and you'll bleed out [...]”

He smiles at the memory of that day and looks down at Lucille, a smirk forming on his lips as he recalls introducing you to her. “Yeah... That's my girl alright,” he smugly praises, his mind clearly elsewhere. “So... What? She got out?” Connor asks, clearly aggravated.

The two Saviors hear Randall scoff at that. “Course she fucking did,” he states like it’s obvious, making his boss and his best friend each quirk an eyebrow at him. “What? You really thought she was going to wait around for salvation? Come on! You said it yourself, Co’, no one did shit to keep this whole thing from happening in the first place, for all she knows, we clearly don't give a fuck about her,” the tattooed survivor rants.
Negan shoots Randall a cold glare but doesn’t say anything, not wanting to start shit now. He knows the young man’s words were directed at him and he's pissed because he knows the guy’s right. He feels like he's about to go fucking mental.

Yeah, he had actually expected you to stick around for him to come get you and save the day, but you didn't give him that satisfaction and he hates it as much as he loves it. He's proud of you but, damn, is he pissed… Why the fuck is he pissed? Worried. He’s pissed because he’s worried. In his head, it makes sense.

With a huff, Negan swings Lucille off his shoulder and tightens his grip on her before walking towards the knelled people waiting for whatever is supposed to happen to happen, and he's about to relieve the suspense when he gets to them, taking a few steps back to look at everyone.

There’re women in the line-up and, he’s not gonna lie; they look like they’ve seen better days not to say shit. He goes and kneels in front of one of them with a smirk. “Hey there,” he smoothly greets, and he can tell that woman is terrified. “Today's you're lucky day, darlin’. See, lucky you, I don't kill women,” he pauses, slightly turns around and points at Faith and Arat with Lucille, a devilish smile on his face. “Those girls though? They're not as kind as I am, they don't give a fuck actually. Man or woman, they'll beat the livin’, breathin’ shit outta you.”

The woman in front of him whimpers and shakes, tears rolling down her dirty face, the salty liquid leaving clear lines through the grim covering the skin below and, taking her in a little more, Negan wonders. “Y’don’t wanna be here, do ya, doll?” He asks, his voice somewhat softer now.

The lady’s dry and cracked lips open when one of Jason’s men suddenly barks out; “Shut the fuck up. I swear to God I’ll beat the sh-” He doesn’t get to finish his sentence thanks to Faith’s closed fist nailing him right in the nose and people jump and gasp when Simon carelessly pulls the trigger of his gun on the guy, killing him without so much as a look his way.

With a sigh, Negan gets back up. “Take the gals to one of our communities, whichever, I don’t give a crap, just get it done,” he instructs Arat and she immediately does as told, silently helping the women in the line-up back up to their feet and walking away with them.

He’s not here to open a shelter but, while he is here, he may as well do something good. And it has nothing to do with you. At all.


His breathing erratic, he turns his back to the headless corpse he’s made and nods to his men, a silent signal for them to finish what he’s started before grabbing Randall and Connor and pushing them along towards the opened gate, a few walkers got curious of all the noise, but he pays no mind to them and keeps dragging the pair with him.
“She can’t be that fucking far,” Negan hopes. “We're gonna fucking find her and bring the fuck back home,” he explains through gritted teeth.

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15th January;

8:26 PM //

Here you are, back “home”, in “your” bedroom, sitting on “your” bed. You let out a small, shaky sigh and wipe the tears off your face as you try and take in everything that’s happened those last twenty-four hours because none of it makes sense no matter what way you try and twist it. It all seems so unreal to you.

What happened yesterday? Who even was Jason? Why are you back here again? You have so many questions going through your head, it feels like it's about to drive you insane.

The whole drive back was just Negan trying to get you to relax, he even cracked a few, really stupid, jokes but it only agitated you further because, while he's here making jokes, going around with that stupid cocky smirk of his, you're here, completely hollow, drowning in your own tears and constantly fighting with yourself, and it's all because of him.

Sure, what happened with Jason definitely has added to it, but you wouldn't be that fucked up if it wasn't for him. Hell, none of that would have happened if it wasn't for him. Or maybe it would have. At this point, you're just trying to make sense of something that doesn't really hold any reason other than that people do shitty things sometimes.

With a frown, you slowly look up as pretty white lights catch your attention, and rub your eyes thinking that they might be acting up because of all the tears you've cried but quickly realize that it's not your eyes playing tricks on you. Nope. There's a bunch of really pretty and soft fairy lights hanging on the walls of your room.

You were so upset when you got thrown back in here that you didn't even bother to look around. Almost hesitantly, you slowly get up and walk up to the ones hanging on the wall right in front of you and carefully reach out to touch one. You've always loved fairy lights and always wanted some in your bedroom, but your mom never wanted to spend money on you and you never had enough to afford some, at least not if you wanted to eat.

Your throat clicks when you shakily untangle a little post-it note from the transparent wires connecting the little lights. It reads; “sorry for being such a dickhead, baby girl,” and you don’t have to wonder who it’s from. You're really trying to get a grip on the fact that this is peak apology
from Negan, that you’ll probably never hear it for real like that, and, you can’t lie, it stings as much as it soothes you.

It stings because it sucks getting hurt like that and not getting a vocal apology but the fact that he’s still taking that little step towards you to let you know that he does feel some remorse soothes you. It’s all a little complicated and, quite frankly, you did not ask for any of it. You were just living your best life in the woods six days ago. Never asked for a handsome, but unstable, rugged man to literally swipe you off your feet.

You're feeling so many things at the same time that it gets overwhelming to the point where you can't handle it and there are only two things to get you to stop thinking when you're in this state; self-arm or alcohol. As you grew older, you've started to understand why your mom grew so addicted to it.

Everyone processes alcohol differently but, for you; everything goes completely numb when you’re drunk, you don't really feel anything anymore. And whist the simple sight of a bottle of alcohol usually makes you sick to your stomach, it doesn’t seem to matter much when you're in this state of mind.

God, you need counselling or something.

Negan is walking around the workers' quarters, making sure that everything is going smoothly, lost in his thoughts and you're in every single one. He keeps on wondering why he didn't just suck it up and apologize earlier on, he's angry about leaving you all alone on the floor back at Hilltop, he keeps on remembering the way your voice shook when you spat his own words back at him. He hated everything single seconds of it.

“Boss, you there?” Simon's voice buzzes through Negan's radio, snapping him out of his thoughts. “Yeah, what is it?” He answers, thankful for the brief distraction.

“Well, we couldn't find y/n in her room, so we swept the compound and uh... Connor found her in the rec-room. She broke into the mini bar and she seems to be well and drunk off her ass, he didn't say anything to her, she didn't even see him but, maybe it'll be good to have someone talk to her?”

“Fuckin’ hell,” Negan shakes his head before pressing down on the button of his radio to answer Simon. “Yeah, yeah, I got it. Make sure everyone is in their room and you can call it a night.” An “alright, boss,” is the last thing heard before the radio clicks quiet again.

Running up the stairs leading to the first floor where the break-room is, Negan barely has a foot in when he tastes the alcohol in the air and he slowly makes his way towards the opened door of the
room, quietly leaning against the frame to watch you.

You're sitting on the pool table, looking down at your dangling feet, bottle in hand. The way the moonlight is showing you so pretty is a huge contrast to how miserable you look. "You really gonna give me Hell, aren't ya, angel face?" He makes his presence known, making you jump slightly.

"You're one to talk, Negan," you mumble and silently thank the alcohol for giving you enough confidence to form a sentence without stuttering like a child. Having your back turned to him also really helps.

Negan chuckles and steps fully inside the room and to you just to lean against the back of the couch in front of the pool table, his eyes never leaving you. "I thought I told you not to fucking touch your arm again, doll," he suddenly points out and you can feel the heat of his gaze on your left forearm, specifically on the stitched-up wounds covering it.

"And I told you; I am not your doll," you remind him, not really feeling like explaining yourself to him right now. "Alright then... Baby girl it is," he announces with a taunting smile and, you don't know what he's trying to accomplish here but, if he wanted to make you blow a fuse; he's succeeded.

"Y'know what?" You exclaim as you clumsily jump off of the pool table, the alcohol keeping you from feeling the pain you’ve felt before when your feet touch the ground. "I'm so done with you, Negan!" You point at him with a shaky finger. "I don't understand you! You hurt me so fucking bad, you treat me like shit and then you're back to being all..." You trail off and make a wavy, unclear gesture at him with your hand, unsure of what you're trying to say.

"What are you doing to me?!" You sob out, suddenly crying, and, before you can't stop yourself, you find yourself hitting Negan's upper-body with clenched fists. He doesn’t seem in too much pain though, and it aggravates you even further.

"Hey, shh, calm down, baby girl," Negan calmly coos as he grabs your hands to keep you from hitting him and gently guides you back against the nearest wall, grabbing your face with his free hand to make you look at him. "Y/n, baby, I'm so fucking sorry."

You whimper and your eyes slightly widen at his words because; did Negan just apologize to you? "I'm so, so fucking sorry. I didn't mean any of the shit I said, I took it too fuckin' far and hurt ya. I fucked up, baby doll," he admits, his right thumb gently rubbing your left cheek, wiping away a few tears as it goes.

Slowly, his left hand lets go of yours to carefully joins its right twin on the other side of your face and Negan lets it rest right below your jaw as his thumb comes up to caress the giving skin right below your right cheekbone, your eyes closing on their own as you let yourself indulge in the softness of this rugged man’s touch.

"Did he touch you, baby?" He breaks the silence and his words make your belly tighten a little. "Did that fucker put his hands on you?" His voice is low and scruffy as he speaks in your right ear,
it’s almost overwhelming to your drunken, dizzy mind.

“I-I’m sorry,” you whisper, your voice shaky and your eyes glassy and unfocused. The alcohol in your system doesn’t seem to have been able to numb you to what happened and it’s making you feel even worse because, now, it seems like there’s no valid reason for you to have gotten drunk since you tried it to forget and it clearly did not work.

Negan’s head comes into view again as he tilts it to get you to see him, hazel orbs scanning every nooks and crannies of your face. In insight, you barely know the man; so why does it feel like he knows everything you don’t ever speak of? God, you hate that.

“Did he? Did he fuckin’ touch my baby?” Now isn’t really the time, but you can’t help but feel some kind of way about the sheer possessiveness and protectiveness in his voice. “Is that why you won’t let anyone touch you, y/n?” Your unfocused mind tells you that you could probably count just how many times Negan has referred to you by your actual name on one hand.

A whimper turns into a sob and you let your head drop against Negan’s chest, your hands coming up to sneak inside his opened jacket and grab fistfuls of his t-shirt to try and keep yourself grounded. The Saviors’ leader lets you cry into his chest, his body tensing against the way your own shakes with every sob you let through and he swears that he can feel them in his goddamn throat.

Negan’s hands find their way to your back and press you further into him, his right hand coming up to cup the back of your head, his thumb soothingly stroking the dip at the base of your skull. “You hurting, huh, baby girl?” He states more than he asks because, of course he knows you’re hurting, it’s fucking obvious.

“You’re hurtin’ and you don’t know what the fuck to do with it, don’tcha?” His jaw ticks when you frantically nod against his chest, your grip on his shirt tightening.

He’s right. You are hurt, and you have no idea how to deal with it. You don’t know what to do with all that anger and pain, all that disgust and feeling of betrayal you just can’t shake. There’s been so much change to your life in six days, it’s all a whole fucking lot to catch up and get used to. Especially since those have been six messy and frantic days on all regards, there’s no denying it.

“It’s okay to be angry, sweetheart, y’hear me?” He insists, trying to step back so you’ll look at him, but you seem content hiding away against his chest and he’d find it adorable if the context wasn’t what it is. “I’ll even give ya a free pass to be pissed at me,” he playfully offers, trying to get you to look at him, and gives you a wink when you shift against him and finally look up, your left cheek squished against his right pectoral.

Negan’s playfulness fades when he sees how wrecked you look even in the dim light the moon provides. “It ain’t your fault, baby girl. None of it is,” he makes clear and your face scrunches up as you fight against yet another wave of tears you can feel coming, trying your best to breathe through your stuffed and runny nose.
“You… You're the o-only man that's ever t-touched me wi-without...” you trail off with a frown, words catching in your throat, unwilling to be let out. It's true though. You haven’t really given it much thought, mostly because you've been trying to avoid the topic altogether, but Negan is the first man to ever touch you with your consent.

He’s hurt you, no doubt, but he’s never forced himself on you no matter how forward he always is. About everything, really. Maybe that’s why it hurts so bad. The way he’s used extremely personal information you’ve confided in him when you were feeling terribly vulnerable just to make a stupid point in a dumb pissing contest was cruel. Physical pain, you can handle; but getting your head fucked with? That’s more complicated for you, it always has been.

“D'you kill the fucker, baby?” Negan breaks through your thoughts and your head slowly nods on its own. “Y-Yes… Yeah,” you whisper, your voice absent and shaky.

“Good, that’s good,” he quietly praises before bringing your face up with his left hand so that you’re looking at him, “so don’t you got feelin’ bad, darlin’,” he finishes, his voice firm but not cold, before carefully bending and planting his lips on yours.

You can’t help the little flinch you give at the contact but don’t move away from it either, your brow creasing with a pleased frown when Negan slightly tighten his grip on your face to bring you closer to him. He’s not letting you get in your head too much and you're somewhat thankful for that because it’ll be so easy for you to freak out right now.

The seasoned survivor sighs against your lips when you kiss him back and you can’t lie; you’ve been craving his touch, missed his lips and his voice. You've just missed him as a whole and you were only apart for a day which is fucking terrifying to think about it. Which is why you don't.

“You scared the fuck out of me, girl,” he whispers against your lips, a frown marking his features. “I went looking for you and you weren't there, you didn't wait for daddy to come get you and I was so pissed off, but damn am I proud of you. You did scare me shitless though, y/n,” he admits with a chuckle and you drink every single word he lets out down like they're water in dry land.

“You're my little baby, and I don't ever want my baby to be in danger. Ever.” Negan barely finishes his sentence when his lips go back to yours and you simply nod your head to let him know that you've heard him loud and clear though you're not too sure what exactly it is you’ve just heard. God this man is fucking confusing. One minute he’s all cocky strut and filthy jokes, the other he’s tearing you down, and then he suddenly gives a shit about you. Talk about a mind-fuck. The worst part is that you really don’t want any part of this, Hell, usually, you’d have already walked away by now… So why haven’t you? Why the fuck does it feels like you’ve fucking imprinted on this man or something? Yeah, you’re positively going insane.

There’s this weird pull, this completely disproportionate need for one another as you both breathe each other’s air, neither of you willing to let go first even when you can feel your lungs prickling with the need for oxygen to fill them because you can't bring yourself to care about your body's primary needs when he’s kissing you like his life depends on it, not when he lifts you up and your legs snake around his waist, not when his hands grab two handfuls of your butt making you jump in
his hold, and certainly not after a whine escaped your lips, making Negan smile against your lips. God, you're so drunk.

The hardened leader of the Saviors is the first to pull away, though he doesn’t go very far when he breaks the kiss. “I fucking care about you, way too fucking much for my liking, I’ll admit,” he pants against your swollen lips, his right hand leaving your butt to absently push a stray strand of hair off your face.

“S’been a long fuckin’ time since I’ve given a shit about anyone, darlin’, and it’s fuckin’ weird gettin’ that feeling back because of a chick I’ve meet six days ago, pardon my French.” You smile a little at that and give him a silent nod to let him know that you get what he’s saying. Hell, you feel the same, you just don’t deal with it the way he does.

_yea, not need to be a bitch about it. right, amiright sir??_


“I…” Your eyes briefly find his. “I wanna be happy,” you say with a shrug. “S’just… I know that… that I’m n-not gonna die in… in my bed w-with my… with my f-friend and family around so I… I just wanna be happy b-before wh-whatever happens, happens… Y-Y’know?” You lift your eyes back up and are met with watchful hazel ones. Man, do you wish you would have kept your mouth shut.

There’s nothing judgmental about the way Negan is regarding you but you still feel really fucking stupid now. “I just- I just wanna be yours,” you decide to dig yourself a deeper hole to crawl into, your cheeks burning and your body shaking both as a reaction to your embarrassment and the alcohol flowing in your system. “Jus' yours… But you... You can't- You can't be m-mine,” you slur out, your head limply falling on Negan’s left shoulder and he chuckles when you nuzzle your face into the side of his neck.

“How drunk are you, baby girl?” He asks with a smirk. Part of him wishing that you could have said those words sober. “D-Drunk enough t-to say it to you b-but not… not drunk enough that I... don’t know wh-what I’m saying,” you mumble against his skin, not really feeling brave enough to face him right now. Plus, everything just feels so heavy and you’re so damn sleepy...

You give a little yelp when Negan shifts you in his arms, making sure he’s got a good grip on you, and then his mouth is right at your ear,making goosebumps bloom all over your flesh. “How 'bout that, darlin'; I'm gonna bring you back to your room and you're gonna get some sleep, rest up, and tomorrow morning, I'll come pay you a li'l visit and we'll talk. Deal?” “D-Deal,” you easily give-in, too drained and drunk for a proper conversation right now anyway.

Tightening his hold around your body a small bit, Negan places a lingering kiss to your temple and carries you out of the room to walk the two of you to your own. Your head stays hidden in the crook of his neck on the way there, his beard slightly tickling you, and he teasingly keeps on squeezing your butt-cheeks in his hands, a low chuckle coming out of his mouth every time he makes you jump or whine.
When he finally reaches your room, he’s mindful of the noise as he opens the door not to wake anyone up before closing it behind him. In a blink of an eye, the blanket on your bed is pushed out of the way and you’re quick to crawl under it when you’re carefully laid down on the mattress, almost purring at just how warm and comfortable you’re feeling.

“Sleep tight, baby girl,” you hear Negan say but he sounds so far away, and you barely manage to mumble a “night, Negan,” before sleep claims you and takes you under. You don’t hear him chuckle or feel the kiss he leaves on your lips before walking out of the room, a crooked smile on his face. Your word echoing through his head; “I wanna be yours.”
You let out a relieved sigh as you step out of your shower. Only covered by a thin towel, you run down the long corridor of the dorm to quickly get to your room, earning a laugh from Arat when she spots you running around in your baby blue towel and your wet hair.

Randall comes out of his room at the exact same moment you reach your door, your cheeks turning bright when he smiles at you and his eyes widen when he spots your lack of clothing.

“Hi... Hi, Randall,” you quietly greet him, nervously shifting on your feet. “Hey, munchkin,” he chuckles, trying not to make the situation unnecessarily awkward.

“S-So, I uh... I'mma go get dressed... C-Catch you for breakfast?” You shyly offer, afraid that you might come off as clingy, your head down as you nervously twist a piece of hair around one of your fingers. Gee, you need to cut those; soon.

“'S'ure, princess.” Randall gives you a smile when you look up at him and, without even realizing it, you get enthralled by the difference of color of his two eyes - one blue, one grey- so much so, in fact, that it doesn’t even occur to you that; not only are you staring but you've also been pulling at the door of your room for a good solid minute now. It doesn’t get past the man concerned though.

“Try pushing it, sweetheart,” Randall instructs with a teasing smile. “Wha-?” You blink and frown before looking at your hand, finally snapping out of your trance.

“Oh... Oh, shoot... Y-Yeah, th-thanks.” You let out the most nervous laugh that’s ever been created, cursing yourself for just how awkward you were being, and push the door open, quickly waving at the tattooed Savior before rushing inside your room and closing the door behind you, pushing your back against it the second it closes to keep all the awkwardness from following you in.

i swear to god...

You seriously consider moving underground for a good second before refocusing on getting dressed. Today’s a cold one and there’s no heating in the workers’ quarter, that’s “for the guys upstairs” you’ve heard some guy complain on your way to the showers this morning.

You move around the room with a grimace, your head aching from the hangover you’ve woken up with and all the overthinking you’ve been doing ever since your eyes popped open at six, an, with a sigh, you pull a simple black sweatshirt and Jesus' jeans, a set of plain, grey underwear and a pair
of white socks with black dots on them out of your dresser.

As you walk back to your bed to get dressed, you catch your reflection in the mirror leaned on the wall right next to your wooden supply-chest and take a quick look at yourself. Shortly put; you look like you’ve just crawled out of Hell. Between the stitches in your left forearm, calf and the ones you can feel pulling at the skin around the bullet wound in your right side; you also feel it. Like Hell, that is.

The wounds on your arm are swollen and seeping, the skin all around them taut and shiny, overall far from being healed. The gunshot wound below the right side of your ribcage is still dressed under doctor Harlan’s instructions so you can’t really tell how it’s doing but, at least, it doesn't hurt so bad anymore.

Much to your relief, your legs finally got their groove back, you can even run a little, not fast but it’s better than not being able to move at all. Your left calf seems to be doing much better too, some stitches have already fell on their own and some of the smallest wounds are starting to turn a pinkish color so that’s one thing less to worry about. As for your fractured rib; it still hurts like hell and you have a mean looking bruise covering the swollen patch of skin it lays under but, all in all; you’ve had worse.

Spilling into your black combat boots and tightly tying them, you sigh as you straighten back up and make your way towards your bedroom's door to go and have breakfast with Randall.

_uuugh... but you've already brushed your teeth!_

You quickly shrug that thought off, knowing that it's only your anxiety trying to talk you into skipping yet another meal. Sure, you did already brush your teeth but that's a habit you've had ever since you were a little girl so it's no excuse at all. You catch yourself smiling a little at old memories of your younger self brushing her teeth every time she’d wake up to go to the bathroom at night.

You were persuaded that you _had_ to brush your teeth every single time you woke up, it was a rule until your dad caught you and explained to you with a grin that, though it was very thorough of you, your teeth needed rest too and you shouldn’t wake them twice a night. Which then brought on the problem of you crying your little heart out when you’ve started losing your teeth and thought your tiny friends were dying, but that's a whole other story.

8:47 AM //

You can’t believe that you’ve spent an entire hour eating breakfast. Randall was there and so were Faith, Connor and Arat. Your stomach aches now that it's full for the first time in months, you didn't eat much at all but it's enough for you to feel like throwing up. You know that you have to fight it though because it's all in your head, but it doesn't make it any less complicated. At all.

“Watch it, you brat,” a woman complains after _walking into you_. Looking at her, you don’t even need to ask who she is. The high-heels and the little black dress she’s wearing are dead giveaways. She’s _one of his._
A knot forms in the middle of your throat as you think back on the things that have been said last night, the things you’ve told Negan, and you can feel venom burning it’s way up to your tongue, suddenly feeling a way you’ve never felt before and can’t explain.

“Hey, you're the one who bumped into me,” you point out, trying really hard to remain polite and calm.

stay graceful, always stay graceful...

“Excuse me?” Oh, you fucking hate that tone. “This is my fucking home, you got that?” She pops a slim hip out and raises a thin eyebrow at you. “Stay in your lane, chubs.”

oooh-o-kay! screw graceful. punch that bitch in the nose and throw her in a fire.

“Your home, huh?” You repeat, quirking an eyebrow back at her as you invade her personal space, and can clearly hear her gulp as you do. “Since you’re so hell-bend on people knowing and keeping their place, how about I remind you yours?” She frowns and opens her mouth, but you cut her off before she gets the chance to dig herself a deeper hole.

“You don't run shit here. Hell, you don’t even run your own life, honey. You're just a dummy that doesn't know any better than to let someone cater to her ‘cause God forbid you break a nail. Guess you’re supposed to be eye-candy but, sweetie, you look pretty damn expired to me.” Your voice is a soft as ever, but your tone is venomous and the disarming smile you’re wearing is pretty damn misleading as you walk away and make sure to “bump” into her, knocking the tray she's holding out of her hands and straight to the floor in the process.

The sound of glass shattering all over the floor echoes in the otherwise silent hallway and, before you can even blink, Simon pops out of nowhere but you catch him just in time as he walks up to her, almost bending down to pick up the mess when you snap at him.

“Don’t!” You stop him and the seasoned Savior looks up at you, clearly confused. “Let her do it,” you tell him, eyeing the reason for your shitty mood with a grimace, “the bitch never does shit, least she can do is clean up after her goddamn self,” you spit out before walking away, pissed, angry and craving the solitude of your own room as Simon stays glued to where you stopped him dead in his tracks, unsure of what the hell just happened but grinning at the outcome of it just the same.

It's seems as if the universe decided to test you this morning because, just as your hand touches the knob of the door to your room, you spot Negan coming your way and glare at him. The mere thought of him with these women makes you want to cry, and you don't fucking understand it.

You barge into your room and slam the door shut behind you before jumping on your bed, hiding your face into the soft pillow laying on the mattress and screaming loudly into it as tears of sheer frustration and anger get soaked up in by the soft lump of feathers.

You don't even realize that Negan has walked into the room until one of his hands gently comes
down on your back, ignoring the flinch your body gives to rub along your spine in an attempt to soothe you.

“Hey now, what's that big heartache all about, baby girl?” He asks, his gravelly voice making your stomach churn.

heartache, yeah... that's a word for it.

Shaking your head into your pillow, you keep on sobbing into it. You don’t want to speak to him right now, let alone look at him. You're tense just from his hand touching you when the exact same touch relaxed you last night, and you don’t know what to make of anything anymore. It feels like you can’t even trust yourself with him. God, you feel like you might go crazy.

“Wanna tell me what the hell happened with Ashley back there?” You tense even more under his hand as he puts a name on the nasty face that’s ruined your morning. “I mean, shit, you're really fuckin' hot when you get all angry and in charge, but I can't have you going around traumatizin' the girls,” he says with a chuckle but you're far from finding his words amusing, they're hurtful if anything.

With a huff, you roll over to your back, and have to shrug Negan’s hand off when it follows your movement and lands on your hip. He doesn’t say anything about it, just watches as you sit up with your back turned to him, facing the left wall of your room. “Do us both a favor a-and… and forget about last night, okay?” You quietly demand, getting up with a teary sigh.

“It was stupid a-anyway. I've just had the shittiest day ever and I was drunk, I should have kept my mouth shut.” You ignore his gaze as you go around to the right side of the bed and walk in front of him to get to the door of your room. You stop in front of it but don’t turn to look at him, afraid that you’ll lose your nerves if you do. “Worst part s'that I actually meant what I said, and you’re making me feel like an idiot for it.”

You clear your throat, trying to keep the tears from falling. “J-Just… Just forget about me, I'm through playing games with you, Negan. You… You don't play fair anyway,” you finish and slam the door shut after you’ve slipped out of the room, not feeling like sticking around because you know damn well how it’ll end if you do.

Your back leaned against the cold metal of the door, you can feel your heart in your throat, like you’re about to puke it out. Your eyes sting and you can’t see a damn thing with the tears blocking your view, but you refuse to let them slip out. You’ve cried enough this week, it’s fucking draining and you’re done wasting that energy on people that aren’t worth it.

Your ears perk up when you hear Negan move around in your bedroom and you decide to head outside before he actually gets out and either tries to sweet-talk you or blow his fuse on you. You're hurting because of this man and you’re about sick and tired of it. You need to get over him and the thought alone shouldn’t make your belly twist and put a knot in your throat the way it does.

what the hell is happening to you?
Negan’s booming voice echoes in the empty hallway when he calls after you just as you turn around a corner and end up in a huge opened space that’s crawling with people, somewhere you know he won’t make a scene, not in front of all of his “employees.”

And you’re right to assume so because, when you look back, you spot him looking at you from across the room, his jaw clenched tight and his knuckles red and white around his bat. If looks could kill, you’d be six feet under by now.

“You smoke, hun?” Faith's voice makes you jump and break eye-contact with Negan as you direct your attention to her. “Uh... I... N-No. No, I uh... I don't,” you inform her with a quick smile though, looking at your eyes, she can tell you could use a distraction. Especially if the look she can see her boss giving you over your right shoulder is anything to go by.

“Well then,” she smiles and gives you a little nudge. “Wanna keep me company while I do real quick?” “Hm... Y-Yeah. Yeah, could use the fresh air,” you accept her invitation with a smile that stays a little longer than the first you’ve given her.

With a soft “c'mon,” Faith grabs your hand and leads you outside where Dwight, Connor and some other dudes are guarding the gate. You quickly wave at them as she drags you to the literal walker barricade you’d spotted when you first took a look a the place six days ago.

**they all look so... healthy? do they feed them?**

“You guys feed those things?” You voice your thoughts, your eyes glued to the creatures roaming around the little pen that’s been made to contain them.

“Honestly?” The lady Savior quirks an eyebrow. “No idea. Never asked, don't wanna know to be honest. This shit grosses me out but it is pretty damn clever, gotta admit,” she shrugs as she casually takes a pack of cigarettes out of her jeans' back-pocket and put one of the nicotine sticks between her lips before flicking her lighter down on it, creating a small flame and bringing the cigarette to life as she takes a drag out of it.

Faith exhales the toxic smoke out and you watch as the little cloud it formed fades in thin air. “Why come here to smoke?” You ask with a curious tilt of your head. “I mean- Isn't it supposed to be a stress reliever? T-To smoke? I-I'm used to walkers and th-those guys f-freak me out,” you admit.

“Well, I don't really mind 'em, other people do, y'know? S'like you say, there’s something disconcerting about chained-up walkers in a place that's supposed to be safe from ‘em,” she explains. “Anyway, I'm sure not to get bothered when I come here to smoke. Only Negan comes here when he needs some alone time, I guess.”

Faith takes another drag out of her cigarette, looking at you as she leans against the wall behind you. “S’good to see ya up and about, hun. Amazing how quick you recover. You couldn't even take a single step yesterday and now, here you are, walking 'round without as much as a grimace on your pretty face,” you blush at that and she chuckles, gently bumping her left shoulder into your right one to make you look at her.

“You're a li'l badass,” she says with a smile before turning her head around to blow smoke out of
her lungs. “It still hurts like Hell to be honest,” you admit with a shy laugh. “I just... I've had worse, y'know?” You shrug, blankly staring at the walkers in the pen in front of you. Some are pushing on the fence like they’re trying to reach out for you and Faith, the sound of their teeth snapping and groans filling your ears.

“I'm a thirty-five grown-ass woman and never in my damn life have I met someone like you. You're just so young and- Fuck... that shit just ain't right, darlin’,” she mumbles, more to herself than for you to hear, as she takes her cigarette out of her mouth and drops it on the concrete to crush it with the tip her ankle-high Converse.

You don't need to ask her what she means; you already know. You know that no one your age should think, function nor speak the way you do. It's all consequences of your past but you don't really take it as a punishment. Yes, sometimes, it can be a burden not to be able to feel like a twenty-year-old would but, then again, you're not really sure how a “normal” person your age behaves either. You've always had older friends since the kids your own age had a thing about out-casting you due to your precocity.

You let out a small laugh and shake your head when realize that you didn't even celebrate your twentieth birthday. You don't know why you feel so odd about, it's not like you've celebrated a single birthday ever since your dad passed. Twenty just... You kind of wish you could have had a little time off to just crash somewhere for the day, treat yourself with candy bars and comics and just celebrate making it.

It sucks but you guess that you've come to terms with the fact that this just isn't your life and it never will be.

“You/hn, hun. You still with me?” Faith asks, a frown creasing her forehead when you look back at her. “I uh… Yeah. Yeah, sorry. Got lost for a second there,” you admit with a little laugh and give her a smile when something clicks in your head.

“Hey, I uh... I got… stuff… t-to do so…” you trail off, unsure of how to leave without being rude. “Don't sweat it, kiddo. I can see that you have a lot on your mind, s'fine if you don't want to talk about it,” she spares you the embarrassment. “I gotta get to work anyway so, I'll catch you later?” She asks with a hopeful smile.

“Yeah. Yeah, of course,” you say before running off, Faith smiling and shaking her head as she watches you go.

You somewhat manage to navigate through the thick crowd inside the compound, people running left and right, doing their best not to piss Negan off, and finally reach your room. You don’t even bother to close the door behind you as you make a b-line for your locked supply-chest and unlock it with shaky hands to fetch your backpack and your bow and arrows out.

With a huff, you straighten up and slip your emergency-ax into a loop on your jeans by your right hip and carefully slip your bow and arrows in your bag, pulling the zipper up to secure them before swinging the it on your back, wincing in pain when your sore right side protests the movement.

After quickly checking to see if your trusty butterfly-knife is still safely tucked into your jeans'
waistband, you get out of the room, closing the door before walking back down the corridor, doing your hair into a messy bun on top of your head and mumbling about how much you hate them as you walk.

You’re outside in the blink of an eye and make your way towards the guarded gate, your head up, trying to make yourself seem a bit confident.

*ah! good one!*

“Hey, Dwight,” you greet the man at the gate and wave at him as you walk closer. “Can you open the gate for me, please? Be back in three hours.”

You hate the way he looks at you right then. “Uh, y/n, no offence but… you sure you want to go out after what happen-” “Yes, I'm sure,” you cut him short. Offence taken.

“All alone? I mean what if something happens again and you're all al-” “S'far as I'm concerned, you guys were with me when I got taken away, weren't you?” You remind him more than you ask, feeling your nose twitch with building anger.

“You didn't do shit for me even though you were all armed head to toe,” you can feel your blood boil and you point at him. “I got myself out of this! Me. All alone! You didn't do anything! I got out of it all on my own, bleeding out and tired!” You snap, your arms flailing about as tears make a comeback and your breath gets caught in your throat when you realize that you've just snapped at the man for no reason. It wasn't his fault.

“I.. I'm s-so sorry, Dwight,” you apologize, blinking your unshed tears away. “Don't be, you're right. I’d be pissed off too if I were in your shoes,” he reassures you as he opens the gate in front of you with a sigh.

“Remember the little chat we've had your very first night here?” You slowly nod your head. “Well it, uh… It really helped me out. A lot, actually. So, yeah, thank you for that, needed it I guess.”

“I'm glad,” you truthfully let him know and carefully bring yourself up on your tippy-toes to leave a quick kiss on the intact part of his face, giving him a small smile before walking out of the compound, the gate closing behind you.

“Three hours?” Dwight asks through the metal. “Y-Yeah. Three hours,” you confirm with a little frown.

“Alright, you be safe out there. Radio in if you need help, kid.” “Sure,” you shrug off before walking down the road leading away from the Sanctuary and into a small, abandoned town nearby.

*you're not coming back in three hours are ya?*

Truthfully, you're not sure when you'll go back. You will come back; you just don't know when. All you need right now is to have some distance, to be away from him, to be away from this place, to go and get lost in the woods. You need a familiar environment where you can let all your anger,
sadness and frustration out. **You need you.**

**11:45 AM //**

You have no clue as to where you are but it's really pretty. There're a few walkers around but they're no bother. A bunch of flowers are trying really hard to bloom through the cold weather and rays of sunlight are piercing through the small spaces between the leaves the tall trees engulfing you. This place looks almost untouched. There isn't blood everywhere, and the smell of nature is much more potent than the one of rotten flesh that has stained the air overtime.

You take a deep breath, filling your lungs to the brim before slowly letting it all out with a small smile on your face. You feel good here, in your element. This is home to you. You like being out here, you can’t stand feeling captive and the Sanctuary was very much starting to feel like a shoebox to you.

“This place is so pretty,” you whisper to yourself, your eyes scanning every nooks and crannies of your surroundings.

You keep on walking further into the woods, eyeing the soft colors of the flowers claiming the ground beneath you, when a squirrel jumps out of nowhere, making your bladder jump in a silent threat to release the kraken.

“Oh MY FREAking God- What the hell, dude!?” You whisper/shout, glaring at the squirrel that seems to be in some kind of weird drug trip. He seems more freaked out than you, jumping from tree to tree like it has demons on its tail.

can’t even trust squirrels these days... how sad.

“**Hey, there,**” bright, green eyes meet his hazel ones as one of his girls pops her head in. “I brought you your meal,” she nods at the tray in her hands before letting herself in and making her way to Negan’s desk, gently dropping his tray filled with food in the wooden surface.

“I thought I told you all not to come bother me.” “Y-Yes, but… I mean, you have to eat,” she quietly explains herself. “Is this… Is this about what happened this morning? With uh… Y/n, right?”
“What d’you know about it?” Negan asks, looking at the way the woman in front of him is twisting the wedding band on her left ring finger with a shaky hand. The one he most certainly has not put there. God, he’s so fucked up.

“Ashley deserved it,” she states with a shrug, making the seasoned survivor chuckle and recline in his office chair. “Yea? Mind enlightening me a li’l bit more there, Laihla?” He demands with a smirk.

“Look,” the woman straightens up and little, her golden, brown skin shining in the sunlight coming through the big window behind Negan, “I don’t have the details on what happened but, when Ashley came back up? She called that poor girl every name under the sun. Makes you wander what she told her to her face is all. Hell, the only reason I haven’t smacked the gal is ‘cause I don’t wanna risk catching something,” Laihla explains with a quirked-up eyebrow and an ample hip popped-out.

Negan chuckles and shakes his head before a frown covers his features. “Alright, I’ll talk to her.” He ignores the rolling pair of green orbs. “Thanks for the meal, Laihla.” “Sure,” she cuts short, already turning her back to him when he halts her.

“I really oughta introduce you to her. Y/n, I mean. Got the feelin’ you two’d be thick as thieves.” Laihla smiles and turns with a little scoff, a few strands of chestnut hair fallen from her turban catching in her lashes. “I’d love that, but something tells me she wouldn’t.” Negan frowns at that, unsure of what she means.

“If my husband moved on,” he hears the woman’s throat click. “If he moved on, I know in would’n want to meet whoever took my place,” she clarifies and the Saviors’ leader’s jaw ticks. “Think about it,” Laihla shrugs before walking out the door, leaving her words to brew over in Negan’s head.

With a huff, Negan runs his hands over his face and into his hair, giving them a tug before letting go with a frustrated groan. He’s known you for six days, why the fuck does he feel that way about you? It’s not like he’s promised you to go steady, marry and have kids someday. He knows for a fact that he fucking hasn’t.

He doesn’t owe you shit; he likes his life the way it is now. Women whenever he wants, no feelings involved; just sex. He can’t have that with you… Okay, so, maybe he doesn’t want that with you. I mean, yes, he fucking does, but not just that. Fuck. He wants all the gross, sappy stuff too and that was not in the program. Like. Ever.

“Fuuuck. What the fuck,” Negan groans, frustrated with himself as much as he is with you. He's frustrated with you because you're so out of reach yet you’re so fucking close, because you're so hard to get yet so simple to approach, because he knows that he hasn't done right by you and that he’s probably broke a really fucked up record with how many times he’s managed to hurt you in six days. Fuck, he just did this morning.

He thought about what he wanted to tell you all night long, he thought about you all night long, and he still couldn’t do the right thing in the morning. You’re as broken as he is but in such drastically
different ways that he doesn’t know how to handle it.

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5:41 PM //

The sun is slowly setting as you finally gather the guts to get out of the woods hiding you from view to make your way towards the huge gate protecting Hilltop and its occupants. Though, when you come into the guards' view, they seem to recognize you even though you never even had the chance to meet them. Hell, you haven’t met anyone here besides Jesus and Harlan.

“What do you want? Negan already had his share of our shit, don't tell me he wants more 'cause we don't fucking have it,” one of them barks, clearly aggravated by your presence. You can't blame him at all, you'd already have lost your mind if someone was taking away the stuff you risk your life for every single day.

“I... I'm not... M'not here for that,” you nervously explain, putting your shaky hands up to show you mean no harm, your nerves and the cold weather getting to you. "L-Look, I... I just- I'm sorry, I didn't m-mean t-to scare you guys. I uh... I'm g-gonna go. I'm sorry.”

You curse yourself for even thinking that paying Paul a visit could have been a good idea as you wrap your arms around your shaking frame and wearily turn your back to the armed men in the towers on each side of the gate.

You start walking but stop when you hear the gate of the small community opening and squeeze your eyes shut for a second, hoping that this isn’t a bad sound. You keep your back turned and your eyes shut tight, unsure whether you should turn around or keep walking. They could’ve opened that gate to welcome you in or shoot you. You couldn't blame them if they did, you're nothing but one of Negan’s dogs to them after all.

“I'm guessing you're here to say hi to Paul, y/n?” You spin around so fast it’s a miracle you don’t get whiplash when you hear Harlan's soft voice behind you.

“Y-Yes. Yes but-” Tears blur your vision when you can’t recall ever thanking the man standing in front of you for saving your life- twice – and guilt hits you like brick. “I-” You don't know what to say so you just walk up to him and hug him tight, repeating thank you’s as you do.

“Hey, it's quite alright, y/n;” he softly reassures you as he carefully reciprocates your embrace. “I never thought you to be ungrateful, I know it's not your fault that we’ve never had a chance to have a real conversation and to get to know each other, I know that. Don't you worry that pretty head of yours, you’re gonna get wrinkles,” he jokes, and you’ve been wound so tight that you can’t help the loud laugh that escapes you.

"Th-Thank you, Harlan.” You withdraw from him, your cheeks a shade darker than the rest of your
face. “I… I can’t even b-begin to tell you j-just how s-sorry I am. For everything.”

“Well then, how about you don’t?” Doctor Carson smiles. “You don’t have a thing to be sorry for, y/n. We’re both on the same odd, wacky boat here,” he points out and, yeah, you guess that, to some extent; you are. The only thing is that the unstable captain seems to have a thing for you he doesn’t for others and that makes a huge fucking difference to you.

Still, it feels as if a huge weight off has been lifted of your shoulders when you’re so warmly greeted and you let out a deep breath that you didn’t know you’d been holding until now, relief washing over you now that the air has been cleared.

“Come on in, darling. You're freezing,” he invites you in, gently nudging you to follow him into the safety of Hilltop, the sound of the heavy gate closing behind you making you jump slightly.

“I'm gonna go get Jesus, he's gonna be really happy to see you,” Harlan tells you with a smile before walking off towards the big building planted in the middle of the community and you stand there, your arms back to hugging your body as your eyes frantically move around, trying to take everything in, when one of the men guarding the gate, the one who spoke to you a few minutes ago, comes up to you, scratching the back of his neck as you look down, pulling on your fingers again.

“Hey, look- Shit…” he trails off. “I’m sorry for the hostility, I just, uh… Y’know, we have issues with Negan and, well, we don't have much left.”

“You don’t have t-to apologize to me,” you quietly let him know as you look up at him. “I get it, I do. It's okay if you don't trust me but, for what it's worth... I truly am sorry about what's happening to you guys, it's unfair and uncalled for.”

He absently nods, his adam’s apple bobbing in his throat, and you wonder if these people ever get the sightless bit of compassion from anyone but themselves anymore which sucks to think about.

“I'm Andy, by the way,” he introduces himself after a shake of his head, extending his hand for you to shake. “… Y/n. N-Nice to meet you, Andy.” Your smaller hand finds his and he lets you give a tiny shake before slipping away. “Nice to meet you too,” he boyishly smiles, clearly more relaxed now.

You actually start to have a conversation with the guy and he honestly comes off more like a teddy-bear than an attack dog when you get to speak with him for a few.

You’re giggling when your ears perk up at the sound of a front door opening and turn your attention to the big building a few feet away from you. You give a little jump and run into Jesus’ arms the second he comes into view and the man carefully catches you before bringing you closer to him to let you curl up in his chest.

“Hey there, kiddo,” he whispers with a smile against the top of your head and gently kisses it before giving you a little squeeze. “What are you doing out here, y/n?”

“I think I ran away,” you whisper as you look up at him, like you’re divulging some top-secret info.
“You think you ran away?” He repeats with a quirked up eyebrow, amused by your confusion about your own situation. “Yeah,” you mumble as you turn your head back down to rest your left cheek on his chest. “I told Dwight I’ll be back in three hours but, well, that was nine hours ago.”

Jesus chuckles, the sound making his chest vibrate against your head. “Well then, I just got back from a supply run which means that my day is done. How about you stick around and hang out with me for a bit?” He proposes with a smile.

“C-Can I?” You ask, excited but not wanting to seem clingy, though your eyes are sparkling with excitement and envy. “Of course, y/n... but you have to help me load the supplies out of the truck, ‘cause, like, you don’t want to be impolite or nothin’.”

“Of course there's a catch. You're the worst,” you whine into his jacket. “What? Afraid you won’t be able to lift anything, s'that it?” He taunts, somehow knowing that it’ll trigger the hell out of your stubbornness.

You have to admit though; you love that he's not afraid to challenge you like this instead of treating you as if you're made out of paper-thin glass even though he knows damn well about the state your body is in. Hell, he saw it firsthand after all.

“You know, for a guy that gets called Jesus? You're surprisingly evil,” you point out with a little smile.

“Yeah, I know, right? I even drink milk directly out of the bottle sometimes and you know what else?” He slowly leans down to face you. “I also eat cereals... completely dry,” he says with an awful “villain” laugh and you're pretty sure that he's mimicking Negan which makes it all even more hilarious to you.

You both end up bursting out with laughter in the middle of the front yard, Harlan watching the two of you from afar with a smile on his face, happy to see some joy around.

10:00 PM

“Okay, okay... What about... The smell of walkers?” You question with a smile on your face. “It's a good reminder that we're not like them. We're alive,” Jesus answers, turning his head to his left to look at you, both of his forearms comfortably resting underneath his head.

The two of you are lying down on the rooftop of the old building in the center of the community, you're completely wrapped-up in one of Jesus' coat, and you've been stargazing for hours now whilst talking about everything and anything.

“Good point,” you concede. “I'm still not used to it though, y'know? I've met so many people who used to say that we all get used to it at some point but... I just can't seem to. I mean, how are you supposed to get used to the smell of rotting corpses?”

“I honestly don't know, y/n. I'm not used to it either, I don't want to get used to it. It's like I said, it's a good reminder that we're still here, we're still living through it all.”
You hum and tear your eyes away from the star-filled sky to look at Paul who's looking back with a smile on his face. “I just wish that… Ugh, I’m sorry, just- forget it.” You sigh and look back at the sky in an attempt to ease the feeling of awkwardness and sadness you’re getting.

“Tell me. What’d you wish for?” Jesus asks with genuine curiosity. “I just… You know,” you whine and take a deep breath, keeping your eyes fixed on the stars covering the beautiful night sky. “Sometimes I just wish that it could just… Stop,” you confess in a whisper. “B-But… But then… Then I just keep wondering; what if I miss out, y-you know?”

You force a little laugh. “It’s stupid, I-I know.” A single tear escapes your eye and you let it roll to your hairline, cooling your skin as it goes. “It’s not stupid,” Jesus scolds with a frown.

“Y/n,” you slightly tilt your head to the right to look at him, “it’s not.” With a wet snuffle, you sit up and shrug, keeping your eyes on the sky. “Feels like I’m being a brat though. Seems all I’m doing these days is cry and feel sorry for myself.”

You hear Paul shuffling around and then he’s sitting right next to you. “You’re what now… Twenty?” He asks and you silently nod. “And the world fell on your head when you were… Thirteen,” he does the math. “You’ve been all alone since?” Again, you give a quiet nod of your head.

“I remember how scary this whole situation was, how bad that night has been- Never seen so much death…” he trails off and clears his throat. “Your current situation isn’t simple. Nothing about it is… I mean, I know how hard Negan is to deal with when he’s around, but you actually live under the same roof as him, y/n. That’s like… Living in a cramped-up apartment with a bulldog that does nothing but bark, eat, piss, shit and fart… And hump your leg.”

Your body shakes and a laugh finally comes out, a sharp contrast to the tears still steadily rolling down your face. It’s odd how Jesus always seems to know how to handle you even when you’re at your worst. Everything just feels so easy with him.

You hear Jesus chuckle next to you and shyly lean his way to rest your head against his left shoulder, closing your eyes when he brings his arm around you and brings you closer to him. “You’ll be alright, kiddo,” he gently reassures.

“Besides, you’ve been through too much to give up now. I know it’s hard and I can’t even begin to imagine just how hard it must be for you having to heal all alone, pushing through every single day but,” he brings you a slight bit closer to him and talks against your temple, “your emotions are nothing to be ashamed of, y/n, you hear me? I’d love to see anyone else try and deal with the shit you’re dealing with without breaking. You’re entitled to your own emotions and that does not make you a brat.”

You frantically nod your head into his shoulder, tears flowing out of your eyes like a broken dam. “I’m scared,” you whisper, more so to yourself than to him but he still catches it. “Of what, y/n?” Paul quietly asks.

“Being alone,” you snuffle and swallow around the lump in your throat. “I’m not going anywhere,” he tells you and you’re glad he can’t see your face as it scrunches up. “Don’t write
checks you can't cash,” you quietly ask him.

“Is that a challenge?” He teases with a small chuckle, getting one from you in return as you recall him saying the same thing in the exact same tone when you’ve told him that he couldn't keep on giving you his clothes yesterday.

Jokes aside though; you are scared, terrified even. Scared of losing someone else, someone that somehow knows how to make you feel safe and valued, scared of him getting tired of your tears, scared of him abandoning you because you're too much to handle. You're just scared of being all alone again, yet you're so prepared for it.

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17th January:

00:02 AM //

You sigh in relief when you finally spot the Sanctuary's gates, it's so cold outside that your breath is coming out in little clouds and your entire body is shaking. You can't feel your face anymore and you curse yourself for not accepting the jacket Jesus kept trying to get you to keep because the hoodie you've put on this morning is not nearly enough to keep warm.

You try to push the gate open but it's locked tight and you feel you could burst with the scream bubbling in your throat.

*of course it's fucking locked.*

You crane your neck and lift on your tippy-toes to try and see if you can spot whoever is on duty at the gate tonight, but the moonlight isn't enough for you to see clearly.

*you should just go back to hilltop, after all, jesus did say that you could stay the night if you wanted to, so... yeah?*

You seriously consider your options for a second as you readjust your backpack on your shoulders, your right hand tightly wrapped around your bow to stay prepared for the eventuality of a walker popping out of nowhere.

You also have an army duffel full of medical supplies, food, five guns and a few bullets waiting for Negan to pick up. You kept your promise to always bring whatever you find out there to him and, yes, you're pissed to do so but you have your codes and rules; keeping your promises when it's possible for you to do so being one of them. Which, in other words means; you're stuck.

*stupid morality…*

“Y/n?” You hear Connor's voice in the dark and finally spot him as he runs up to you, quickly
opening the gate for you to get in.

“[You] scared the shit out of us! Negan almost sent us back out there to look for you! What the hell!? You can't just run off like that! What in the fuck were you thinking?!” He scolds, relieved to see that you're safe and sound, but he was clearly scared shitless, and his body is showing it. He's shaking and his eyes are glossy with tears.

great. now i feel bad.

You don't think twice about it and hug him to you, getting on the tip of your toes to hide your head in the crook of his neck. “I'm sorry, Connor. I'm so sorry, I didn't mean to be bad. I didn't mean to worry you,” you apologize in a whisper and feel the Savior relax against you.

“You feelin' any better, princess?” He asks, still holding you tightly to him. “I... I don't know… I'm kind of lost right now,” you quietly admit as you let go of him, immediately missing his body heat but you want to be able to see him.

“But uh… I will be, e-eventually. It can't always be rainbows and sunshine, but it can't always be a-all bad either, r-right?” You ask with a shrug and a sad smile. Not sure you believe that yourself.

The green-eyed man hums and smiles. “Yeah, can't have light without darkness and all that crap,” he quotes with a chuckle. “You've never stroke me as a poet, Connor,” you make fun of his lack of optimism.

“They call me Van Gogh.” “That's a painter, Co',” you correct with a grin and a shake of your head.

“Yeah? Well- Could he write his name and his email address in the snow with his piss?” The man counters and you laugh, forgetting about the cold for a minute.

“You're nasty.” “Hey, don’t insult the art,” he scolds with a chuckle, cackling when you push into his left shoulder and shush him.

Your little moment is cut short by the sound of a throat being roughly cleared and it seems to be enough for Connor to shyly wave you goodbye and go back to his post along the fences. Your shoulders drop when he leaves.

“What'd you think I should do to you, uh?” Negan's coarse voice sends the worst kinds of shivers down your spine as he steps right in front of you and it takes every last drop of courage you have left in you not to look down.

“I don't know. You’re the boss,” you tell him, sounding way colder than you expected yourself to. “Oh, I am, huh?” He asks through gritted teeth, clearly not pleased with the status you've given him. He normally demands it from his men but, even though you're supposed to be, you ain’t one of them to him.

The sigh you let out shows in the cold air of the night. You’re not in the mood to get in another fight with him. You don’t have the energy for it either.

“Here,” you whisper as you throw the bag filled with supplies at his feet before walking past him,
slightly brushing his arm with your shoulder as you walk by him to get inside the compound and go back to your room, ready to pass out.

Before you can set a single foot inside the compound, Negan's rough hand harshly grabs your wrist to bring you right back outside and you yelp when he roughly pushes you against a cold, hard wall, making you hiss in discomfort.

“We need to fuckin’ talk, doll,” he says through gritted teeth. “Yeah, we do,” you agree, your voice tight, looking down to focus on not stuttering. “Problem is; I'm pretty sure we don't see eye to eye when it comes to which issue we need to discuss, Negan,” you finish without stuttering once but with tears filling your eyes instead.

“Oh, so now we have fuckin’ issues, huh?” Yeah. He’s angry. Good for him ‘cause so are you. “Alright then, dolly, how 'bout that, I tell you what’s fuckin’ bugging the hell out of me and then, if you’re done being a brat, maybe you'll tell me what in the holy fuck is going on with you.” He's so close to you, you can feel his breath hitting your temple as he tilts his head to try and catch a glimpse of your eyes since you're busy looking at the ground.

“You almost got into a fight with Ashley,” -holy shit you wanna punch him- “you fuckin' walked away from me twice when we were in the middle of a goddamn conversation, you fuckin' ignored me when I fuckin' called after you this morning, you went outside the fuckin' compound after what happened to you a fuckin' day ago. You fuckin' told Dwight that you'll be back in three fuckin' hours and you show up fifteen hours later! Where the fuck were you, huh?”

Negan's voice is starting to get more and more angry as he keeps on listing your faults and your free left hand comes up to cover your ear, your right one twitching in his hold, seeking to join its twin on the other side of your face.

“Oh, no. Nuh-uh, you don’t get to cover up, darlin’.” Your left hand is snatched away and your bottom lip wobbles in protest. “You wanna act like a brat, you’re gonna grin and bear through the consequences of that, baby girl.” You’re not going to give him credit for it because what he’s doing is wrong, but he at least reels his voice back in a little now that you've made your clear distress show.

“Fuckin' hell, doll, you've been giving me so much fuckin' attitude lately. You keep on fuckin' disobeying me, you're constantly defying me and talking back.” Negan takes a step closer to you and crushes your shaking body between his and the rough wall behind you, his breathing uneven and his jaw rippling beneath his skin.

“I'm getting seriously pissed with all the shit you seem to enjoy putting me through, you and your fuckin' attitude. Y'know what you need, doll? I think you need a good o'l punishment.”

“Wh-What, y-you're gonna give L-Lucille another g-go at me?” You're still looking down, tears falling out of your eyes to land on the hard ground below, and Negan is so close to you right now that you can't even see your boots anymore, all you can see are his legs.

“Nah, as much I love to see my two favorite girls play together,” he slightly tilts his head with a wicked grin on his lips which both seriously worries and scares you, “I'll be the one doing the spanking this time and, y'know, no matter how bad you thought Lucille was on your ass; I'm gonna
be **much, much** worse, doll. You think you ever saw me pissed? Let me change that real quick.”

You don't get to process what's happening when you're thrown over his broad shoulder and then he’s walking towards his quarters, his grip on you so tight it kind of stings but you can't say or do a damn thing because you're completely paralyzed by fear and frustration. You're frustrated by the things he does to you; the way he makes you feel. You're so fucking confused.

Panic kicks in when a door is slammed and another clicks shut a few seconds after, and you’re brought back to the present. You start wiggling around, trying to get free of his grip when you realize that you've somehow zoned out long enough for Negan to walk you to his room.

you're in his room... you're in negan's room... you are in negan's bedroom... the bedroom that belongs to negan... oooh, fuck no.

He sets you down on the carpet-covered floor and you quickly take several steps back until your back hits the door you assume leads out of his bedroom. “What the hell, Negan!?” “What happened to “boss”, baby doll?” He taunts with a grin.

“What happened to me not wanting to be in your quarters? What happened to me not wanting to be in your freaking bedroom? What happened to being a man of your words!?” You rush out and turn around to pull at the doorknob, wiggling it pointlessly since Negan locked the damn door and the key is God knows where.

he probably swallowed it and now you're stuck in here with him forever 'cause that's totally something negan would do.

You sigh and let your forehead fall repeatedly on the hard, wooden door, tears filling your eyes as you realize just how vulnerable you are whenever he's around, and now you're literally **stuck in a room** with him.

“C'mere, baby girl, you're not going anywhere any time soon anyway.” His voice is right behind you and you can feel his breath on your exposed neck since your hair are still resting in a messy bun on top of your head. “Where'd all that attitude go, huh?” He asks and you don’t need to see it to know that he’s smirking.

“You're full of crap, Negan,” you snap, turning around and somehow mustering up enough courage to look him straight in the eyes. “You talk a big game, but you don't do shit.” “Watch the way you fuckin' speak to me, girl,” he warns, his voice not so cocky anymore, clearly aggravated by your behavior and your words.

“No one ever came in this fuckin' room but me and no one ever slept in this fuckin' bed but me, doll. So fuckin' relax. You're the only person who ever even caught a glimpse of my damn bedroom.” For some reason, it actually soothes you to know that you're the only girl that's ever been in his bedroom, but it doesn't really appease you though. He's clearly pissed, and you know that he meant it when he said that you weren't going anywhere any time soon.
You watch carefully as he walks up to the left side of his bed and takes a seat on the silky looking comforter. His head drops and he lets out a heavy sigh followed by a breathy chuckle before looking up at you and extending his hand out for you to take just like Andy did earlier, though you seriously doubt that Negan is actually asking for a handshake right now. Giving him your hand would be like a bunny willing stepping into a trap.

“C’mon, doll, you either take my hand or I’m coming over to get you and I’m pretty sure you don’t want that,” Negan breaks the silence, his voice firm yet somewhat softer than it’s been so far.

You take small steps in his direction before extending a terribly shaky hand out that you wearily put in his much bigger one and, sure enough, it immediately closes around you like a noose around the bunny’s leg.

Negan tugs you right in front of him with a little too much force resulting in you losing your balance, but he quickly puts a hand on your belly to stabilize you. “Thank you,” you whisper with darkened cheeks, your blood rushing through them and it feels like its forgetting to go through your brain as well.

“Th-there she is, there’s my good girl,” he praises and, God, you hate that you’re suddenly feeling guilty for being bad in the first place. He has no right to do this to you. “You’re welcome, y/n,” he says with a smug smirk on his face, his eyes scanning your body from head to toe. “Now; pants off, dolly.”

You almost choke on your own spit at his words, but he doesn't seem faced by your reaction, it actually seems to amuse him if anything. “Wh-What?” You dumbly ask, hoping that you’ve heard him wrong somehow.

“Y’heard me. Pants off, now. You can keep your panties if you want but the pants are goin’. C’mon, chop-chop,” he claps his hands together twice, that cocky smirk of his still splattered on his face and doing nothing to calm your nerves.

“N-No… Negan, I-” You can't talk properly so you just shake your head left and right whilst looking down at the soft floor. “

Look at me, doll,” he demands as he gently - well as gentle as Negan gets - grabs your face with his right hand. “It's not just me, you fucked up when you didn't respect our li’l contract today, didn’t you?” There's nothing you can say to that because he's right; you didn't respect the rules he’s set when you both came to an agreement before he brought you back to the Sanctuary, so you just silently nod your head.

“Alright then, d'you know what happens when someone misbehaves here?” Your throat clicks. “I burn half of their fucking face off or they get somethin’ chopped off. Now, I don't wanna do none of that to you, baby girl, I just fucking don't, but you gotta learn to trust me and do as you’re told. So, you’re gonna take those pants off, lay down on my lap, and reap what you sought,” he explains, and you swear your cheeks are going to melt off your face they’re so hot.

You shakily reach for the brass button of your jeans and slowly undo it, your pants dropping from
your waist to catch at your hips and you shimmy to make them fall to the floor, the material pooling at your ankles and leaving your shaking legs exposed to Negan.

You watch him eye the bruises littered here and there, his gaze eventually dropping to your left calf and he seems pleased to see that it’s almost healed now.

“Good girl,” Negan praises and your toes unconsciously curl in your socks and into the fuzzy carpet below your feet. “C'mere,” he demands, tapping his lap with a wolfish grin.

not helping, you assbag...

You hesitantly take a shy step towards him, your eyes fixed on the floor still, but his hand grabs a hold of you and quickly brings you to him, pushing you down on his laps before you can even blink.

“Damn, look at that,” he whistles, and you feel his hand gently touching the soft skin of your butt, his touch feather like, “Lucille sure did a number on you, didn't she, doll?” He observes, feeling the thin, raised white lines the bat left on your skin. “Fuck, that must'a hurt like a big o'l bitch, uh?” He asks with a snicker before grabbing a handful of your plum flesh, making you flinch at the sudden, blunt contact.

“Now, I want you to count every single spank I'll give you out loud and you better say thank you afterwards. You miss one,” he pauses and grabs a handful of your hair with his free hand, making your back arch uncomfortably when he pulls your head up, making you cry out at the sharp pain in your scalp, his mouth right next to your right ear.

“You miss one, and I'll start all over again. Hell, I'll even fuckin' double the damn number just 'cause you really pissed me off today with your goddamn disobedience and your attitude. S'that understood?” “Y-Yes, Negan,” you whimper, struggling to keep your head up because it's hurting your neck but not daring to put it down to relieve it because then your scalp will smart with Negan’s tight pull on your hair.

You let out a cry of pain when his hand comes down on your left cheek, your first reflex is to try and get away from him, but you quickly calm down and bite down on your lip, remembering his instructions. “O-One. Th-Thank you, daddy.”

you did not...

You hear him let out a low grunt inside your left ear and you're not sure if it's because he likes it or because he's mad about it.

“God fucking damn, baby girl. See? It ain't that hard bein’ a good girl for me now, is it?” He asks with a cocky smile, trying to ignore the fact that his cock just twitched when the word came out of your mouth.

He brings his hand down a second time and tightens his grip on your hair, making sure to hold you in place. “TTwo! Th-Thank you, daddy,” you cry out, your bum already stinging. He was right; he is way worse than Lucille was.

“You're my li'l baby girl, doll. These other women don't have a goddamn thing on ya. You're my
only baby girl and I'm your daddy, that's how it is and that's how it's gonna stay.”

A small, needy noise comes out of your mouth, surprising the two of you. For some reason, knowing that you're the only one he gives that little tittle to does something to you, you don't know what but the noise that just came out of your mouth says it's utter arousal.

“Yeah, you love having daddy's attention, don't you, baby girl?” “Y-Yes, daddy, I do,” you admit, not able to keep quiet anymore and Negan’s hand comes down on you for the third time, making you jump forward on his lap.

“So needy,” he scolds, his voice is even more gravely that it usually is and you get an odd feeling in your tummy from it. “You've been giving daddy so much attitude today, you've been so fuckin' bad, sneaking out behind my back, throwin' shit at me, talking back - fuck - telling me to fuckin' forget about you?”

“I'm sorry,” you whine, wiggling around on his thighs, already missing his touch but then his hand comes back down and this one seriously stings.

You try to get your butt away from him but he's still firmly holding you in place, his free hand still tangled in your hair to keep the left side of your face right in front of his. You quickly calm down and count the fourth spank, thanking him afterwards.

“Where the fuck were you, uh?” He asks harshly as he gives you a fifth spank, making you wince. “H-Hilltop! I was at Hilltop! Five, th-that's f-five. Th-Thank you, daddy.”

“Hilltop, uh?” Oh, he didn’t like that. “Jesus kept you company I'm guessin', doll?” He’s clearly getting angry again just as he was starting to calm down. “Y-Yes but-” You don't get to finish, your yes enough for him to lash out on you and you end up getting four spanks in a row, breathlessly counting each of them out loud and thanking him for them.

You’re in tears by the time he finally gets to the fifteenth spank. Your backside hurts like hell, it feels numb but it's not at all, you can feel the blood that has rushed to the surface of your skin and is making it prickle.

Negan’s hand gently rubs your twin mounds to get the blood going again and that sting to fade a little as he slowly lets go of your hair and grips your jaw instead to make you face him, rubbing the tip of his nose against the tip of yours.

“You okay, dolly?” You nod your head but, no, you're not okay. Your entire body feels achy, and your bum is throbbing, but it seems to all go away when Negan's lips find yours and give you an oddly gentle kiss. “This is for your own good. You gotta learn to trust me, baby girl. When I say jump, you say how high.”

You frantically nod with a little frown on your lips and he lifts you off his lap to carefully lay you down on your stomach on the satin sheets covering the bed before walking to his bathroom, leaving you alone for a few minutes as he looks for something to sooth your pain and keep bruises from forming further.
The second he has his back turned to you, you start to wail into the mattress, not sure what’s causing your chagrin. You feel bad for misbehaving so much and you're completely lost. You're tired and your butt hurts, not to mention the horrible discomfort you're feeling in your tummy, it feels tight and weird and you don't like it.

You squeal when you feel something cold hit the heated, throbbing skin of your butt as Negan gently puts lotion on both cheeks to soothe your soreness. Once he's done, he wipes his hands on his pants and you feel his hands going under your sweatshirt, running along your spine before unclasping your bra, and he leaves it to you to take it off on your own not wanting to push any more tonight.

“Here, princess,” he hands you a clean white shirt and busies himself with bringing the lotion back to the bathroom while you change out of your hoodie and into his t-shirt. You mumble a small “thank you” when he comes back and he plants a lingering kiss to the crown on your head before carefully guiding you under the sheets, you'd protest but his mattress is so soft, and his smell is all over the pillows, so you stay calm and let him take care of you.

You let your head fall against a soft, cool pillow and feel your heart in your throat when you see Negan walking towards the door of his bedroom. “Wait- No- Stay, please!” You plead with tears in your eyes.

“Doll, trust me; you don’t want me ‘round right now,” he says with a chuckle. “But- No- I do!” You protest.

“Baby girl,” he slowly walks towards you and sits down next to your legs on his bed. “It's not that I don't want to share my bed with you, hell, that's all I fucking want but… Not when my dick is rock hard, doll,” he explains with a smirk as he watches your cheeks darken.

Negan slowly gets back up, and you quickly grab his hand in your smaller one, keeping him from walking away. “Y/n-” He scolds. “Let me fix it then,” you cut him off, grasping at straws. “I… I wanna fix it,” you shyly whisper, casting your eyes down at the satin sheets covering your bare legs, your hand shaking in his.

“Baby girl… Fuckin’ hell…” He's getting light-headed from your words alone and can feel his cock twitching in his briefs as he watches your cheeks darken.

Negan quickly undoes his jeans and kicks them off but keeps his boxers on as he climbs in the bed next to you, covering his lower body with the sheets before looking at you. “What do I do?” You whisper as if you were about do to something you’re not supposed to.
“C'mere, baby girl,” he coos, wrapping his arm around your waist to drag you closer to him until you’re nestled tight against the right side of his body. “There. Now, gimme your right hand, princess,” the older man instructs, and you do as you told, giving him your shaky hand, your cheeks burning as he takes it in his own.

“Promise me you'll tell me if it gets too much for you, baby,” he demands looking straight into your eyes. “I promise,” you whisper and he looks at you one last time before diving down to kiss your lips greedily as he slowly guides his free hand underneath the sheets to pull his briefs down just enough so that he can spring free, his lips still assaulting yours.

“Open your hand, baby doll,” he whispers against your lips as he looks straight into your eyes which are now filled with curiosity and excitement. Again, you do as you're told and open the hand he’s holding, watching with wide eyes as he brings it to his mouth and licks two broad strips on your palm, the foreign contact making you shiver.

Negan chuckles and gives you a slow kiss, distracting you as he slowly guides your opened, and now wet, right hand down under the covers and carefully wraps it around his throbbing erection, grunting when he feels your smaller, much softer hand around him and you gasp against his parted lips, carefully watching his face.

His eyes are way darker than they usually are, and his chest is quickly heaving up and down. Darkened hazel orbs find your own and shoot you a wink accompanied by a smirk. “Your hand's too small for daddy, angel.” You ignore his words and curiously move your hand up on his cock but still when he lets out a groan, unsure whether you were supposed to do that and if you’ve hurt him.

“Fuckin’- Sorry. Keep goin’, baby girl, keep movin’ your hand up and down just like that,” he encourages, and you relax a little, moving your hand up and down on him, your movements agonizingly slow because of your uncertainty.

“Ugh, baby girl, rub your li'l thumb on top of it,” Negan instructs and you let your head rest on his heaving chest as he lays back on the bed, his head propped on his pillow, curiously moving your thumb around until you finally find a round, soft part on his cock which you assume was where he wanted you to touch him so you start rubbing your thumb in small circles on it, making him grunt below you.

“It's wet,” you observe in a whisper. “Why's it wet?” You ask, genuinely curious about the whole thing. You've never touched a man like this before and you don't even see what the hell is going on since he covered it all up but you assume that's how he wanted it to be and you think it might be for the best because whatever's down there is freaking huge and full of thick veins but it’s also oddly nice to touch which is weird to you but you like it so you don't question it.

“It's uh – fuckin’ hell - It's just 'cause I'm havin' a fuckin’ blast right now, sweetheart,” he vaguely explains through heavy breaths and low grunts, clearly enjoying himself.

You can hear small, wet noises coming from beneath the sheets and can't hold your curiosity in any longer. Your head never leaving Negan’s chest, you gently lift up the satin sheets and a gasp
escapes your parted lips when you’re met with the sight of the Saviors’ leader’s erection heavily laying in your hand, the tip of it a pretty, dark pink and it's shinning with pre-cum that's dripping down onto your hand and spreading all over him with every single ups and downs you make.

“It's so pretty,” you whisper with red cheeks as you look back up at Negan. “You're fuckin’ killin' me, baby girl.” His breath is getting faster and faster with the movement of your hand, and you let it happen naturally, you don't really control it and you don't really care, you just want to please him right now.

“Fuckin’ - Holy shit – Fuck,” the man beneath you starts to let out a dictionary worth list of curses, his eyes closing and his head digging further into his pillow as you carefully watch it all unfold. You don't have a damn clue as to what's happening, but it is happening.

You can feel his hips bucking under your hand and your eyes widen in surprise when you feel a hot, sticky liquid run directly down on your hand and quickly look down as Negan keeps on cursing his heart out, to see a white, thick liquid spread all over his tummy and your hand.

“Oh... A-Are you okay? Did I... I... No... Did I hurt you?” Panic eats you alive as tears fill your eyes again. The last thing you wanted was to hurt him.

“Hey, no. Shit. You didn't hurt me, sweetheart,” he pauses to catch his breath and reaches into his bedside table, getting a box a tissue out of it to wipe himself and your hand clean before carelessly throwing the used tissues on the floor and sliding his briefs back on, spend and sated.

“Remember when we had a li’l fun in your room three days ago?” You slowly nod your head, your cheeks burning at the memory, and Negan wipes a tear off your face. “Well that's exactly what happened to me except that you didn't see it happen last time, baby girl. That's why I kept that shit covered but curiosity killed the cat, hey?” He teases with an amused smirk.

“I'm sorry, I just... I really really wanted t-to see you.” ‘S'okay, baby, you haven’t done anythin’ wrong. I didn't do it for me, I did it for you.” He yawns, his eyelids getting heavy and so are yours though your tummy feels even worse now, but you don't mention it.

The lights in the room are turned off and Negan’s arms wrap around you and settle you with your back to his chest, his left hand creeping underneath your shirt to come rest on your belly and he smiles when he doesn't feel you tense or try to get away from him.

“Sleep tight, baby girl,” he whispers, kissing your neck and undoing your bun before settling behind you, his thumb gently rubbing random patterns on the soft skin of your tummy.

“Good night, daddy,” you whisper back with a small smile resulting in Negan chuckling against your neck and pushing you closer to him before you both fall deeply asleep.

It feels good, for once, to go to sleep feeling completely safe and warm.
Your eyes slowly flutter open, the first rays of sunlight invading the room as memories of the night before hit you like a rock and a knot forms at the pit of your stomach. “What is wrong with me?” You whisper to yourself as you slowly sit up on the mattress and dive headfirst into your cupped hands.

You don't know what you feel guilty for exactly but you can name a few things like; the fact that Negan sweet-talked you back into his arms again after he successfully made you feel bad for not being all rainbows and sunshine’s with him, the fact that you completely gave into him and the fact that none of the issues you two are having have been solved in the slightest.

You wearily take your head out of your shaking hands, not really ready to face what happened last night, especially not Negan, and you frown in confusion when you look around and realize that you're not in the room you were locked in last night nor in the bed you recall falling asleep in. No, you're under warm blankets, in your own bed, in your bedroom.

what... the hell?

You look around, confused as to what's going on, tears of panic filling your eyes for a reason you can't identify, when you spot a small piece of paper neatly folded on your nightstand, waiting for you to open. You hastily grab it with a shaky hand and unfold it with shaky hands. It reads; “Didn't want to wake you up, baby girl, so I had Simon carry you back to your bedroom before the girls woke up. Nothing personal, doll, I just don't have the fucking time to deal with girl drama Negan.”

You feel your stomach tightening, your body shaking, and tears silently roll down your cheeks. He didn't want girl drama? He fucking had Simon bring you back to your bedroom whilst you were asleep? What the hell is wrong with this man?
You close your hand on the piece of paper and throw it across the room before burying your face in your pillow to scream into it, the soft lump slowly getting soaked with your tears.

You don't know if you actually wanted to have a conversation with him this morning about what happened last night or if you just would have silently went back to the hell-ish, messy relationship you two seem to be stuck in, all you know is that; you've never felt so vulnerable and gross in your entire life.

seems like he took that decision for ya if you ask me... you should've listened to me when i was literally screaming at you to fucking stop, you have a goddamn conscience and it ain't here to hurt ya, quite the opposite actually.

You let out a small sigh of defeat as you realize that you, indeed, did not listen to your own protests last night and you feel like the price you're paying for it right now- Well, it wasn't worth it. Not at all.

You fell asleep so peacefully last night, you actually were even kind of looking forward to tomorrow but, now that tomorrow is here, you wish that you could make what occurred yesterday disappear. Sadly, that’s not how things work and now, you're left on your own to deal with that guilt, anger and disgust. Worst part is; you can't even blame him for letting things happen when you were begging for them to.

Breathing into your pillow, you try to muster up some courage and strength to get up and go take your morning shower but it's proving difficult to do this morning.

It's not the first time that you have to literally drag yourself out of bed. Staying in bed all day and oversleeping being symptoms of depression, you've been dealing with that exact same situation for years but, today? It seems to be painfully complicated for you to actually push yourself over that ledge.

just stay in bed. no one cares anyway.

A soft knock on your door makes you jump, and you quickly sit up and dry your tears with your hands before hesitantly making your way to your door and slowly opening it, not too eager to talk or see anyone today.

“Wakey wakey!” Simon greets, clearly in a brighter mood than you are. “How's my favorite troublemaker doin' today?” He asks with a bright grin as he leans against the frame of your door, making sure that it stays open.

“Hi… Hi Simon,” you quietly greet him, looking down at your hand, trying to avoid eye contact.

“Hey, look,” Negan’s right-hand man leans a small bit towards you, quickly looking around before putting his eyes back on your flushed face. “I get it, but I ain't here to judge shit, okay? Hell, I don't really give a fuck about what's goin' on between you two, s'yall business, so, let's just relax a li’l bit, yeah? You're so tense I could use you as a plank to smack a bitch.”
You let out a small giggle at his odd choice of words, your hands nervously pulling at the hem of your t-shirt - Negan’s shirt. “O-Okay, th-thank you.”

“Like I said, none of my fucking business, sweetheart,” he shrugs, clearly not an ounce as embarrassed as you are.

“Alright!” he claps his hands together, making you jump and look up at him. “Today's schedule. I heard that you take a shower every damn morning so, go do that, get dressed, then you'll go eat somethin’ and wait outside in the yard, I'll tell you what there’s to do ‘round the place, go it?” Simon asks with a raised eyebrow, waiting for you to answer and you do with a small nod of your head which seem to suffice him.

“Alright then, catch ya later, pumpkin.” He gives a tap on top of your doorframe and walks off, stopping right next-door to knock on Randall’s door with a nice “rise and shine, shithead,” and you can hear the tattooed man on the other side of the wall grunt dismissively from where you stand.

Shaking your head, you smile a little before deciding to go for that shower since you’re up and out of bed. Quickly looking left and right to make sure that no one is walking around in the long corridor leading to the communal showers.

Once you deem the coast is clear, you make a run for it, trying to stay as quiet as possible not to wake anyone up but you can hear Simon's voice booming through the hallways as he yells “rise and fucking shine, it's mornin’ kids!” which is kind of funny to you but also makes your whole “let's not make a single noise and be nice to the sleeping people” thought process completely irrelevant.

You thank your lucky stars when you make it to the showers without coming across anyone and quickly undress to slip into the cabin you usually take your shower in, letting the water warm up a bit before stepping under the shower head, letting the hot water hit your body, sighing as your muscles finally relax a bit.

maybe, just maybe, you needed things to go that far with him just to realize that he's no good. maybe now you're gonna be able to move on from him. after all, your life has been nothing but messy ever since he came into it. you’ve been kidnapped for god’s sake.

After a good fifteen minutes, you turn the water off and wrap a big towel around your shaking body, quickly dry your hair and brush your teeth before grabbing the t-shirt and pair of undies you came in with and walk back to your room quickly because you're freezing your butt off.

Stepping into your room, you let out a relieved sigh when the door clicks shut but your relief is quickly replaced by a huge heart attack as you turn around and see Randall sitting on your mattress, a smile on his face, the squeal that’s just left your mouth clearly amusing to him.

“OH MY FREAKING GOD! RANDALL! WHAT THE HELL?!” You grip your towel tight as you became hyper-aware of the fact that it's the only thing hiding your birthday suit from him right now and grab your pillow to throw it at his face angrily.
“You... You suck!” You angrily point at him with a shaky finger. “You're the worst!”

Completely unfazed by your little outburst, Randall holds your pillow to his chest as he keeps on laughing, tears rolling down his face as his laughter gets completely out of control which causes you to smile against your will and, eventually, a giggle comes out, then a genuine laugh rolls out of your mouth.

“You're a prick,” you let him know with a smile. “You love me, princess,” he retorts with a boyish grin, making your eyes roll.

“No, I don't, I hate you actually. I almost peed myself because of you.”

Randall gives you a pout, his eyes big and misleadingly innocent. “Aw, poor li'l y/n, I'm so mean to you.” “Yeah, you are. You're the worst.”

The blonde man smiles and stands up before pointing down at your bed. “I just wanted to bring you some new clothes, sweetheart, honestly didn't mean to scare the shit outta you like this... Even though it definitely made my day, gotta admit.”

“Oh, shush your ass.” You pout and punch his shoulder in a friendly manner before taking a look at the pile of clothes with a frown. “Randall, this tank top is yours and,” you pull out a pair of dark denim jeans, “those are as well. Why are you giving me your clothes? What about you?”

“Don't worry about me, I have a bunch of those, I just... y'know.” He trails off and nervously scratches the back of his head. “I was on laundry duty yesterday and I noticed that you only have, like, four decent things to wear and the rest are just pieces of tissue with holes, so, I thought, maybe... I mean- Shit, that sounded super creepy, didn't it? Fuck.”

“Thank you,” you cut his ramblings off with a smile and hug him, forgetting about your nudity for a second to hold him tightly against you.

You stiffen a little against Randall when you realize your mistake. “Okay, don’t panic, but; we're stuck like this forever now 'cause I'm not holding my towel anymore and if you pull away it'll fall and I'll explode so, yeah, you're stuck with me, pal.”

“Sounds like a pretty good deal to me,” he chuckles against the top of your head before leaning down to gently kiss your forehead. “Here, I'll cover my eyes, grab your towel and pull away, promise I won't peek.” You see him close his eyes so tight it makes his brow furrow, and he even covers his face with both his hands for good measure.

Nervously biting down on your lip, you grab a small bit of your towel, pull away and turn around before wrapping the soft fabric around your now dry body. “Okay, crisis averted for another day,” you signal him that you're covered.

“Hi,” Randall greets you with a grin and a chuckle as he lets his hands fall from his eyes and blinks
a couple of times to readjust to the light in the room. “Hi,” you whisper back to him with a small smile but the sadness in your tone doesn’t go unnoticed.

“Hey, what's goin' on, princess?” He asks with a frown, concerned by the sudden change in your demeanor.

“I uh... Randall…” A single tear escapes your eyes and you force a little laugh, shaking your head dismissively. “Sorry. S'nothing, just uh... Today's just one of those days, y'know? I'm just... just a bit down. It'll pass.”

“Something happen?” A blue and a grey eye scan your face, looking for anything that’d give him some intel on what’s on your mind and, even though you know he won’t find anything, you can’t put into words how much the mere gesture means to you.

negan happened.

“No... No. Just... Just a bad day, that's all, really,” you lie through your teeth, a tiny smile on your lips.

Randall looks at you, not sure if he can actually believe what you're saying. He knows that you have your very own ways of expressing yourself, your own ways to show affection, anger and sadness which are things he absolutely loves about you. He loves that nothing about you is similar to anyone he’s ever known, but you need your privacy and he needs to respect that. He won't be the one to violate your boundaries and make you feel uncomfortable on purpose. He wouldn’t do that to anyone.

“Alright then I uh... I'm gonna let you get dressed... Catch you for breakfast?” He asks almost hesitantly, not wanting you to feel forced into anything.

“Yeah, f'course, breakfast sounds great,” the genuine, albeit small, smile you give him is enough to make him relax. “Just uh... Give me a minute to get dressed and I'll join you at the cafeteria.”

“Awesome,” he smiles and gives a quick peck to your forehead before leaving you to it.

The second the door clicks shut, you grab a pair of underwear, a small squeal of excitement accidentally escaping you when you spot a pair of Batman boxers in the pile of clothes on your bed and quickly put it on with a simple, plain black bra before putting Randall's black, ripped jeans on.

You reach for his tank top and smile when you spot the Nirvana yellow smiling face on the black-ish cotton and put it away in your supply-chest. You’d love to wear it but it’s way too cold to be going around in a tank-top.

Thankfully for you, Randall seems to be into the same kind of music you are and you quickly find your happiness in a grey Led Zeppelin sweater which you’re quick to throw over your head and get your arms in each, way too big, sleeves that go down to the very tips of your fingers.

Excitedly clapping your cotton-covered hands together, you let your legs bounce a little to use that nervous energy filing you before stilling to pull your hair in a ponytail, some strands escaping your
hold to hang loosely over your face. You keep saying it, but you really need to make some time to cut those. They’re not safe.

As you go to walk out of your room, you see that Negan’s note, which you scrambled and threw on the floor earlier on, is now in the small garbage-can sitting in a corner of your bedroom and your hands start to shake when you realize that Randall must have moved it in there while you were in the shower.

*please, tell me he didn't read that... for the love of fuck...*

You don’t actually **know** if he’s read the note or not, but the uncertainty doesn’t really calm your nerves. For all you know, the chances that he actually **did** read it are pretty damn high, right?

“Someone, please, set me on fire and throw me in a pit,” you mumble quietly to yourself as you get out of your bedroom with a loud sigh filled with complete despair.

You try to shut your overthinking mind up as you head down to the cafeteria, trying not to think about what Randall might or might not know about, trying not to think about how you got royally fucked over by Negan again. At this point, really, you’re just trying get from point A to B without losing your mind in the meantime.

But, as you finally come closer to the kitchen and the cafeteria, awfully similar, irritating giggles assault your ears. You keep heading down but, just as you’ve passed the kitchen, you spot Negan leaning over none other than the famous **Ashley** as she’s leaning against the wall behind her in the middle of the hall, a tray full of food in her hands, and he’s saying God-knows-what to her with a sly smirk on his lips.

You feel sick and tears are invading your eyes again, completely blocking your view. God, you feel so fucking stupid.

You quickly swallow your tears back and get yourself together before you actually end up sobbing or even worse; bash both their heads in. Your arms protectively wrap themselves up around your shaking frame as your mind tries to fight off all of the dark thoughts coming through it, eager to make you blow a fuse, to take all of that frustration, anger and sadness out on you like they always do.

*just keep going straight.*

Your mind is a mess of positive thoughts and really dark ones fighting for your attention, trying to get to you first. The bad ones want to get to you first to cut you deep while the good ones want to help you keep your head on straight.

You have to get to the cafeteria but you can’t do so without passing Negan and his girl and, for an instant, you feel like digging a hole into the ground and crawling your way under the compound to the cafeteria seems like a good, totally feasible thing, but you settle for just going for it.

you **just look straight forward, you don't pay attention to him or her and don't you dare cry, you've already cried enough for him.**
Easier said than done though. Negan is quick to grab your forearm right as you go to walk past him and his girlfriend, your head down, tears still filling your eyes.

His eyes on you, he orders Ashley to “get back upstairs and drop [his] fucking tray in [his] office and fucking get the hell out,” before bringing his attention fully back to you and looking at you up and down, frowning when he spots Randall's clothes on you.

He can't get you to look at him and you keep on pulling at his arm, trying to get him to let go of you but he's not moving, not even a little bit.

“Don't be mad at me, baby girl,” he demands with a smirk, clearly amused by what he presumes to be your jealousy but it's not, at least not completely. It's mostly hurt and insecurity.

Negan sighs, running low on patience, when your only answer to him is complete silence and a simple shrug of your shoulders, your head down still.

“Look, doll, I get it. You like having daddy all to yourself but, shit, I can't just leave the others in a corner, that's not how I do shit around here,” he justifies himself, clearly missing the fucking point.

“You know what,” you start, feeling like you're about to snap at him and he's bracing himself for it as well, but you completely deflate and the only thing that comes out of your mouth is a sigh of defeat and fatigue as you force a small smile.

You slowly look up at him with that awful, plastic smile that is filled with pain and sadness painted on your tired face. “I know. You have your own ways around here, your own rules n'all. S'no problem,” you calmly state, and you're confused by your own behavior.

“Have a good day, sir,” you whisper with a frown and tears in your eyes.

His behavior is like poison, it's suffocating you and making your body ill. You can't believe he actually had you sent back to your room in the middle of the night. No, actually; you can. What's so unreal to you is that you actually thought that he was a decent man for a minute, you fucked yourself over big time.

It seems like the two of you just can't get it right. Today makes it a week since you've officially met Negan and it feels like all you’ve been doing this week is alternate between crying, feeling your anxiety spike and getting panic attacks. You’ve also hurt yourself twice, got taken by some psychotic guy looking for a new toy to chew on and got shot, and that was five days in. It doesn’t feel like it’s gonna get any better on the seventh though.

“Your li’l trips outside the compound? That shit’s over,” Negan’s cold voice makes you stop in your steps and turn back around to face him.

*he did not just do that.*
“E-Excuse me?” You ask with a frown, your vision still blurry with unshed tears.

“Y’fucking heard me, y/n. From now on, your ass is stayin’ in this goddamn compound where I can keep an eye on you, whether you like it or not. No more little walks in the woods, not after the shit you've pulled last night. I don't do second chances,” he firmly says before walking away, leaving you standing there, your fists clenched and your jaw tight.

How fucking dare he? He wants to talk about the shit you've pulled yesterday? How about the shit he's pulled last night, huh? Oh, and of course, let's not forget the ballsy “I don't do second chances.” Does he seriously expect you to just sit around and listen to him? Fuck that. You're not his fucking dog.

You don't turn back around to head down to the cafeteria, oh no, instead; you head back to “your” room. There's no way in hell you're staying one more day here and you don't care if you have to snap some necks to achieve your goal, you decided that you'll get out and get the fuck out you sure as shit will.

Pushing the door of your bedroom open, you carelessly slam it shut before walking up to the wooden chest that keeps everything you own safe. You unlock it with a shaky hand and hastily shove your belongings in your backpack, stopping for a small second when you spot the GameBoy you've found back at the church eight days ago but you quickly snap out of your little reverie and close your backpack.

one thing done.

You can't help the small smile that seems to be stuck on your face as you tug your butterfly-knife in the waistband of your jeans, adrenaline cursing through your veins, eager to get your freedom back, eager to get back to being your own person and not someone's toy.

“Well,” you sigh looking down at the watch wrapped around your right wrist. “Seven thirty. I should have enough time.”

Truth be told, you don't want to hurt anyone, you just want to leave and go back to the somewhat peaceful life you used to lead on the outside and you're really hoping that Negan didn't actually tell his men not to let you go out anymore because, if he did, things are gonna have to get a little messy and you don't want that.

you can't tell Randall, Connor or Faith about what you're about to do, it'll only get them in trouble when Negan'll find out that you're gone but... they deserve a goodbye at least, don't ya think?

With an agitated huff, you open your nightstand, grab the black pen sitting in it and fetch the note Negan left you last night out of the otherwise empty trashcan, flip it over and write a small note to your friends. “I'm so sorry, I just can't do this anymore. Please don't be mad at me. Stay safe -y/n.”

You look at the piece of paper and tightly hold it, guilt filling your heart, but you push through it and grab your backpack to swiftly put it on your back before grabbing your bow and heading toward the bedroom's door.
Your soul damn near leaves your body when the aforementioned door swings open, revealing Negan, Lucille on his shoulder and a smirk on his face. You quickly shove the note you've written in the back pocket of your jeans with a shaky hand.

*fucking fucker- fuck! how the fuck does he do that?*

“You goin' somewhere li'l one?” He asks, leaning against the frame of the open door, making your blood boil. “Just going to the yard like Simon told me to,” you lie, your voice filled with bitterness.

With a hum, Negan steps inside your room and closes the door behind him, grabbing your face to force you to look up at him. “You're goin’ out with me and the boys today so, let's make a deal, yeah sweetheart?”

“I'm good,” you grit through your teeth, trying to turn your head but his grip on your jaw tightens and he chuckles at your clear aggravation.

“Prove me that you can fuckin’ behave like a good girl while we're out there and I'll reconsider letting you go out on your own again.” The leader of the Saviors smirks when he sees your eyes light up at the suggestion even though you try hard to hide it.

“How 'bout it, baby girl? Wanna show me how good you can be?” “No,” you whisper, exhausted with his games. You just want to get the hell out of this place. You don't have shit to prove to him.

An irritated laugh comes from Negan, making you shiver in the worst way possible. “You wanna run that by me again, y/n?”

“I said no,” you repeat and reach up to harshly take his hand away from your jaw, taking a few steps back from him as you try to rub away the pressure his grip left on your jaw.

“I'm done with you; I'm done with your games and your sweet talking! You're horrible to me and- I didn't ask for any of this, okay?! I didn't ask for your men to drag me out of my little life to bring me to you and I sure as shit didn't ask for the things you do to me!”

You whimper as you press your fingertips into the sore patch he’s left behind on your jaw and look at him. “I don't understand what it is you want from me, Negan.” You hiccup on a sob, your frustration and sadness leaking through.

The man concerned doesn't say a damn thing, just leaves your room and slams the door behind him, making you flinch, your hands jumping up to cover your ears as you cry some more. This whole situation is hurting you and God knows you don't need any more of that in your life, you've already been through the wringer and you're not too keen on going back on that ride.

8:15 AM //

You drag yourself out to the main yard, your feet as well as your heart feeling like they’re weighting a freaking ton. You’ve dried every tear off your face, trying really hard to cover up the fact that, after Negan left your room, you've cried for about twenty-five minutes in a row into your
pillow, but your puffy, red eyes and your stuffy nose are dead giveaways.

You're frustrated, frustrated that Negan kept you from going anywhere, frustrated of what he's putting you through, frustrated because of the things he makes you feel. You're frustrated at yourself for actually thinking that he gave a shit about you when he clearly doesn't care about anyone but himself.

“Morning you sorry fucks!” You hear him loudly greet the second you set foot outside. “Hope you all had a good night of sleep, I sure as shit did,” his cocky smirk appears on his lips the second your head snaps up when he mentions his night.

is he fucking serious? fuck you.

You turn around, ignoring Randall’s hand when he tries to keep you from walking away because he knows damn well that it'll piss Negan off and he doesn't want you to get in trouble. You start to head back inside, tears filling your eyes. Sure seems like Negan is getting a kick out of embracing you in front of everyone.

It doesn't matter that no one but the two of you - and Simon - and maybe Randall- know about what happened last night because one; you freaking know and, two; you know that everyone understood that he was alluring to explicit things, they just don't know with whom and it hurts you, way more than it should.

“You got somewhere to be, li'l miss?” You tense when Negan calls after you and turn back around to look at him.

He's standing tall in front of everyone and they're all standing as well but only because he gave them permission to. “You got a special someone waitin’ on ya, doll? Wanna share with the class?” He taunts.

oh, so you wanna play.

“Well, you've done well so far without shoving your nose in my business so, let's keep it that way,” you answer coldly. Even though you're hurt, you're not willing to let him put you down any lower than he already has, especially not in front of his attack dogs.

“Feisty. I like that,” he chuckles though it's deadly obvious that the man’s not amused one bit.

You decide to push. “Really? No, 'cause, by the looks of it; it seems like you're more into dummies you can do whatever you want with that can't do shit to save their lives and don't help around the compound while your men risk their lives every day to bring them nail polish back.”

There's a long silence, no one dares to say a thing, not used to see anyone talking back to Negan nor push his buttons like you're doing right now.

A menacingly low laugh comes out of the very back of Negan's throat as he swiftly swings Lucille on his shoulder, looking straight at you as he does so and, you can’t lie, you feel a sharp currant of
fear run down your spine. You've done a lot of things that Negan never let slide with anyone else; talked back to him, fucking spat on him, ran away and disobeyed him multiple times but never have you snapped at him in front of all his men and the look in his eyes is enough for you to understand that you really fucked up this time.

“Alright, then,” he slowly drawls out with a sneer. “Let's get this shit-show on the road, kids!” He orders and walks towards you, whistling with a smile on his face still, Lucille on his shoulder, and you find yourself backing up as he gets closer and closer to you, your eyes scanning the crowd for Randall, Faith or Connor.

His men are all getting ready, loading the trucks and getting in as Negan finally gets a hold of you and tightly grips your wrist making you wince in discomfort, but he completely ignores your complain and brings your body flush against his, firmly keeping you against his chest as he speaks.

“Oh, I'm gonna have a fucking blast with you, princess. I swear to fucking God, you'll fucking think twice next time before running your goddamn, pretty li’l mouth like that.”

You don't have time to say anything, hell, you don't actually have anything to say, when he starts to drag you towards his truck before literally shoving you on the passenger side. Your eyes are filled with tears that you don't allow yourself to let go of, not with him around.

He climbs in the vehicle and slams the door of the driver's seat shut before signaling Simon to open the gate to let him through. You have no idea where you're supposed to be going today as neither Simon nor Negan gave any clear information, but you're stressed out just because of what Negan just said to you.

11:25 AM //

Three hours. That's how much time you've been in this damn truck with Negan for only company when it all finally comes to a stop.

“What the-” you quietly whisper as you take a peek out of your window and spot five people kneeling on the ground, some of Negan's men surrounding them, including Dwight and Randall.

“C'mon, sweetheart, let get this shit over and done with so we can go back home, and I can deal with you properly.”

\hspace{1cm} no thanks. fuck that actually.

You hesitantly jump out of the big truck, your eyes directly going to the crying people kneeled on the hard ground and you feel your heart break in half at the sight of them. They all look so terrified
and tired. Negan snaps you out of your contemplations when he grips your wrist tightly and drags you along with him, stopping right in front of the lineup of people.

He keeps you slightly behind him and puts on a big, quite terrifying, grin as he swigs Lucille around carelessly, Simon taking place right at the end of the line before looking up at Negan, waiting for him to say something.

“Well, ain't this a fuckin' predicament! You guys fucked up real bad, y'know that?” Negan crouches down, using Lucille to keep himself balanced. “I really thought you folks fuckin' understood when I said half your shit and no fucking less.” He lets out a dangerous snicker and gets back up as you stand back and watch the scene unfold in front of you.

“N-Negan we… we don't have a-anything l-left we re-really tried-” God, these people are so fucking terrified, you can feel your bottom lip wobble at the distress in the stranger’s voice.

“And you fucking failed my friend!” Negan cuts him off, pointing Lucille right at the poor, crying man's face as he does.

You stiffen when he slowly turns around to look straight at you and gestures for you to come over to him with his head but you're completely frozen in place. You see him tilt his head and are quick to comply when you can clearly see that his eyes are way darker than they usually are, and it scares the life out of you.

He grabs your left forearm and wanks you right in front of him and you whimper when the force of his movement pulls on your stitches, but the sound doesn't seem to reach him, that or he doesn’t fucking care, as he puts his right arm around your waist to firmly keep you in place, your back flush with his chest.

“Ain't she the prettiest thing you've ever laid your goddamn eyes on?” Negan smiles and tilts his head slightly to look at you. “Guess what? She's mine, all fucking mine. She's my new favorite li’l toy but, well,” his chest vibrates with a low chuckle, “she's a disobedient one, y'know. She just can't fucking help it. Always talking back and misbehavin'... So, today? I had an amazing idea, like, the best idea ever, y'know? And I figured; why not punish them both at the same fucking time! Y'know, kill two birds with one stone n’all that crap.” Negan slowly lets go of you then and forces you to look at him.

“Isn't daddy just the most fucking creative sonuvabitch, baby girl?” He grins and kisses your forehead. For the first time, you feel like throwing up at the gesture. It's not a sweet kiss, no; it's filled with venom and bad intentions and the fact that he's just referred to you as a toy makes it humiliating to boot.

Lucille appears right in front of your face, making you jump slightly, and your breath catches in your throat as it tightens. “Now, be a good girl and hold that for me, yeah?” Negan demands, handing you the bat, and you take it with a heavily shaking hand.

“Wh-” You’re about to question his attentions when he cuts you off. “Pick one and bash his fucking head in for me, baby girl. Hell, you can even pick a chick if you wanna.”

no. fucking. way.
You screw your eyes shut tight as a tear escapes you and your body starts to shake. You can feel everyone's eyes on you, including the ones belonging to the people kneeling down next to you.

“I… I ca-can't,” you choke out. Your legs are shaking so vigorously it’s a miracle you haven’t crumbled yet.

You flinch when you feel Negan's hands gripping your shoulders and re-positioning you just for you to find yourself facing the lineup of people when your eyes open, a gut-wrenching sob coming out of your mouth.

“I know there's a lot of bad things goin’ on in that pretty head of yours. Let it the fuck out,” he whispers in your ear but speaks loudly enough for everyone to hear him loud and clear.

You repeatedly shake your head left and right, closing your eyes again as you itch to cover your ears, curl up until a tight ball and cry until you eventually pass out. You want the ground to swallow you.

You’re shaking from head to toe and tears are still coming through your closed lids. “Boss…” Simon starts, the sight of you so distressed disturbing even to him.

“Pick one, now,” Negan orders, his voice hard in your ear. “Fucking do it or I'll get one of the guys to kill them one by one until you decide to fucking execute my goddamn order, y/n,” he threatens through gritted teeth and you feel like you're about to collapse.

“Hey, it's- it's okay, kid. Y-You do what you gotta d-do,” the man kneeling right at your feet says with a shaky smile and the cry you let out sounds like a scream.

“Negan, c’mon-” You vaguely hear Randall through your cries and don’t see him getting held back when he tries to step-in.

“Go on, might as well pick me, I… I don't have anyone waiting for me back home, I… I've only been part of this group for three weeks,” the stranger explains.

None of them deserves to die, especially not like that. Slaughtered by a bat, that's no way to go. But you have a choice to make; either kill this one innocent, terrified man right now, or wait until Negan starts asking his men to go on a killing spree just for you be forced to kill someone anyway, the only difference is that there won't only be one victim then.

“Three, two,” Negan counts behind you and you push your back against his chest with a whimper.

“No, no, no! I-I'll d-do it,” you cut him off in his countdown. He can feel you shake against him and brings a hand around and down on your stomach. “Yea you will, and you're gonna breathe for me before you do, darlin’,” he instructs like you're even capable of processing what’s being said to you right now.
You weakly lift Negan's bat up, the weapon shaking in your hold, and sadly look down at the man in front of you as he gives you a small nod with a watery smile. “It's okay. I forgive you,” he whispers to you and you start hiccuping, your belly jumping every time you try to breathe.

“Easy, y/n. Breathe.” You know Negan is speaking to you but none of it makes sense through the buzzing in your ears.

“I... I'm s-so-sorry,” you choke out, your eyes still shut tight when you swing the barbed-wire covered part of Lucille right against the poor man’s left temple, not killing him but inducing severe damages. You can hear people cry next to him. You're making them cry. You're killing somebody.

You bring the bat down again and again, repeating that you're sorry until, finally, after five more swings, it all stops.

You open your eyes and drop Lucille to the ground like you've been burned when you look down with aching eyes at what you've just done, tears still falling and sobs continuously coming out of your mouth. Your shaking body finally gives out and you let yourself fall to your knees on the hard ground, putting your forehead in the dirt and blood covered ground, coughing as you breathe dust in.

You're not sure what’s happening around you, you hear the buzzing noise of a camera next to you and Negan's voice barking out orders left and right, one of them being for Simon to bring these people back to their camp. You hear trucks driving away but pay no mind to it all, you just keep your head in the dirt and keep on whispering “sorry” over and over like a broken record.

“Stop it, baby girl,” Negan says as he carefully picks you up off the ground and you don't even try to put up a fight. You're in shock, terrified like you haven’t been in a long time. “Y’know why this shit happened?” You absently nod your head and let out a sob into the crook of his neck, soaking his red scarf.

“Why?” “B-Because I m-mis-misbehaved.”

“S'right. You're gonna do it again or you're actually gonna start listening?” “I-I'll l-listen. I'll listen!” You manage to choke out.


You feel your legs gripping his waist tighter and push your arms further into your chest as they're stuck between your and Negan's body. You're looking for safety somewhere in his arms, but you can't find it. You just can't. Not after what’s just occurred. You're petrified.

“C'mon, let's go home, doll.” Negan carries you in his arms on the way to his truck but stops in his tracks when he feels you furiously shaking your head in the crook of his neck.


Your reaction is immediate; your legs tighten around his waist and your hands cling to his jacket as
you keep on crying in his scarf. “Good girl.”

3:15 PM //

Your feet shakily touch the concrete ground of the compound and you close the door of Negan's truck, wrapping yourself up into your own arms, feeling vulnerable as you feel Faith's eyes on you. She was heading towards you to greet you after she opened the gate for the trucks to come in but stopped in her tracks when she's spot blood covering your face, your eyes filled with tears and she can tell that you're completely broken.

Negan is right behind you as you walk into the compound but you're abruptly stopped when his hand harshly grabs your wrist from behind, forcing you to turn around to look at him and your eyes widen when you spot the small note you'd written this morning when you were planning to run off in his hand. You shyly try to snatch it from him, but he only has to lift his arm up for his hand to be out of your reach.

“You were about to fucking run away from me again, huh?” He states more than he asks, and you whimper against the painful hold he has on your wrist. “N-No-”

“Oh, so you just like to write fucking random goodbye notes?!” He snaps at you and you flinch at the sudden boom of his voice. “I… I w-was uh-upset-”

“That ain’t my fuckin' problem, girly,” he rudely cuts you off, his jaw so tight it's a miracle his teeth aren’t breaking under the pressure.

You whimper when Negan harshly tugs at your wrist and drags you to God-knows-where in front of everyone, no one coming to help you. You end up going down a very dark staircase and almost fall once or twice because of Negan's pace but manage to stay standing behind him as he drags you along.

When you finally get off the never ending stairs, you come face to face with what looks like three awfully dark cells and you start to cry again when you realize why you're here. “P-Please don’t… d-don't lo-lock me in here,” you beg, pulling at Negan's hand on your wrist, memories of your mother punishing you the exact same way, which ended up making you claustrophobic, clawing their way back to the surface.

“You gotta learn, baby girl. You can't run away from me, it's completely out of the fucking question,” he says with a somewhat gentle voice but all it does is make your breathing even more frantic.

god. just fucking pass out already.
Negan hardly ignores your heart-wrenching cries and puts you in your cell before locking the door as you curl yourself up into a small ball in one of the corners of the tiny, cold, dark room, crying in your knees, your body shaking with terror and your heartbeat quickly getting out of hand.

*why do you always have to piss people off, you stupid bitch.*

Unconsciously, you start gently rocking yourself, squeezing your eyes shut and covering your ears tight, your bad thoughts quickly winning over the good ones. Nothing about today is good; nothing at all. The only thing keeping you a little grounded is the smell of Randall on the hoodie you’re wearing.

*yeah, you can also smell the blood of the poor innocent man you’ve killed today…*

Without even realizing it, you start to shakily hum Led Zeppelin’s “Gallows Pole”, the soft tune echoing throughout the empty cell.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

5:45 PM //

The mess in Negan’s apartments is indescribable; bookshelves are laying on the ground, chairs turned upside down, there’re books everywhere and he’s completely out of breath, his knuckles white around Lucille.

He's full of things that he can't explain or even put words on, all he knows is that you're the reason for them.

He knows that he fucked up again and it pisses him off. He doesn't understand his own behavior and he came to realize that even is formal wife, Lucille, wouldn't have had half as much patience as you do with him.

He never was poisonous with her like he is with you and he doesn't understand why the fuck he’s treating you that way. He’s just so fucking terrified, it’s easier to be an asshole about it apparently. Except it’s not, because he fucking regrets it every single time. Fuck. He can’t shake the look on your face and the sound of your cries when he made you kill that guy.

He hates having you far from him, he hates not having you in his within his reach, he hates not being able to touch you; he just hates not having you around and he hates that he feels this way. He's so caught up in his thoughts and his anger that he doesn't even realize that Faith has walked
into the room until he hears her clearing her throat. “What the hell are you-”

“How many times do you think she's actually gonna take your shit, huh?” She asks, completely ignoring him. “You keep on fucking her up when, clearly, all she wants is to catch a fucking break from all the shit she's been put through. You need to stop playing games, Negan, 'cause you're hurting the li’l one and I'm done with it.” The two Saviors look at one another with narrowed eyes.

“Don't you think she's had enough shit happen to her already? She deserves to be able to heal but the poor thing can't catch a fucking break and you always fucking make sure of that, huh?”

“What she fucking needs is a fucking roof above her fucking head, food in your goddamn stomach and a fucking comfortable bed to fucking sleep in instead of behind out there risking her fucking life like a dumbass!”

“You're a grown-ass man, Negan. Do better!” Faith shouts back, squaring her shoulders, clearly not fearful of her boss’ wrath.

“Faith-” Negan starts, his jaw clenched but she cuts him off again. “You really think that having a bunch of whores around is cool? Every men's wet dream, huh?” Faith scoffs, unimpressed. “It's misogynist as shit, you're an asshole, get over your fucking self already. Oh, but, lemme guess, Negan doesn't give a fuck about what other people think of him, right? Nah, he's too fucking cool and important for that. But what about her, huh?” Faith can see Negan’s jaw ripple at the mention of you.

“Do you actually not give a single shit what she thinks of you? About how much she's hurting over this?” She looks at her old friend, her eyes softening as she lets out a small sigh of exhaustion. “You know I fucking care about your stupid ass, so, please, make it right, Negan. I know you're not the big bad wolf you're always playing nowadays. I get it, you have legit reasons to act the way you do, but with her? C’mon, man, the girl just wants to feel safe.” Faith slowly turns to leave.

“Just fucking apologize and clean up your mess, Negan, and if you can’t do that, then leave her the fuck alone. You're afraid to lose your pride and power around the fucking place if you actually show the li’l baby that you care for her? Yeah, fucking up is what you're doing alright. Y/n doesn't need you to pamper her, she doesn't want to take advantage of you or your status and, goddamn it, she takes a lot of shit from you. She’s known you for what? A week now?” Negan quietly nods.

“Yeah. She doesn’t owe you shit, man. Just remember that,” Faith quietly says before walking away with a deep sigh.

She pieced two and two together when she saw the blood on your face, the complete emptiness in your usually bright eyes and Lucille baked in blood and pieces of flesh but she didn't want to believe it, she couldn't imagine Negan doing this to you. Dwight confirmed it with a shaking voice, clearly shocked by what had happen.

She hasn't seen you ever since you got out of Negan's truck and she's getting seriously worried about you.
Leaving Negan’s quarters, Faith immediately pulls out a cigarette once the door leading outside closes behind her, lighting the stick up and taking a long drag out of it. “Y’know he's gonna blow a fuse if he catches you smoking on his doorstep, right?” Simon reminds her with a small smile.

“Why d’you let him do that?” She asks, ignoring his warning. “Didn't have a fucking choice, y'know that,” he answers, clearly getting what Faith is referring to.

“Like hell you didn't-” she stops and lets out a sigh. “Sorry I just- I fucking care about that girl, you know?”


He takes a long drag and passes the nicotine stick back to her. “She's in one of the cells down in the basement- I can't fucking stand being in there for a goddamn second she just... she's crying her li’l heart out in there.”

Faith’s eyes widen at that. “Wait... What? She’s where now? Simon, she's fucking claustrophobic! What the fuck?! Who the fuck put her in th-” She’s cut off by the heavy door behind them opening, Negan appearing quickly after, looking at the two Saviors with a quirked up eyebrow.

“Don't fucking smoke on my goddamn doorstep for fuck's sake, how hard is that,” he complains, and Faith is about to tear him a new one, but he doesn't give her the time to do so. “Go get her out of there,” he demands her and grabs her cigarette to take a drag out of it before crushing it on the steel landing of the staircase.

“And stop smokin’ here.”

Faith quickly runs down the staircase and through the compound, pushing people out of her way to rapidly get to you. She gets down to the cells in record time and immediately goes to unlock the door keeping you locked up in that tiny cell. She swears that she can feel her heart drop when she sees you crying and shaking like she's never seen anyone shake before, completely curled up in the far left corner of the dark cell.

“Fuck- Y/n, honey, c'mere,” she whispers as she walks up to you and carefully grabs your shaking body to wrap you up in her arms, trying hard to calm you down but, wherever your mind is right now; it’s far from here.

“C'mon sweetie, talk to me,” she pleads with you, worried about your silence.

Faith has had the time to bring you all the way back to your bedroom and you still haven't made a beep, even your cries are completely silent, the only way she knows that they're still here is because they're rocking your body in her arms.

With a sigh, she places you down on your mattress and you finally come to life only to hastily bring your legs up to your chest and hide your face in them.
“Hey, it's okay. It's okay, y/n, you're safe. I promise.” You quickly shake your head at her words, refusing to believe that you're safe anywhere near Negan anymore, not after today.

Fuck, you hate yourself for wishing he was here right now. Despise what he’s done to you today, you want him here telling you that it'll be okay, you want him taking you in his arms and telling you that you did well today even though it was hard.

You slowly look up at Faith with tears-filled, red-rimmed, puffy eyes and wait for her to say something because you don't trust yourself to talk right now.

“You want some alone time?” She asks, her voice low and gentle as she carefully examines your face. Your face is covered in dried blood and tear-streaks, your nose running, your cheeks darkened, and your eyes exhausted.

You nod your head, and she gets up off the bed with a little smile before walking out of your room without a word, she wouldn't know what to say to you anyway.

Looking down at your shaking hands, the noises the bat made as it bashed that poor man's head in are filling your ears. You can't stop thinking about it, you've killed before, but never like that. Ever. You've never killed someone who didn't cause you any harm.

it wasn't your fault; you did the right thing. they'd all be dead if you hadn't done it.

“I need a shower,” you whisper to yourself before getting off your bed and dragging yourself into the showers to wash away the blood that has dried on your skin before heading back to your bedroom, ignoring Randall when you see him standing right in front of his room to directly go back into yours and change into the silky baby-pink set Negan got you when you first came to the Sanctuary.

You immediately crash into your bed afterwards even though it's still really early. You're done with today; you want it to go away and forget. Hopefully, tomorrow will be a small bit better, can't be worse that's for sure, and that's all that matters, really.
18th January ;

2:16 AM //

You've been in this damn shower for almost an hour now, crying your heart out as blood keeps on dripping out of your re-wounded left forearm even though you tried to make it stop. You've left it underneath the shower-head and let water wash your cuts but, even though the warmth of the water actually soothed the painful throbbing going through your limb, it didn't really help with the bleeding.

So now, here you are, your arm covered in blood which is now also all over the white cubicle. Your eyes are puffy, your body shaking from exhaustion, your head throbbing with a mean migraine and your jaw is snapping uncontrollably. You're curled up against the wall of the small cabin as you let the water hit you, soaking your pajamas in the process.

You feel asleep rather quickly when you went to bed but, much to your dismay, you've been woken up at one in the morning by a mean bitch called panic attack. You ended up hurting yourself again and freaked out when you realized that you'd once again broke your stitches and re-opened the wounds below so you ran to the showers, holding your wounded arm tightly against your chest whilst keeping yourself from sobbing not to wake anyone up in the dorms.

Now, here you are; sitting down, your legs against your chest, right underneath the running spray of water as you wait for your mind to stop racing, you wait for the cries of the small group you came across yesterday to stop echoing in your head, you wait for the face of the innocent man you've been forced to kill to fade away from your mind. At this point, it just feels like you're waiting for your sanity to come back to you.

You slowly get up from the shower's floor and turn the water off before walking out of the cabin, your hair soaked and dripping all over the place just like your pretty baby-pink pajama set. Blood is flowing out of your forearm to land on the cold, tiled floor beneath your bare feet.

The smell of blood is so strong that you can literally taste it and it’s like there's a bunch of pennies melting on your tongue, but you can't bring yourself to care.

You make your way out of the common shower room and absently walk down the long corridor leading from the dorms and end up in a large hall which leads to either the cafeteria and the kitchen or to the open area of the compound which leads to the outside and you really feel like having a refill of fresh air right now.
If anyone was to stumble upon you, you're a hundred percent sure that they'll freak the hell out and try to kill you because you look like you've just came back from the dead. You’re quaking, blood seeping out of your wounds, and your bare feet are leaving wet prints behind you as you absently cross the huge opened doors separating the “living” area to the rest of the compound.

It looks so big now that everyone is asleep in their bedroom and not running around the place. You look around, spot a few chains hanging from the ceiling, a small room that looks like it used to be a small office but is now filled with working material and some menacing looking tools, you also notice a mean looking old iron resting on what seems to be a grill from a barbecue gone wrong.

You walk right in the middle of the huge space and feel lost, you wonder what the hell you're doing here and if you'll ever be able to get back to your old life, the life that you’d somehow put together for yourself, the life that somehow made you happy in its very own ways.

You let out a small sigh and slightly turn your head to spot a giant staircase, right next to the small office, which leads to a big deck above but, as you're about to get close to it to satisfy your curiosity, something else catches your attention. There's a wall practically covered in what seems to be polaroid pictures and you decide to check it out. You immediately regret your decision when you finally get in front of it.

You were right, these are pictures, but not just simple pictures. No, those are pictures of Negan's victims; it's a real horror show.

Negan's people have to work in this particular space for hours and hours on end every single day with those pictures hanging around. What's the point? Is he trying to remind them what happens to those who dare step out of line? You feel sick, and it's not only because of the blood you're losing, when a really particular picture catches your attention.

You can feel the hair on your arms and at the nape of your neck rise as goosebumps bloom all over your skin when you realize who's on this specific photo.

The innocent man you've killed yesterday is on that picture, his headless corpse is on that picture, Lucille right beside him, right where you'd dropped her before falling to your knees.

You've seen a lot of messed up shit in your days, you've done a lot of things that you didn't want to do but had to... Being forced to kill though? Having to kill an innocent man? Having to kill an innocent man that's literally forcing a smile, accepting his death to spare the group that took him in and telling you that it's okay? That he forgives you? You don’t know how you’re supposed to handle that.

His words keep coming back to you, the noises the bat was making as it was bashing his skull into a pulp and the sobs of the rest of the survivors kneeling beside him as they were forced to watch their comrade die in such an awful way are repeating over and over in your head like a damn
broken record and you guess that's your punishment.

Does Negan ever feel that way? Or does it get easier? God, you don't want to know. You don't want this be become who you are, what you do. You don't want this to become normal and easy. There's something bubbling inside you, a silent scream stuck in your throat and the sting of phantom tears in your eyes yet there's nothing there. Not a word, not a tear; nothing at all. You're completely silent in your fall.

You take the picture off the wall with a shaky hand and slowly sit down on the cold, hard ground, your bare thighs burning because of the cold and hurting because of the rough concrete below as you sit there, legs crossed, looking down at the photo of the man you've killed, the small picture shaking in your hands.

“I'm so sorry,” you slowly whisper over and over again, your eyes stinging with tears. “I… I wish— I just… I'm so, so sorry.”

You slap a hand on your mouth just in time to conceal a sob and tighten your grip on the picture as you screw your eyes shut, desperate to get a single second of calm but your head won’t let up, it just keeps on replaying the scene in your mind and it's like it's happening right in front of you all over again. You can't escape it even with closed eyes.

You let a few minutes pass, get back up and head back to your bedroom to try and get some more sleep, the small photo still in your shaking hand.

You're completely drained, between your emotions being all over the place and the blood still oozing out of your forearm, it feels like no amount of sleep will ever be able to fix you at this point, but you need to shut your mind up and you can only achieve that when you're sleeping.

Crawling back under thick blankets, you put the polaroid underneath your pillow and rest your head on it, sighing deeply as you try to take comfort in the fact that your bad thoughts can't reach you the same way in your sleep. Your heartbeat gently slows down and the bleeding on your arm slowly but surely comes to a stop as you start to fall into a deep and well deserved sleep.

9:13 AM //

Your eyes slowly flutter open and a small groan of protest slips past your slightly parted lips as you clumsily turn on your back on the mattress, letting out a wince of discomfort when you feel the pull where the blood on your forearm has dried against the white mattress cover which ended up making your wounds stick to the thin cotton.

You carefully peel your arm away from the soft fabric, hoping that your wounds won’t start bleeding again as you manage to gently pry your forearm off. You take a look at the cuts and let a sigh of relief when you see that they didn't re-open, they're extremely swollen and red but you're used to that, so you don't worry about it. What you do worry about though is the blood covering the spot your arm was resting all night on.
“Things just don't get any easier, do they?” You quietly observe with a heavy sigh following right after.

You look down at your watch and your eyes almost pop out of their sockets when you see that it's a quarter past nine. Why didn't Simon wake you up?

You gather the small amount of energy you have left in you to get out of the comfortable, warm bed and get dressed. Mismatched underwear on, you grab a simple white t-shirt and throw a red and black flannel on top of it, making sure that your forearms are covered, before slipping into Randall's black, ripped jeans and finish with a pair of plain black socks and your black combat boots.

You messily gather your hair on top of your head and put them into a bun all whilst walking out of your room. You close the bedroom door and directly head out to the yard, not even bothering to go and try to have breakfast since your stomach seems to be stuck into a huge knot anyway.

“Look who's finally awake,” Simon greets you with grin the second you step outside. “How d'you sleep, pumpkin?” he asks, walking up to you.

“Hi, Simon,” you give him a shy smile. “I uh… Well, y'know, I guess I slept as good as a-anyone does these days,” you tell him, nervously pulling on your fingers, giving your anxiety away.

“Smart answer,” he chuckles and leans against the wall in front of you, blocking your way. “Hey look, we're having a little supply run this afternoon, care to join?”

You visibly tense at the invitation, your breath itching in your throat. “We-Well, I mean-” You start to panic, worried that it'll be the same kind of “supply run” as yesterday and Simon takes notice of it.

“Hey, relax, pumpkin, it's a simple supply run at an old factory three hours from here, nothin’ less,” he trails off and gently grabs your chin making you flinch at the contact, “nothin’ more. I promise you that.” You look at him for a few and silently nod when you don’t find anything vile in his eyes.

“O-Okay. Y-Yes, I'll be happy t-to tag along if that's o-okay with N-Negan.”

“You hear the aforementioned man's voice behind Simon, and he doesn't seem surprised by his boss' presence at all but that’s all you can focus on now; that he's right there, that he freaking heard you which means that he wasn't even that far from you to begin with.

Never has Negan's mere presence scare you like it did just now. You never truly feared him; you've always been more afraid of the fact that he's a man rather than the fact that he's Negan. But now? After what happened yesterday? After what you had to do last night to make it all go away?

You can't see him the same way you used to, and you don't even know what that was to begin
FLASHBACK // TWO YEARS BEFORE THE OUTBREAK:

Tuesday, 5th February 2008:

Once again, you're walking home with fresh bruises and wounds covering your upper body and legs, your backpack getting dragged along on the sidewalk as your heavy feet lead you back home.

Home. You hate that word. Probably because you never found yours. A lot of people seem to think that a house makes a home, but it doesn't. You see home as more of a feeling. It can be a person or a place, Hell, it can ever be a song or a book. Home can be a lot of things, but four walls and a roof are not what makes a home.

You stop in your steps when you hear loud sirens going off in your neighborhood.

Of course it’s in front of your house, of fucking course...

There's a bunch of police cars and an ambulance parked right in front of your house, the front door is wide open and there're people running in and out of the place. You don't even bother to try and find out what's going on, you just drop the handle of your backpack and sit down in the grass right next to the sidewalk as you look-on.

It's not the first time something like this happens, your mother gets a little too drunk sometimes and the neighbors have to call an ambulance to come and take care of her or she'd get dosed up on some really strong drugs and start to do some stupid shit, angering the neighbors until they end up calling the police. You really wonder why no one ever took you away from her at this point.

It's odd though, there normally isn't that many people when your mother needs to be dealt with.

“Alright, careful now,” you hear a man instruct and quickly get up to take a look at what's going on, your legs turning to jelly when you spot two men carrying a gurney, a thick, black sheet covering the body lying on it.

A single tear escapes you and you quickly wipe it away, refusing to let another one out. Your legs start to shake and your mouth opens, feeling the urge to scream, but nothing comes out, only a quiet whimper.
A bunch of cops come out of your house as you're still completely unnoticed and you're not sure if you want to stick around to find out what happened, hell; you already know what happened, you just don't want to know how it happened.

So, just like that; you disappear. You run off, leaving your backpack on the grass, a small trace that you were there, that you know.

If feels like you've barely had time to blink when you're jumping off the bus you don't even remember climbing on, not even saying goodbye and thank you to the friendly driver you've come to know over the years, his name is Shawn, and then woody air is filling your lungs as you run through the small forest on an all too familiar dirt-road.

You almost stumble when you hastily climb up the three small steps leading up to your personal sanctuary, frantically knocking on the wooden door, your eyes completely drowning in your tears which you strictly refuse to let go of and it hurts so fucking bad. You want to cry but you're scared.

"Damn, hold the fuck on!" You hear a rough but comfortably familiar voice bark on the other side of the door and it barely cracks open when you run into him and hold him tightly against you, making him flinch at the sudden display of affection.

"She's gone," you whisper into the man's waist, burying your face in it to keep your tears at bay. "I'm sorry, munchkin," his voice has drastically changed and it's now back to its softer tone. He wraps his arms around your small, shaking frame and pulls you inside the house.

The house smells of weed, alcohol, sweat and leather and something else, something sweet that seems so out of place yet fits perfectly in. You always thought that specific smell was Daryl's because, like Merle says, getting a blast teasing his little brother; Daryl has always been the sweet one.

The youngest of the Dixons gently sits you down on the couch and takes a seat next to you, not sure of what to say to you or what to do and you can't really blame him for that. He and his brother have been with you when you've lost your dad, they were there when you came crying after Luna got diagnosed with her leukemia and they were there when you'd come running to them after "something bad" had happened back home with one of "mommy's new boyfriend" but this... this is different.

Your mom has been consumed by her grief and turned her anger on you. Again, both brother know the feeling. Will, their father, has never been the greatest role-model and Merle still sometimes shows hatred the man has ingrained in him. Now isn't the time to say it, and he probably never will, but Daryl is relieved to know her gone for good. The brothers have known you ever since you were a tiny baby girl shoving her chubby feet in her toothless mouth and they've watched you grow, they've protected you and now they're finally going to be able to help you build yourself up without your demon of a mother coming to fuck it all up.

"Where's Merle?" You ask barely above a whisper. "He and the old man got at each other's throat again so he went huntin' and dad probably left for Vegas or some shit, he'll probably come back
beat up and drunk off of his ass in two or three days,” Daryl shrugs with a chuckle but you know it's the same kind of laugh you let out when you feel upset or nervous.

You know about Will’s abusive but there isn't a damn thing you can do about it, hell, you don't really need to anyway. Sadly, both Merle and Daryl grew up with his violent outbursts, they're both used to him throwing punches and, as they grew older, they started throwing them back. The boys have lost their mother pretty damn young as well and Daryl was left alone to deal with that, just like you are now.

“Alright,” you sniffle and push yourself off the couch, extending your hand out to Daryl, “you have to finish teaching me how to shoot a crossbow, Dixon,” you remind him with a small smile, knowing that you both need the distraction.

With a tilt of his head, he takes your hand in his ridiculously bigger one and gets up, grabs his leather jacket, Merle's motorcycle keys and leads you through the kitchen then through the back door before hopping on the bike, patting the space behind him for you to climb on.

“Thank you, Daryl,” you whisper, resting your head on his right shoulder. “I didn’t to nothin’,” he points out.

“You’re here,” you counter, “s’all I need.” “I always gonna be here,” he reminds you and your small arms tighten on each side of him. “Happy birthday by the way... Sorry you-” You give his waist a small squeeze to silently tell him that it’s okay and he turns around to briefly look at you before turning back to start the engine.

You close your eyes as he drives up to the small dirt road next to the house that leads to the small training ground he’s improvised to teach you how to shoot. You feel lucky to have Merle and Daryl in your life; they never judge you, they know exactly what you feel, you don't need to explain them because, somehow, they always seem to know.

To anyone else, it would have been weird as all hell not to see you shed a single tear when your mother just died, it would have been weird to see you act like it's just another Tuesday, to still have the energy to ask such a thing as getting trained to shoot a damn crossbow and, hell, you'd be lying if you were to say that it doesn't scare, hurt and worry you a little too, but it's not like that to Daryl just like it wouldn't be to Merle because they know. This isn't who you are, it's how you've been taught through violence and threat to behave and function. Sadly, those things don't just disappear with the people who’s installed them in you.

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Wednesday, 18th January 2017 ;
You're brought back to the present when you hear a door click shut behind you and slowly realize that you've somehow walked back inside your bedroom. You feel light-headed with the sudden change of scenery and squint against the feeling.

“You're back with me, doll?” You hear Negan's voice behind you and flinch, quickly turning around and nodding just as quickly to let him know that he has your attention.

“Where the hell d'you go just now, huh?” He curiously asks. “I… I just… I just g-got lost. S-Sorry, sir,” you whisper, still trying to get a grip on your surroundings.

He sighs, leaning against your dresser before nodding towards the bed for you to sit down on. You wearily walk to it and sit on the middle of the mattress, your legs crossed and your hands pulling at the hem of your flannel’s sleeves.

“Roll up your sleeves, baby,” he orders, not ask, and a single tear escapes you when you realize that he somehow knows what lays beneath the soft cotton.

You shyly shake your head and curl yourself up, bringing your legs up to your chest to hide your face away in your thighs. “Now, y/n,” Negan insists, his voice not particularly harsh but the command makes you whimper all the same.

You sob into your jeans, your body shaking with it, and you desperately try to push your head further into your legs, but it just isn't physically possible anymore, at least not without breaking your nose.

You wish that he'll just walk away and leave you alone but, Negan being Negan, you know damn well that he's not going anywhere until he gets what he came to get so, since there's no hole appearing inside your mattress to swallow you up, you decide to face him and gently roll up your left sleeve before extending your arm out for him to see while you keep your head hidden away.

“Fuckin’…” You hear him move around but you're completely frozen, you don't even cover your arm back up. “I'm sick of this shit, y/n!” The sudden boom of his voice makes you jump.

yeah, me too, asshole. thanks for the concern though, appreciate it.

You look up, shaking like a leaf in high wind as tears keep on rolling down your tired face until you feel every single muscle in your body tense up when you spot your butterfly-knife in Negan's gloved hand. “Wh-” you start but quickly back down when he turns to look at you with something that you can't quite place shinning in his eyes. Something that isn’t anger.

“You,” he starts, looking down at the bloody knife in his hand, “are not getting that shit back until you're at least three fucking weeks clean, doll.”

what? hey, he can't fucking do that! it's not your fault, what the fuck?!
You're about to protest but realize that he's already left the room with your knife in hand and you're left there with your mouth hanging open.

You're not angry or, at least if you are, it must be buried deep under everything else because you don't feel it even though you know that you should. You want to tear this whole place down, want to watch it all burn, crush every last bit of it in the palm of your hands, but all you can really do is feel the awful pain you're in right now.

Anger makes you stupid, sadness numbs you and frustration blinds you; you fear what those three things combined together are going to do to you. You've never went through all of these emotions at the same damn time and now that you are, you can't help but feel vulnerable and scared.

You let out a small, watery sigh before getting off your bed and walking out of your bedroom to go and try to find something to keep yourself occupied for a few hours at the very least.

You can't take everything that's going on in your mind anymore, the migraine you've had last night still doesn't seem to wanna go away, it actually feels like it's getting more and more painful. You could cry just from the physical pain you're in and now, you also suffer because of your mental health which seems to be declining way too fast for you to feel comfortable with it.

For a short instant, you wonder what your life would have been like if you hadn't had left Daryl and Merle the night when everything went to shit to go and find Will. You wonder if they're even alive anymore, and the thought of either brother being hurt or, worse; dead, hurts you so deeply, it feels like you've just stabbed yourself right in the heart.

You can hear Simon yelling in the yard for the people going out on supply runs to gather around before he drags them here himself by the skin of their asses and his words would usually have made you chuckle, but not today. You're just seeing red today.

1:00 PM //

After three hours clinging to Connor's waist sat behind him on his bike, every vehicles behind and next to you come to a stop and you take a minute to look around before slowly getting off the motorcycle, stretching a bit when your feet go back on the ground, a small mewl-like noise coming out of your mouth as you do, making Connor chuckle.

“Are you making fun of me?” You cross your arms across your chest in mock offense and give a slight pout. “I wouldn't dare, darlin’,” he says with a boyish grin, and it actually makes you smile a little.

“Oddly enough, I don't believe you but, hey, whatever.” The green-eyed man laughs and brings you to his chest, kissing your forehead and winking down at you in a friendly manner. However, when he lets go of you, you can feel a pair of eyes burning holes into the back of your head and get the awful feeling that those may be Negan’s, so you don't turn around just yet. You can't bring yourself to.
“Alright, you sorry fucks! Time for some teamwork, yeah? The usual, three groups, one with Simon, one with Dwighty boy over here, and one with me. Y'all got that or do I have to fucking repeat?” A “yes” echoes among Negan’s people and you give a quiet nod.

Faith is standing right beside you and she gives you a small smile when you look up at her before taking your hand in hers and bringing you along over to Dwight. “Hey, you cool with y/n joining us today, D?” She asks, the two seeming pretty close.

“F’course not. You okay with that?” He directs the question at you, and you give him a small smile and a shy nod as an answer, but he takes it. He knows yesterday was hard on you.

You watch as Dwight walks up to Negan to talk to him, and quickly look down when Negan turns his head to stare at you whilst his man keeps on speaking to him. You've never felt so damn uncomfortable.

“Where d'you get that bow?” Connor curiously asks as he eyes the weapon in your hand. “I uh… I…” You frown, finding yourself unable to focus and form a goddamn sentence to save your life.

“Shit, sorry, didn't mean to make you uncomfortable. Just drop it, it's all good. M'sorry darlin’.” You can tell that he feels bad and you feel terrible for it. He hasn't done anything wrong, you're just not entirely here today it seems.


_daryl made that bow for you._

A few minutes later, every group has been assigned different tasks and yours' is to look around the five small houses the people working at the old factory used to live in.

_does negan even realize how much work that is? of course not._

You're way behind everyone else, lost in your thoughts when your mind should be the very last place for you to be in right now, but you can't help it and you don't really care either if you're being honest.

A groan brings bursts your bubble though and pulls you right back into the real world to be greeted by a walker which is missing its bottom jaw and an arm. It’s a man, well, at least it _used to be_. It’s really skinny and you wonder how long it's been since it's had its last meal.

It always upsets you whenever you come across walkers, you feel horrible knowing that they used to be simple people just like you, that some of them probably have a tone of history and have been reduced to walking, rotting corpses.

Still, you reach for you knife as an automatism and groan in frustration when you remember that Negan has it. Your frustration is quick to take over you and you end up bashing the poor dead
You feel like crying and screaming at the top of your lungs when you realize how you’ve handled that walker; its head is almost completely gone and all you can think about is how similar it is to what you’ve done yesterday.

“I hate him! God, I hate him, I hate him, I hate him!” You keep on shouting the same three words over and over again, smashing whatever has the misfortune of being within your reach straight to the floor and, by the time you’ve calm down, there's glass shattered all over the place, you're out of breath and your face is soaked in tears and sweat.

Sitting on top of a counter, you try to catch your breath as you let the last of your tears freely fall out of your eyes. You feel exhausted after that little meltdown, but you know that you'll have to hide that when you'll walk out of this house to get back with "your group".

You smile a little when you spot a full jar of Nutella standing right beside the sink of the kitchen and reach out to grab it before looking down at it. You know that you have to bring it back to Negan and it upsets you because, when you used to live by yourself, you didn't have to do that. Hell, you've never had to do that even in the time you’ve spend with other people. You would share your stuff with them, and you'd always do so happily, but this is different.

“Once, I ate a whole jar of this damn thing just to make a point about me not being allergic to hazelnuts. You better believe that your boy ended up in the hospital.” Randall’s voice makes you jump, too mesmerized by the damn chocolate paste to even realize he came in.

He walks towards you without mentioning anything about the mess the room is in or the corpse laying in the middle of it all, and looks through the drawers of the kitchen until he finally finds what he’s looking for. “Here, go ahead and dig in.” He hands you a silver spoon with a smile.

You shyly take the spoon from him but, just as you’re about to open the jar, you remember what happened yesterday; you remember just how cold, isolated and small the cell Negan threw you in was and your breath catches in your throat, your hands shaking at the thought of it happening again.

Opening the jar and eating out of it would be misbehaving and misbehaving gets you in the cell.

You quickly shake your head and shove the jar and the spoon in the small bag you've been given to collect things before silently jumping off of the counter to walk out of the house on shaking legs, tears rolling down your face which you're quick to wipe away, refusing to let anyone see just how awful you're feeling at the moment.

You walk back to the trucks where Simon and Negan seem to be having a chat and quickly drop your full bag off before trying to sneak away from them but you only get to take three full steps when Negan's hand gets a hold of you, stopping you dead in your tracks and you don't move a single inch.
You're shaking even more now, and he can feel it. Hell, he can fucking see it. "Relax, doll, I just want us to have a nice li'l talk. Think you can do that?" He asks right in your ear, sending shivers down your spine and creating an uncomfortable pressure down in your tummy.

You simply nod your head, feeling like you'll burst into tears if you open your mouth even for a small second, but he's not satisfied with your silence. He never is fucking satisfied with anything. "Use your big girl's words, y/n." You swallow loudly, making him smirk behind you.

You feel so damn small and vulnerable with him; it frustrates you to no point. "Y-Yes, I can d-do that," you somewhat manage. "See? Easy-peasy."

You nod and release a shaky breath when he finally gives you your personal space back, but stay tense due to the fact that his hand is still holding your left wrist and you can feel the pressure on the wound throbbing above.

Negan drags you along with him to God-knows-where in a relatively gentle way until you both end up at the very back of the old factory you're scavenging and he finally lets go of your wrist. Absently rubbing your wrist, you look around and see that there's nothing protecting you, you only have your bow, there's no fences or anything to keep you a small bit safe but it doesn't seem to bother Negan in the slightest.

"Why in the holy fuck did you take that damn picture, doll?" He rips through the silence, clearly referring to the polaroid you took off his wall of horror last night.

"How- Wha-" Neither your mouth nor your brain seems to be in the mood to co-operate with you at the moment, so you give up on words and shrug, nervously pulling on your fingers and completely avoiding eye contact.

"I went to take it down this morning, but it was already fucking gone." He gets closer to you and you quickly take a clumsy step back, a whimper leaving you. You're terrified and you're not so sure why anymore. "Hey, c'mon now, baby, we need to stop fuckin' around like that."

we? did he just said we? what!? we need to stop fucking around? is he fucking kidding?

"I don't need to do anything a-anymore, Negan," you find your voice again. "I've never played with you, never intended to, and I sure as hell have n-never even considered hurting you the way you did. Just… P-Please, just leave me alone."

He's about to speak when a bunch of walkers literally pop out of nowhere and they're on you in a matter of a second.

You dry your tears, take a deep breath and try to steady your grip on your bow but your vision is completely blurred by your tears and your body keeps shaking. You can barely hear Negan calling out to you through the buzzing in your ears but a very loud gunshot snaps you out of your panic and you turn around to see Negan glaring at you; he's pissed, and if there's one goddamn emotion this man can show and express you better believe that anger is fucking it.

"What in the holy fuck was that! Are you hur-" He gets interrupted once again by a walker that must have been roaming close enough to hear the gunshot and quickly found the source.
You completely freeze for a second as you watch Negan get pushed against a wall, creating a loud banging noise when his body makes contact with the steel covering the surface. Everything feels so unreal to you at this instant, all you can hear is the sound of the walker's snapping teeth and that's it.

Before you can even think, you find yourself picking Lucille off the ground where Negan dropped her when he took his gun out, run up behind the walker snapping its jaw at his face and, without even thinking about it, you swing the bloody bat right on the left side of the creature's rotten face, making it fall down and you keep swinging Lucille down on its head until the body goes completely limp but there's so much adrenaline running through your veins at the moment that you can't stop yourself from bringing that damn bat down over and over.

You feel Negan's hands gripping your waist tightly and lifting you completely off the ground much like he’s done before when he found you after the whole debacle with Jason, making you drop his bat. “Let go of me!” You protest, gripping his forearms and digging your fingertips in.

“It's all your fault, Negan! It's all your fault! You made me sick! I hate you!” You cry out, wiggling against him, trying to get away from him as all of your anger finally drips out of you much to your dismay.

He ends up having to pin against the wall he was stuck against a second ago, quickly grabbing your hands to hold them tightly together in one of his so you can swing at him and forces you to look at him with his free hand.

“Go ahead. Keep going,” he orders, carefully watching your expression and following a few tears as they roll down your face. “Go on. Tell me how much you fucking hate me, doll.”

“I don’t wanna play,” you tell him. “This ain’t a game,” he quickly assures you but that doesn’t seem to appease you at all.

“Let go of me, I don't want to talk to you!” You manage through your tears, trying to regain your composure but you just can't stop something that you don't have any control over. “It's all your fault! I… I… I was supposed to be happy, okay?! When do I g-get to be happy?” You ask, your voice dropping back to a whisper.

“Why don't you just let me have that one little thing! It hurts s-so bad, I hate you so much! I hate you, I hate your stupid face and I hate your attitude, I fucking hate what you do to me. I hate you, Negan!”

“What else?” You feel Negan’s forehead rest on yours and, when his breath hits your parted lips, you open your eyes to try and look at him but there's so many tears in them that it actually hurts to keep them open. “C'mon, don't you fucking dare hold out on me now. Empty your damn bag, that shit looks heavy as balls, baby cakes.”

is he getting a kick out of this or does he actually fucking care for once in his life? is that what's happening here?

You look down and shake your head, silently telling him that you're done with whatever game he’s playing. You're so tired; fighting with him is exhausting. But when Negan isn't satisfied with
something, he always turns it all around until he is.

Gently, he puts you back down on the ground but keeps you from going anywhere until he’s gotten to say what he has to say. “Y/n,” he grabs your chin and forces you to look at him. Your face is a mess; there’s hair sticking to your forehead, tears still rolling down your face, your nose is running, and your lips are all puffy.

“Let's say I let you go wonder outside on your own again so that you can go and do whatever the fuck it is you do when you're out here.” His words grab your attention and that stupid smirk of his appears when your eyes finally find his. “If I do, you'll have to come get your knife every time you're about to head out and you damn well know that it'll be in my bedroom for the next three weeks so you'll have to come and pay daddy a li’l visit-”

“So, basically, I don't get to go out anymore; that's what you're saying,” you interrupt him. “Don't cut me off, darlin’, I fucking hate that shit,” he scolds and gets even closer to you, completely crushing you between the wall behind you and his body.

“Now, I was saying; you come to me, politely ask for the damn knife and I'll give it to you if you at least had one meal that day.” “And you'll let me g-go out?”

“If you had your meal? Sure, baby.” “But how will you-” “I'll know 'cause I'm everywhere, doll. I always fucking know, you'd do good to remember that.”

With a little frown, you slowly nod your head, quietly telling him that you're okay with his terms and he smiles in return, pushing his forehead against yours. “Yeah?” Negan asks, smirk still in place. “Yeah? Yeah. I… I can d-do that.”

“F’course you can,” he tells you and, God, you hate how good it makes you feel to have him validate you like that.

Negan'd be lying if he said that he didn't want to kiss you breathless right now. He craves you, he feels like shit and he fucking needs you, but it's pretty damn clear to him that even the most innocent of kiss from him is not something you want right now. In fact, he's pretty damn sure that you're fucking terrified of him and he's right; you are, you can't help it.

However, you're really happy about the little deal you have with him now even though you know that it won’t be easy to have a meal a day, it's worth a shot if it means getting a small bit of your freedom back.

“Alright, doll. You okay to get back to work?” Negan asks, unsure as to where you stand. “Yes, I-I'm okay,” you assure him, your voice barely above a whisper, and shyly look up at him as he's towering over you.

“Good. That’s good.” He takes a step back and lets you walk away from him, hoping that you'll get the hell out of his sight before he says something he doesn't usually say, if ever, but he can't hold it in any longer. “Know, for what it's worth, I'm really fucking proud of you, baby girl.”

And that all it takes to put a smile on your face and set your cheeks on fire. You whisper a “thank you” and head back to the rest of the group as Negan finds himself feeling like a freaking whale
was just lifted off his shoulders. Okay, so, maybe he's starting to dig this whole “feelings” thing with you.

8:38 PM //

You've finally found the strength to get out of your warm shower and run back to your room where you quickly put the pajamas you've found earlier today on. It’s a pair of fuzzy, brown pants and a matching, just as fuzzy, brown fleece top and they're so comfortable and warm it almost makes you purr.

You're so worn out after everything, you're a mess and you feel more lost than ever, you hate the way you're feeling right now if you're being completely honest with yourself, so you’re seeking comfort in the little things such as your new brown bear suit/pajamas.

Ready and eager to get some sleep, you limply let yourself fall on your bed with a sigh but quickly sit back up when your back hits something hard on the mattress.

“What the-” You turn your head around and spot a huge jar filled with chocolate paste. “He did not.” You take it and inspect it to find a small note on to cap that reads “eat your troubles away and let a bellyache take the spotlight.” It's not signed but it doesn't need to be for you to know who it's from.

Tiredly, you slip into your slippers, grab the jar of Nutella and get out of your room just to go knock on the door right next to yours. Randall opens it with a shy smile on his face like he was hoping you'd come but wasn’t expecting it and you quickly get past him to walk into his room, letting him close the door behind you.

“Hey, are you-” “What were you thinking Randall?” You cut him off. “You could get in so much trouble for that!” Your hand holding on to the jar of chocolate paste flashes up. “You can't sneak things in and out for me. What the hell? I don't want you to get hurt again, Randall. Are you out of your freaking mind!?” You're in complete and utter panic over a damn jar of chocolate but you're way too concerned about your friend's safety to care right now.

“Y/n,” he tries to catch your attention, but you keep on mumbling incoherently to yourself. “Y/n!” You finally stop talking and look up at him with teary eyes. “Damn, sweetheart, I didn't steal anything, I promise. I bought it.”

Oh yeah, the famous point system Negan has told you so much about on your way to the Sanctuary the first time. Thing he’s never applied to you, you now come to realize. “You bought- You used your freaking points on me? Randall-”

“Yes. Yes, I have, and I was more than happy to, y/n. C'mon, just let me have this, please?” You let a small sigh of defeat as he gives you his damn, adorable puppy eyes and you end up hugging him tightly, whispering a “thank you” into his chest.

“You're welcome, pretty girl.” He gently pulls away from you, tells you to make yourself comfortable and walks to his opened supply chest where he fetches a bunch of things out before joining you on his bed.
You hesitantly grab a really pretty looking glass bottle from his nightstand and read the inscriptions on it; it's cherry liquor. "Can I have some? 's my favorite," you quietly ask, looking down at the bottle, afraid that you might have sounded greedy.

"'F'course you can, y/n. Go ahead. Take a swing," he invites you with a smile and looks back down to lit the candle in his hand before putting in on top of his nightstand as you take a big sip of the strong liquor.

You feel your throat burning and your stomach getting upset with you the moment the alcohol reaches it. You haven't eaten anything today and consuming alcohol on an empty stomach may not be the brightest idea.

"Here." Just like earlier that day, a silver spoon shows up right in front of your face as Randall waits for you to take it. "Dig in," he encourages with a smile and, albeit a tad bit wearily, you open the jar and dip the tip of the spoon in the thick paste before bringing it up to your mouth, smiling when the chocolate hits your tongue.

You can't even recall the last time you've had chocolate and it almost has you feeling nostalgic. "Good?" You hear Randall chuckle and open your eyes, not aware of when you've closed them, a blush on your face when you make eye contact with him.

"Yeah," you quietly admit with a bashful laugh. "Thank you."

You two stay sat on his bed, legs crossed, passing the liquor to one another whilst you get to know each other a little better. So far, you've gathered that he's twenty-four, he used to be a tattoo artist and was engaged to someone before the world went to shit. Nothing too deeply personal.

At this point, you've been talking for three hours straight, it's almost midnight but you're not willing to go to bed. Truth be told, it's more that you don't want to be alone tonight and you love having Randall around, he makes you feel safe. He's good company. "Okay, okay, my turn, right?"

"Sadly," you tease. "Aw, c'mon, I'm not that bad," Randall flashes you a wink. "So, uh... Favorite villain?" He asks with a grin.

"Easy. Harley Quinn," you answer with a shrug. "Why?" "Hey, you only get one question mister, s' my turn," you point out and he chuckles, putting his hands up in surrender.

You take a minute to think of something to ask him without getting too personal. "Okay, I got one; grossest thing you've ever eaten." The man grimaces and narrows his eyes at you. "I had to fucking eat worms once and a raccoon another, just thinking about it kinda makes me wanna puke so, let's leave it there, yeah?"

"Worms? Why would you eat those?" "I didn't have a choice, believe it or not," he recalls with a chuckle. "The glamorous post-apocalypse life, huh?" You joke, your tone light but still somewhat weighted by the reality your words hold.
“You’re tellin’ me,” Randall mumbles before limply flopping down on his mattress, crossing his arms under his head. “Okay, my turn,” he puts the game back on tracks. “Why Harley Quinn?” Of course he wouldn’t let it go.

“Well,” you let out a small sigh, “everyone thinks that she only has a purpose as the Joker’s girlfriend but… but I feel like… like there’s more to her. She’s not… someone’s plaything. She has her- her own characteristics, y’know? And... And I like that she’s still human, regardless of her sickness.”

You shyly look up at Randall which is now propped up on his elbows to look at you and let out a nervous laugh. “I know it’s dumb-” “No, it’s not,” he cuts you off. “I really your take on it, actually.”

“Hey, you ever heard of ink-less tattoos?” Randall asks, not giving you the time to feel awkward about your little confession. “N-No, what’s that?” You ask with a frown. “It’s the same basic concept as a tattoo, the only thing that changes is that, you’re not actually tattooed with a gun and ink, you just use the tip of a needle, heat it and draw your tattoo with the heated steel, it's basically just the burn without the ink. The scar tissue is what makes it.”

“Can I have one?” You perk up, your curiosity tickled. “It hurts, sweetheart,” he warns you.

“Randall, I’ve been shot, stabbed and beat to crap, believe me; my tolerance to pain is pretty high.” You watch him carefully consider you for a moment before he straightens up on the mattress with a sigh and leans towards you to leaves a quick kiss on your forehead, whispering a quiet “okay” against your skin.

Randall gets off the bed and looks through his nightstand, fetching a clean, sealed needle, that you assume he used to tattoo people with, before coming back to you. He settles against the headboard of the bed, patting the space between his parted legs so you crawl between his thighs and he gently pushes your upper body against his chest, silently telling you to relax and it’s almost scary how easy it is to do so.

“Alright, what do you want and where, miss?” He asks with a smile, resting his chin on your left shoulder. “How about… How about a- a rose? On the right side of- of my left thumb?” You hear him hum behind you.

“Sounds good,” he notes before kissing your temple and you feel him move around behind you. “If it hurts too much just tell me, okay? I need you to promise me, y/n.” “I promise.”

A minute later, there’s a paper towel on your left thigh where your hand is resting, your skin has been cleaned with antiseptic products and Randall has gloves on when you suddenly feel a sharp shot of pain ripping through your entire arm as the hot needle burns your skin, the lib twitch but you manage to contain it and stay still as Randall starts to draw the flower on the side of your thumb.

“You alright?” He asks. “Yep. You just do that directly on the skin like that?”
“Well, not normally, but I don’t really have any transfer sheets on me at the moment, sweetheart,” he points out with a chuckle. “Don’t get smart with me, Randy,” you scold him with a smile.

“Ugh, don’t call me that. Negan calls me that, it's awful,” he complains. “Alright then, what do I call you?”

Your arm twitches again underneath the heated needle but you keep on distracting yourself by talking to Randall. “How ‘bout big papa? How’s that?” You jokingly propose with little smile. “Big papa, uh? Sounds pretty damn badass to me,” he plays along with a grin.

“Sounds more like the name of a prison inmate.” He takes the needle away from your thumb and looks at down, chuckling and shaking his head. “Big Papa’s seen some shit, boy.” You wiggle your eyebrows, laughing along with Randall.

It’s now past midnight, there's a beautiful - albeit swollen and slightly bleeding - rose burned into the skin on the right side of your left thumb, and you're curled up against Randall's chest as you're both laying on his bed underneath a warm blanket, the two of you slowly but surely falling asleep.

“It ain't your fault, sweetheart,” Randall speaks, but you're so tired you can't even answer him. “I'm so fucking sorry about what happened. I'm so sorry that you've had to go through it and I'm so fucking sorry that I didn't do a damn thing about it, I was just... I just fucking froze like a dumbass.”

He brings you closer to him and snuggles you tighter in his arms, bringing his blanket higher up on your shoulders. “I'm sorry if you felt abandoned and I promise I’m gonna try to make it better,” he quietly promises.

“Just don’t leave, please,” you sleepily ask him. “I won't,” he assures you and, on those words, you both silently fall asleep tightly curled up against one another as if you're afraid of the possibility to lose each other in your sleep somehow.

Admittedly you'll say that you actually are scared shitless of that possibility. The possibility of losing a friend, the possibility that someday the rose on your thumb may be all that's left of him to you and it fucking hurts to even think about it.
Another one of your violent night terrors wakes you with a start against Randall's chest but, thankfully, it doesn't seem to disturb his deep sleep.

“How can someone sleep so soundly nowadays,” you quietly whisper to yourself as you carefully sit on the mattress, push off the warm comforter from your body, whimpering as the cold air of the room hits you as you gently get out of the bed.

“Thank you,” you softly murmur to the sleeping Randall laying on the bed, pull out the lit candle on his nightstand and bring his blanket further up on his shoulders before quietly leaving the bedroom, closing the door behind you just to lean against it afterwards.

Bringing your left hand up, you smile as you gently run a shaky finger over the rose now engraved into your skin. It's still a small bit swollen but it's not bleeding anymore though there're small dots of dry blood on the flower and you have to fight the urge to scratch them away.

On an impulse, you decide to go outside to get some air, your mind reeling way too much for you to be able to go back to sleep anytime soon anyway.

You head back to your room, take your pajamas off to get into Randall's jeans and a grey hoodie, the grey hoodie, the one that's now permanently stained with your blood because no one seems to be able to completely wash it off. You try not to think about, you really do, but it still seems to stay in a corner of your mind, and it frustrates you.

You haven’t really talked about what happened with Jason, you don't want to... Or maybe you do? You're not sure. What’s there to say, anyway? And what's it gonna change for you? It's done, it happened, and you can't change that. This complete stranger laid claim to you and fucked with your head, he touched you like you were his to touch and, worst of all, he looked at your body like it was his to judge.

You feel gross just thinking about it. This is not okay, it never was, and it'll never be but, for some reason; you don't feel like it's all that big a deal. He wasn't the first man to ever lay his hands on you, he wasn't the first one to ever take advantage of you but, all in all; he also wasn't the first one
You fought off.

You feel like you should be relieved that he's not walking on the same ground as you anymore but, for some reason, you can't bring yourself to even feel slightly better about the whole situation.

You shake your head, slip your combat boots on and run out of your room. It feels like you're suffocating in here.

You're just about to cross the huge opened doors of the compound leading to the yard, when your hard-headed nature takes over and whispers to you to go and get what's yours back.

Halting your steps, you turn back to look around until your eyes finally stop on the huge staircase leading up to the big deck standing tall above the rest of the warehouse.

*how much you wanna bet that whatever's up there belongs to negan.*

You sigh; of course those stairs would lead to another part of the place that exclusively belongs to Negan, the simple fact that this deck is high-up, *standing above everything else*, gives it away.

Wearily stepping closer to the big, quite intimidating, staircase, you hesitantly put a foot on the first step, letting out a shaky breath as you do.

Is it really worth it? You don't have the energy to fight with him, not again. You can't keep up with that crap anymore; you don't want to. If he catches you roaming around where you're not supposed to- Hell, you don't even want to think about it.

Still; your stubbornness has you climbing up the stairs and up to the wooden deck. You look around and you can easily picture Negan standing there, Lucille on his shoulder, his people kneeling on the hard ground below, not daring to look up at him, bowing down like he's some kind of God but you know better.

You sigh and jump over the safety ramp to sit on it, your feet dangling in the air. You’re terrified of heights, you have no idea what the hell you are doing, why your feet are literally hanging in complete emptiness but, for some odd reason, it feels kind of right. Everything seems so small below you. Is that what Negan likes so much about it?

“Can't sleep either, huh, darlin'?" An all too familiar, scruffy voice echoes right behind you, sending shivers down your spine and causing the hair at the back of your neck to stand straight up.

You're completely frozen, suddenly hyper-aware of the height you're at and terrified because you'll end up face to face with Negan if you turn around. “N-No,” you quietly answer, your voice shaking, and your grip tightens around the cold railing below you.

You hear him chuckle. “I can't even see your goddamn face, yet I can tell that you're fucking terrified. Question is; what's scaring you?” You hear him take a step closer and then his breath is
hitting the shell of your ear, making you flinch and your eyes flutter.

“You scared 'cause you know damn well that you're not fucking supposed to be here? Or is it because you're really fucking high up right now, doll?” His arms snake around your waist, making your entire body go stiff as a board until he slowly brings your back to his chest and, without your command, your shaking hands tightly grab onto his forearms; seeking safety.

“C'mere, baby girl,” he coos before lifting you up and off of the safety ramp, keeping you firmly against his body, waiting for you to calm down.

“You better not be there for what I fucking think you're here for 'cause I'm gonna be even more pissed, darlin’,” Negan warns you, his voice low in your ear.

“Wha- I- But-” Between the tears you're fighting to swallow back, your uneven breathing and the fact that you're completely crushed against Negan's body; you can't focus enough to form a proper sentence no matter how hard you try.

“Words, princess,” he reminds you with a chuckle. “My… My knife, I…” You shakily exhale, trying desperately to stay focus on what you’re saying. “Can… Could I have it b-back, please?”

You hear Negan sigh behind you and feel his grip loosen around your waist until he completely lets go of you, turning you around to face him, one of his hands coming up to your face to keep it up before you even get the change to try and put it down.

“We’ve already talked about this, didn’t we, sweetheart?” He raises his eyebrows when the only answer he gets is your eyes dropping to the ground as you try really hard not to let any tears slip out.

“I wanna go home,” you say with a sad frown, your voice barely above a whisper but Negan still catches it. “And where the fuck would that be, doll?” “I- I dunno,” you quietly shrug.

*but it doesn’t feel like this place is it.*

Silence takes over, Negan's hand still resting on your cheek and you're not sure how comfortable you are with that. It just feels too intimate.

You close your eyes, feeling like you might blow up if you make any kind of eye contact with him but it results in you being completely unaware of the fact that Negan's eyes dropped down to your left hand, spotting the fresh burn sitting on the right side of your thumb. His jaw clenches, an odd feeling running through him as he examines the swollen rose.

“Nice li’l burn you got there, baby girl,” he points out, breaking through the silence to let you know that he’s seen it. Your eyes snap open and you tense, your head coming back at up to look at Negan with wide eyes.

“Let's go have a li’l chat, uh? Yeah,” he speaks through his clenched jaw and starts to drag you off the deck to an open door leading inside.

“Wa-Wait-” You try to keep him from moving you any further by sticking your feet to the ground but the glare he shoots you kills your bravado.
He closes the door behind you and drags you into a big room filled with couches and a small bar, there's a chess table and a few plants here and there. A shiver runs down your spine when you realize that you're in his parts of the compound, the strong, toxic smell of nail polish and cheap perfume as well as the cliché, girly magazines laying all over the place easily giving your location away.

You're not sure what the emotion you're feeling right now is, all you know is that; **you hate it.** You harshly break out of Negan's tight grip, making him turn around to look at you, a frustrated sigh leaving his lips as he loses his patience like you're some petulant child throwing a tantrum.

Negan carefully looks at your face from your tired and teary eyes to your lips, swollen from you biting down on them, your cheeks are red and your eyebrows furrowed in what he assumes to be anger and confusion.

He steps closer to you, making you feel uncomfortably small when you don't step back. **“You seriously think Randy boy is the man for you, doll? That it?”** He’s wearing that damn smirk of his though it falters when he looks down at your left hand, his jaw visibly clenching again.

You're not sure what it is, but something pushes you over the edge and you end up shoving him away from you, not by much since he is bigger than you and you're completely drained.

You run a shaking hand through your messy hair, slightly pulling on them out of frustration. **“I can't- I can't… Negan, I-”** You tighten your jaw and swallow your tears back though a single one slips away, and you flinch when Negan's hand comes down on your face to wipe it away.

His touch overwhelming you, you smack his hand away and step back from him so you're just barely within arm-length from him. **“Do you e-even care a-about me?”** You ask, your voice shaky and low as tears start to stream down your tired face.

**“Do you want me t-to take my meals b-because you care about m-my health or is it just that you… Is it j-just another way t-to have control over me?”** You ask, your voice shaky and low as tears start to stream down your tired face.

**“Is that why you- why you took my knife away? Because you- you feel like you should be i-in control o-of... of…”** You lose track when Negan steps closer and closer to you until he has you completely pinned down against a door. **“I hate you so much. Why are you like this?”** You whisper with frown, looking down at your boots.

**“You're the fucking reason why,”** he tells you, his voice lower and rougher than usual.

You're about to snap at him, slap his stupid face off and send it to fucking Jupiter but, just as you're about to spit venom out of your mouth, his lips land against yours in such an oddly gentle way, so gentle that you're more surprised by that rather than the fact that he's kissing you at all.

You feel like you really should push him off you and throw him out the nearest window but, for some reason, you can't bring yourself to move a single muscle, you don't kiss him back but you
don't push away either, you don't want to, or maybe you do- You're lost and it's all his fault.

He makes you dizzy; he somehow manages to make you feel whole just as easily as he can break you apart, he sparks that little light in you but he’s also the only person able to put it out and make you feel so painfully numb and hollow in a blink of an eye. It just hurts, plain and simple.

Ok, so, maybe not that plain and definitely not that fucking simple either.

“I was so scared when he took me away,” you pant as soon as his lips leave yours. “I wasn't afraid just because he was touching me.” You shyly look up into Negan's eyes, his forehead resting on yours. “I was scared because he wasn't you.” You quietly confess, unsure of where this is all coming from, why you’re speaking of it now.

“He... He wa-wasn't you, Negan. A-And he... he just... You weren't there and-” You push your forehead harder against his, your nose now touching his, desperately seeking safety and comfort. “I'm scared,” you whisper, blinking against the tears stuck to your wet lashes.

Before Negan can even think of words to say, your right hand is gripping the back of his neck and pushing his lips back onto yours, keeping him as close to you as possible, your jealousy and craving showing right through but he doesn't seem to mind at all; he actually takes full part in the heated kiss by pushing you flush against the door behind you, gripping your thighs and lifting you up, relishing in the way your legs immediately come up and around his waist.

Pushing his lips against yours, he grunts into your mouth, sending shivers down your spine, and it’s like something snaps when you feel it, like you’ve been slapped and brought back to your senses. You end up pushing Negan away from you. Again.

“What?” he starts but you cut him off with a slap, making his head snap to the right, his jaw clenched when he looks back at you.

“What are you doing to me?!” You break into tears again and pull at your hair, feeling like you’re slowly losing your sanity.

He completely ignores your outburst and, in only two steps, he's right back in front of your face again. His eyes have darkened and there's a clear, small, open cut on his cheekbone. You don’t have time to blink when his hand wraps itself around your neck and he roughly pushes you back against the door you were leaning on a few seconds ago.

Your hands shoot up to scratch and dig into his forearm to try and get him to let go of you, but his free hand quickly snatched them away and pins both of your arms up above your head against the wood.

“Oh girly, you’re in a fuckin’ world of goddamn trouble.” Negan carefully watches your face as you keep on wiggling around to try and escape the contact his hand is making with your throat but it only makes his grip tighten and, before you can even try to stop it, a small whimper slips past your swollen lips, your body seemingly getting something out of the pressure put on your airway.

“It ain't right, doll,” he says with a frown and you try to ask him what he means but only a shaky
breath comes out of your mouth, his hand on your throat keeping you from speaking up. “You should fucking be mine,” he clarifies.

“You should be right by my fucking side all day fucking long. You should be my fucking princess.” He narrows his eyes at you and gets a small bit closer to your face, the tips of your noses touching. “You are. And I'll fucking kill every single damn man and woman left on this goddamn planet to make sure that no one ever fucking looks at you the same way I fucking do. D'y'know just how fuckin' mad I get whenever I catch one of my people looking at you or fucking talking to you or about you, huh? It makes me want to fucking bash 'em 'til there's nothing but a puddle of blood left of 'em.”

As he roughly unravels in front of you, admitting to his jealousy and owning-up to his protectiveness, his darkened eyes and his rough hand gripping your throat; you can't help but follow through.

It's all too much for you and, at this point, it feels like you're not in control of anything anymore and you can't stop the small, needy noise slipping out of your mouth as your teeth keep on digging harder and harder into your fleshy bottom lip, almost breaking the skin.

“You were fucking made for me, baby girl,” Negan states, his voice rough and his lips grazing yours, making you want to cry and beg, and you don't even know what for.

You try to say something, but his hand is keeping you from doing so and he seems to realize it. He slightly loosens his grip on your throat and smirks when he can already spot a huge handprint on your soft skin. His handprint on his girl.

Negan waits for you to say whatever you wanted to say but you're so overwhelmed that you can't think of anything else but his lips and end up pushing your head up against the door behind you where your hands are still trapped above your head, and you kiss him back with all your might.

“You're fucking mine, been mine since fucking day one, baby girl,” he tells you before crashing his lips against yours, pushing your head back against the door behind you where your hands are still trapped above your head, and you kiss him back with all your might.

Since his right hand is still keeping you from breathing properly, your head is quickly spinning from the lack of oxygen and you're seeing stars, but you don't give a damn; you could fucking pass out and you still wouldn't care. His lips moving hungrily against yours is all that matters to you at the moment. His smell, his taste and his touch are all that you crave, and it makes your need for air seem ridiculous.

His grip on your throat loosens and he gives you a few minutes to catch your breath as his left hand finally lets go of your hands which immediately find their way into his dark, salt and pepper hair to pull him right back to your lips.

Your eagerness amuses him just as much as it turns him on, and he just can't deny you but he sure as shit wants to take advantage of your vulnerability. “You're so fuckin’ needy, baby girl,” he coos with a grin against your lips, teasing you.
His mouth is right against yours, your swollen flesh touching his, but he just stands there, grinning like the cat that got the cream. “P-Please,” you whine, arching your back and making fists in his hair.

“Please what, doll?” He asks with darkened eyes, waiting for you to say that one damn word that’ll send him into overdrive. “P-Please, daddy.” And there it is.

“Good girl,” he growls and forcefully crashes his lips down on yours, his tongue not waiting for an invitation and directly slipping in-between your slightly parted lips as his right hand comes back down on your throat, making you whimper.

A few minutes go by where it's just the two of you heavily making out and rutting against each other like goddamn animals in heat. Your cheeks are burning, your breathing heavy and your lips are all swollen. As for Negan; he doesn't seem to give a damn about his need for air anymore, it almost seems like he forgot about it actually, his lips never leaving yours, not even when he whispers praises to you.

This is stupid, you know it is. He hurt you and he's going to keep doing it again and again and again until, eventually, it'll end up being too much for you to handle and you’d rather not think about the "what then" if you're being honest.

You hate how much you crave this man, how safe you feel in his arms, the way his rough hand wrapped around your throat makes you feel, the way he sends you into overdrive with just a smirk and, God, do you hate how jealous you get.

You hate that you're not the one and only girl in his life and you hate to even think about thinking about him sleeping with others, kissing them and taking care of them, it hurts you so bad. It just isn't worth it.

You push Negan away from you and try to regain your composure as best as you can before he starts asking you what the hell is going on but, oddly enough; he never does, he just looks at you with a slight frown. “Doll-”

“Y-You can either have them all a-and let go of me or…” you trail off to look at him with glossy eyes. “Y-You can… You can have me b-but… but you can't have b-both, I- I won't let you.”

“Are you seriously doing this shit to me right now, baby girl?” He asks with what seems to be a nervous chuckle to you.

“Y-You've done wa-way worse t-to me, Negan, a-and I don't-” You sigh tiredly. “You're hurting me, and I can't… I can't t-take it anymore.”

A pregnant silence fills the room and it's when Negan lets out a heavy sigh that you decide to cut through the tension with your sharpest knife.

“A-Alright then.” You let a nervous, teary laugh, trying not to cry in front of him again. “Forget
about me.” You quickly walk to the door leading out of the room but stop in front of it when Negan calls out for you, you don't let him talk though; you don't even turn around.

“And don't you dare hurt Randall, Negan. This isn't about him or anyone else. It's about you and you alone,” you tell him, hoping that'll set the record straight and finally cut the wire holding you to the Saviors’ leader.

That being said, you quickly open the door and get out of the room when you hear Negan's footsteps getting closer to you. You close the door behind you and run down the giant staircase, the really cold air filling the open warehouse cutting right through your skin as you walk straight back to Randall's room, feeling like you could seriously use some comfort right now.

You feel like shit running back to Randall after what's just happened with Negan. It's not that he’s a second option to you, no; he's more like your comfort zone, somewhere safe to land on.

You unzip your jeans and gently push the door to Randall's bedroom open and close it behind you just as quietly, not sure if he's awake or not but not willing to risk waking him from his slumber.

Slipping out of your combat boots, you let your pants fall and pool at your ankles before stepping out of them and slip out of your bra underneath your hoodie before turning around to get inside the warm bed.

You jump when you see that Randall's awake and watching you as he's lays on his side on the mattress. “Got a lot on your mind don't ya, sweetheart,” he observes more than he asks as he looks at your puffy eyes and your swollen lips.

“Y-Yeah, I-” You drop your head down, feeling tears filling your eyes yet again. “I-I'm s-sorry that I left like that i-in the middle of the night, I just… I had a really b-bad dream and the-then I thought a-about J-Jason and- and then I wanted to- to go get some fresh air b-but I d-decided to sneak around N-Negan's back to get my kni-knife back b-but he cau-caught me and- and then I… I… We k-kissed and- and now I have marks a-all over me and… and… and I-”

“Hey,” Randall quickly gets out of his bed to take you in his arms, burying you in his embrace, the warmth of him sipping through your sweater. “Ssh, it's okay, sweetheart. It's okay, relax.” He looks at you then, frowning when he spots Negan's handprint on your neck.

You nod into his chest, wiggling to push yourself further against him, feeling his chest vibrate with a chuckle. “Alright then,” he whispers.

“Now, I love you n’all, sweetheart, but it's like, four a.m. and I'm still really fucking tired so; how 'bout we go to back to sleep and we'll talk tomorrow- Well, more like, later today really... We have a fucking long ass supply run scheduled and we can't go out there with our heads in our asses. Believe me, it's really fucking dark in there, plus it ain’t comfortable. I mean, it's a whole head we're talking about here.”

You laugh into his chest and give his abs a gentle poke, your playfulness a sharp contrast to your teary and tired eyes, but it still to makes Randall happy to hear you giggle.
With a smile, Randall pushes the thick comforter and the blanket down to let you crawl in bed. Your cheeks burn when the cold air of the room hitting your thighs and butt-cheeks makes you realize that you're on all four in front of him with no pants on, but he doesn't make any comments on it, he simply lets himself fall, literally, right on top of you, crushing you and making you laugh a little too loudly but neither of you care.

Chuckling, he lets you slip out from underneath him before bringing the thick, warm blanket back on top of your heads so you both end up completely buried under and he settles right next to you on the comfortable mattress.

You feel like a kid again. You used to love building pillow forts to protect you from the “monsters” outside. It's funny, because, when you think about it? That's your life now; improvising safe places from scratch to protect you from the monsters roaming outside, nothing seems to have the same meaning it used to though. Not at all.

this new world is goddamn confusing and painful to live in.

“No offense but, you look adorable when you're deep in your thoughts, sweetheart,” Randall smirks, bringing you back to him. “Shush your mouth,” you mumble, embarrassed.

“Oh! Such a potty mouth. I can't believe you right now,” he faints outrage, making you blush and giggle at the same time. “I don't like to curse, alright? Leave me alone. You're mean,” you pout.

“Goddamnit,” he whispers, looking at you with a small smile. “Wh-What is it?” you whisper back, suddenly afraid to break the moment. “It's just… It feels, someday, I'm gonna wake up and you'll be gone, y'know?” He regards you for a moment that feels like hours to you, like he's trying to figure something out.

“How are you even real?” He asks with a frown, clearly lost in his own thoughts.

“I uh… Well,” you clear your throat and get closer to him, lowering your voice to whisper. “Don't tell anyone but, I'm actually a unicorn dressed-up as a human... Sadly this is the only human costume they had left at the store, it's kind of gross if I'm being honest,” you can't help the self-deprecation and instantly cringe at it when it comes out.

“Hey, don't you say stuff like that, y/n. You're a really pretty girl, in and out.” Your cheeks burn and, since you can't seem to find anything smart to say, you give his cheek a quick peck and bundle up against his chest, your arms folded between his bare chest and your fleece-covered upper-body. “Unicorn 'n'all,” he adds with a smile to lighten the mood and you laugh against him.

“Goodnight, Chicago boy,” you whisper with a small smile, referring to the city Randall was born in, making him laugh.

“Goodnight, Batman,” he answers, making you snicker, before kissing your forehead and letting his head rest on one of his pillows as he slowly but surely falls right back to sleep in the same rhythm as you.
9:00 AM //

It's been two hours since you've left the Sanctuary, two hours sitting next to Simon in his truck, listening to his horrible uncle jokes that only he laughs at which results in you laughing along. Two hours of listening to some obscure country music that's so bad you've seriously considered jumping out of this moving truck a few times now.

Negan has been piercing holes in the back of your head all morning and the reason why you're riding with Simon and not with him is only because Faith seem to have sensed your uneasiness and she distracted Negan while you ran to Simon to ask him if you could ride with him which he gladly accepted.

You know that you'll have to explain what's going on to Faith when you'll go back to the Sanctuary but right now, you're just trying to enjoy a genuinely good moment with Simon. If someone would have told you that you'd end up looking up to him and actually befriend him, you would have point them to the nearest asylum, but you found out that he actually genuinely cares and respects you, plus; he's actually alright when he allows himself to be.

1:00 PM //

You're finally here, wherever the hell here is. Every vehicle stopped and Negan's men start to jump out of the trucks they're piled in. You've quickly come to realize that the Saviors always ride in the back of trucks reserved to them whenever they go out of the Sanctuary because Negan wants to keep the bigger trucks for supplies.

yeah, why the fuck not. pile the people up but careful where you put my new fucking Chinese vases.

You scoff at the thought and quickly jump out of Simon's truck to directly run to Randall who's already waiting for you outside with his hand out for you to grab, Connor by his side, chatting with Arat.

“Hey, sweet pea,” he smiles when you grab his hand and carefully brings you to him. “So, what d'you think of Simon's sweet jams?” The tattooed Savior asks, clearly trying to keep from laughing.

“You're evil,” you mumble, though not without a chuckle, into his chest.

“Yeah,” you hear Arat say next to you, “Simon has awful music in his truck, his radio is busted, and it's stuck on this crappy signal, but he says that he'd rather listen to that crap than be in complete silence.”

“Oh,” you dumbly whisper.

You jump when the loud sound of hands clapping together announce that Negan is about to give
yet another, awful and overused, speech about how useless everyone is but still wants them to work their ass off to bring him some new shiny toys.

You look around as Negan keeps on babbling and spot Connor all by himself which you find odd. He's usually always making people laugh with stupid puns or at least talking to someone.

“Connor? You okay?” You ask him in a whisper as you stand next to him.

“Huh?” He blinks and smiles when his green eyes land on yours. “Hey there, princess. Yeah… Yeah, I uh, I'm all good,” he says, his mind clearly elsewhere.

“Alright.” You don’t push. “Hey, you… you know that i-if… if you ever need anything, to talk or whatever else, I'm here, alright? Just like you are for me,” you let him know.

“Thanks, sweetheart, I'll remember that but I'm okay, I promise,” he assures you. You don’t believe him.

From afar, a blue and a grey eye find yours and then their owner is giving you the lightest of nods, silently inviting you to him. You send one back and give Connor’s arm a squeeze before slowly leaving his side after he gave you a smile and a wink, to go over to his best friend.

“Hey,” Randall whispers and slings an arm around your shoulders, keeping his voice down as Negan is still going on about God knows what. “He is gonna be okay?” You quietly ask with a worried frown, referring to Connor, and you feel the man tense a little against you.

“He uh… Yeah. Today’s just a bad day for him, it’s uh… His niece, Lana, she uh… It’s been seven years since she...” He trails off, letting you fill up the blank.

“She would’ve been nine today,” he explains, and you feel your heart jump in your chest, your eyes finding Connor again. “That’s awful,” you whisper.

Whatever happened to that poor little girl, she was only two when it did and that’s a haunting thought. “Wha… What can we do to help him? I mean… He shouldn’t even be here, he should be mourning at home, where it’s safe and—”

“Yes, honey, it’s okay,” Randall hushes you. “Trust me, he needs this. It’ll be okay, we’ll get this shit done and, once we get home, we’ll hang out, drink some booze and relax. Just you, him, Faith and I; it’d be good, you’ll see.”

You nod absently, still looking at Connor from where you stand, the tight feeling in your guts sickening and you can’t shake it off.

2:15 PM //

The groups have been made, you're with Randall, Connor, three other dudes that you don't know the last thing about, and Simon. You feel pretty damn good about being outside and the small town you're in is pretty quiet, you took down six or seven walkers and Simon officially crowned you the “walker slayer” of the group. You’re not sure how you feel about the title just yet.

Right now, you're all taking a time out and you're sitting on an old bench away from the rest of the
group with Randall as he smokes a cigarette.

“S’pretty damn quiet today, huh?” He notes before blowing a cloud of smoke out of his mouth. “Yeah, don’t jinx us, Chicago boy,” you absently mutter, your eyes scanning the area.

You hear Randall chuckle next to you. “That my new official nickname now, sweet pea?” He asks with a smile as he takes another drag out of the nicotine stick between his lips. “Yup, better get used to it,” you advice him with a smile.

“Way ahead of you.”

You both laugh and enjoy the comfortable silence that slowly takes place between the two of you until Randall's laugh breaks it. “S’like we're on a date,” he points out. “Pff, laaaaame,” you tease with smile and slightly darkened cheeks.

You were so young when the world turned on its head, dates have never been a thing for you but you remember Daryl promising you to take you out on one when you’ll be old enough so that he’d be sure your first date would be with someone who cares and would keep you safe. You guess that’s just one of those things you’ll never get the chance to experience and you’re trying to make your peace with it. Among other things.

“Oh, c’mon, could be worse,” Randall protests with a grin. “Yeah, I guess... Sure could be better though.”

“Yeah, you're right,” he admits with a chuckle. “I never was too good with dates- Hell, go figure how I’ve ended up getting engaged.” “What was she like?” You ask a little too quickly, your curiosity once again getting the best of you.

“Well-” “S-sorry,” you frantically cut him off, “you don’t have to talk about her i-if you don't want to. I'm sorry, that was s-stupid of me, Randall.”

“No, no, sweet pea, it's all good.” He turns to face you. “So, she was the same age as me, pretty tall, she had adorable freckles covering her face, she hated them so much, but I loved them. She was beautiful,” he smiles at that, clearly thinking fondly of her. “She huh… left me the day before our wedding because she got nervous and that was that.”

Your expression falls and you look down at the ground beneath your feet, sadly playing with the hem of your t-shirt, unsure of what to say. “Tha… That's terrible. I'm sorry Randall.”

“Nah, s’all good, princess.” He chuckles, “Connor was so freaked out and pissed, the poor guy offered to marry me instead.” You shake your head and smile at that. Those two have quite the history.

“D’you say yes?” You ask with a smile. “No, sadly. It was too soon, y’know? I had a broken heart to mend.” You give a soft chuckle and gently shove your left shoulder into his right one.

“Bet he would’ve been the best husband ever,” you theorize. “Yeah, definitely,” Randall affirms with a smile.
The sounds of gunshots in the distance come crashing into the moment, shattering it to pieces and the two of you jump out of your skin. You quickly get a hold of your knife, which Negan was “graceful” enough to give you before going out today, and Randall gets a firm grip on his ax, a gun tugged in the waistband of his jeans just in case.

You both run towards the gunshots and find a few Saviors fighting walkers off in an old grocery store, you panic and start looking around, trying to spot Connor and let out a sigh of relief when you finally spot him.

Tightening your grip on the body of your knife, your lunge for the first reanimated corpse that comes near you, holding the back of its rotten skull as you shove the sharp blade of your weapon right between its lifeless, milky-white eyes.

You all spend a good fifteen minutes fighting the creatures off and, by the time it’s all over and done with; you're out of breath, completely covered in blood, and there's so much adrenaline pumping through your veins that it makes your vision fuzzy.

“Alright, c'mon people, let's fucking go home. Enough of this shit,” Negan barks from outside the shop and you can’t help the irritation you feel at the sound of his voice.

You spot the two other groups of Negan's men that were still scavenging the area -despite the fact that you clearly could have used more hands here- walking towards the trucks and the store slowly empties as people go to help load the supplies.

“This is so fucking pointless,” you hear Connor's voice behind you and spin around, growing and putting your hand up as you carefully approach him. “I’m so sick and tired of it, y/n.”

He looks at you then and you can see his beautiful emerald orbs shining with tears, your throat tightening at the sight. “Co-” You don't even get to finish his name when his shoulders give a shake, his face scrunching up as tears fall down his tired and bloody face.

“I'm so fucking tired, sweetheart.” You frown and take another step towards him, your hands shaking as you try your hardest not to crumble in the face of Connor’s distress.

“Hey, it’s alright, Connor. W-Well, no; it’s not… But it will be. We’ll make it okay,” you softly tell him, needing him to know that he’s not going to be left on his own to deal with this.

“Fuck… I just-” He blinks, tears falling from his eyes as he looks up at you, and your heart stops beating when you see a lone walker round the corner.

The creature is on Connor in a blink of an eye, its teeth sinking into the flesh of his throat. Your scream gets stuck in your throat and your upper body shakes, your belly violently spasming.

“N-No... No, no, no! Connor, no!” You cry out and run up to him, shoving the walker off your friend and clumsily sinking the blade of your butterfly knife into its putrefied skull.
Tears stream down your face as you follow the limp body to the ground and crawl over to Connor who's now laying on the floor, holding the wound on his throat with a shaky hand, his breath ragged as he gasps for air.

"NEGAN! NEGAN, HELP! PLEASE SOMEONE HELP!" You call out, your eyes never leaving Connor’s. "I-It's okay. It's okay, I- I can fix you, you just... You stay wi-with me, okay, Connor? P-Please. Please d-don't go. Please don't do this to me. Y-You're gonna be okay," you keep on repeating it like a mantra as you put your shaking hands down on his and his wound to help him apply pressure on it.

"S’okay, y/n," he somewhat manages. "You're m-my favorite. Don't... don't tell Randall though," he jokes with a chuckle that makes him cough and his smile gets a little wider for a quick second. You can't process what's happening. The way his blood is seeping through your fingers and his hand is shaking below yours doesn’t feel real.

"Wha-What the hell happened?!" Randall comes running but you don't say a word. You can't move your fucking jaw. "Connor?! What the fuck! Connor!" The tattooed Savior runs up to you and the body, tears filling his eyes when he realizes that his best friend is gone.

"I- I didn't- I don’t. You choke and put your right, bloody hand on your mouth to keep your sobs from coming out. Your left hand tightens its grip where it’s still holding onto Connor’s now limp one against the wound in his throat.

"He... He just- He's... He's g-gone? R-Randall?" The man chokes on his words as his mouth opens, clearly not able to get a grasp on the situation either.

"B-But... But he... No..." Your voice is a shaky, watery whisper. "You said... You said it'd be o-okay... Y-You said we'd... P-Please, oh God, no! No, no, no! G-Give him b-back, pl-please! P-Please, please, please." Your head falls to Connor's chest which is no longer moving up and down to the rhythm of his heart.

You keep on crying into your friend's friend until a pair of strong hands pull you away from him, making you cry out in protest. "No, no, no! Let go!"

"Doll- Doll, listen to me," Negan grabs your face with his hands and keeps your eyes on his. "We-Fuck. We need to make sure he doesn't come back, alright? You know that."

"No, no! We can fix him! I’ll fix him, okay?! Just... Just l-let me..." You hear an all too familiar grunt behind you and know that it means Connor is already back.

Your shoulders slump and you cry out. It feels like hope has been drained right out of you. That sound means no turning back. There’s no fixing your friend.

Prying yourself away from Negan's grip, you quickly get back on the ground to Connor. "R-Randall!!" You immediately call out for him when a pair of green eyes met yours. You know you can’t do this on your own; not this time.
From the corner of your eye, you can see that Randall is now kneeled right next to you and your shoulders shake with a silent cry when he squeezes your blood-slick hand in his. “Hey, bud,” the tattooed Savior greets his best friend with a yet smile and a shaky voice.

“Y/n-” you hear Negan warn behind you, but you ignore him and focus on Connor.

You reach over and frame your friend’s head with shaky, bloody hands. ‘I'm sorry, Co', it's my fault. I- I should have… Oh my God…” You trail off with a cry when Connor starts to snap his jaw at you, and you have to tighten your grip on his cheeks to keep him at bay.

You push your forehead against his as he keeps on snapping his teeth at you, his hands tightly wrapped around your arms. “It'll be o-okay. You don't have to be scared anymore. You rest easy, okay? I’ll t-take care of R-Randall.”

You hear the man next to you swallow around the lump in his throat and you tear your eyes away from Connor for a brief instant to look over at Randall. “It’ll be o-okay. We… I’ll m-make it okay a-again,” you promise him with a whisper and he nods with a tight jaw before leaning over to kiss your forehead.

“You be good up there, Co’. Get you some hard-earned rest, buddy,” Randall addresses Connor whose eyes stay focused on his and it kills you how normal he'd look if it weren’t for his heavy breaths and growls.

You shakily reach for your knife and give Randall a look; a silent question to which he shakes his head and whispers “I can’t, sweetheart.” Everything around you falls silent except for Connor and you screw your eyes shut before sliding the sharp blade of your weapon through his temple, crying as you have to force the blade through more than you usually have to; a reminder that his body didn't even have the time to get cold before he turned.

You slowly get back up on your shaky legs, Negan, Simon, Dwight, Arat and the others are all standing right in front of you, but you ignore them and rush to Randall the second he follows you back up. He’s quick to receive you in his arms, his grip tight around you as you cry your heart out into his chest and gently coos you, trying to calm you down and reassure you, but it's hard for the both of you right now.

Negan just stands there, watching as you cry and seek safety into another's man arms, and he has to admit that he envies Randall’s position. He envies being able to be there for you when you feel down and he never felt that before but, somehow, he doesn't really mind that craving, he's just frustrated because it can't be satisfied at the moment and he knows that he's to blame for that.

Last night made him think and what's just unfold with Connor definitely did something to him because, for an awful second, when he heard you calling out for help, he lost his shit, dropped what he was doing and rushed to you, afraid that something may have happened to you.

What if it would have been you and not Connor? He can't bring himself to think about it. Fuck, he hates to even think about thinking about you getting hurt. Hell, he loses his mind when he sees just so much as a scratch on you, nevermind the self-inflicted cuts on your forearm.
Faith’s words resonate in his head; he needs to get his shit together. Letting you walk away from him last night was the worst thing he's ever let happen and he knows that he can’t take back the pain he saw his silence cause, but he can try and make it better. He broke it, he should be able to fix it. Right?
[UPDATED JULY 14. 2019]
Sorry for the delay on the uploads, things have been happening in the real world and I kinda have to work with it. Still! The twenty-seven chapters will be back new and "improved" by the end of the summer for sure, as well as the twenty-eighth chapter that will continue this shit-show and be all new territory!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

5:45 P.M //

All it took was a small second of inattention from Negan for you to run off when he’d ordered for everyone to stop to spend the night in one of the Saviors' safe-zones, the sun setting way too quickly to reach the Sanctuary before complete darkness.

You don't know why you ran off; it just happened. Everyone was getting out of the trucks, heading to the small yet well-protected place Negan had decided you'd spend the night in, and you were about to head inside as well but couldn't bring yourself to move. Your mind fixated on the way Connor's blood had dried on your skin and was now pulling at it with every little movement.

Eventually, you took a sharp intake of breath, unbuckled your seat-belt and jumped out of the big truck. When you looked around, you immediately spotted Randall leaning against a concrete wall, Negan right in front of him as they talked about what you assumed to be what happened to a few hours prior.

Just looking at Randall made your heart ache, you felt like shit about the whole situation. You dropped your head down, a single tear escaping your eye, making a small thud as it splashed on your boot-covered left foot.

Your face scrunched up when you looked down at your hands, both tainted with your friend's blood. Your body started to shake as Connor's voice rang through your ears, the sound of his flesh getting ripped off his neck invading your mind and the whole scene started to play over and over again right in front of you, leaving you a mess. You swear you felt the urge to claw your eyes out to make it all go away.

You were right there, yet you failed to protect your friend and it cost him his life. You've had to witness it, you've had to keep it from getting any worse. You killed him. You put him down and, for all you know, Randall could actually have wanted to be the one and you can’t ever give that back to either of them.

You were out of everyone's sight, standing behind Simon's truck, no one could see you and you
couldn’t think straight from all the shit running through your head at once, all demanding your undivided attention.

It was like an out-of-body experience in a way. You can’t even remember what was going through your head; you just hitched to get away before all your demons came pouring out. You took off and ran to get lost into an overgrown wheat field by the side of the road, the guilt of leaving Randall behind igniting ambers in your belly you knew would turn into a wildfire and consume you ‘til there’s nothing but ashes the seconds you’d stop running. You deserved that pain.

Looking down at your watch, it reads a quarter to midnight. You sigh and sink further against the hollow trunk at your back, a shiver running down your spine as the cold of the night starts to really get to you now that you've stopped moving.

The adrenaline and heat you’d gotten from running kept you somewhat functioning until now and you find yourself exhausted, hungry and thirsty, as it all drains out of your system.

Your mind is a mess, thoughts tripping over themselves and getting all tangled-up with one another. Guilt is eating away at you and you can’t make it go away, you can’t make yourself numb to it when it’s so fresh and your hands are still stained with Connor’s blood.

You can’t believe you left Randall to deal with this on his own. Fuck. **You** can’t deal with this on your own.

You can’t believe you went and got attached like that. What were you thinking? Why the fuck did you believe that this time would be different? It never is, it always ends the same. Hell, you guess now at least you’ll be able to cut the ties binding you to Randall and Faith too. You don’t need more heartbreak; you already can’t grasp why Connor’s passing stings as much it does.

I mean, you haven’t known the guy that long, right? So, what’s the big deal? Why has seeing the life go out of his apple-green eyes, that bright smile fade from his face, affected you so much?

Fuck. He was so full of life, always had a smile on his face. Of course he was the saddest man behind closed doors, you’ve seen it right there and then before it all came crashing down. He needed help and you felt it in your guts, all those words he’s convened through his teary eyes. He deserved so much better and you wish you could have given him that, you’d give anything to be able to go back and get him out of this damned shop before it stole his life away.

Connor’s death hurts like Hell because you understood him with a single glance, because he made you laugh even when you felt like sulking and wallowing in your own misery, because he cared and **so did you.** Times means nothing nowadays.
Your teeth are clinking with the cold as you reach over for your backpack and dig around in it until you find the thick military jacket laying at the very bottom of it. It’s all wrinkled but you don’t give a shit about aesthetic right now, you just need to get warm before your lips fall off.

If you could, you’d bury your face into the heavy, green canvas and let yourself sleep for the next ten years but you know that you can't, not when you're out here, on the ground, vulnerable and easy for walkers and people to reach. You’re too tired to climb up a tree, you thought about it, hell, it's the first thing you’ve tried to do when you decided that you were far enough from Negan and his men, but your body didn't seem to agree with you on that one.

Negan… Fuck... You'll justify that later and claim a brief moment of insanity but; you wish he was here now. There’s this… weight, like led at the pit of your stomach, that you don’t really understand but still somehow get that it’s to do with his absence.

As if he’ll be of any help. He’s probably making crude jokes and getting wasted right about now. Hell, he’s probably found some woman to lay with for the night even in the middle of nowhere because of course he would. Fuck, why does that agitate you so much? You need to calm down, but all your brain is asking for his him. Where’s Negan? Where’s Negan? Negan not here, me no like.

Your ears perk up at the sound of leaves cracking and you carefully reach for your knife, getting a tight and steady grip around its body before silently getting up off the ground, your muscles aching and a little stiff from all the stress they're carrying.

You try and listen for any kind of heavy breathing or groans to try and identify whether that noise was just a simple walker roaming around but you don't hear anything like that, only leaves cracking and branches snapping under someone or something's weight.

Squinting your eyes, you try to examine the area surrounding you but it's so dark you can't see a damn thing, until a small light pierces through the trees, making you shake slightly, afraid that it might actually be Negan or one of his men out looking for you.

"Fuu…dgesicle,” you whisper and quickly turn around to pick up your backpack before clumsily putting it back on your sore shoulders.

As you turn back around to check if the light has gotten any closer, and a squeal escapes your mouth as you make direct contact with someone's chest. You immediately try to take a step back but an oddly gentle grip on your right forearm keeps you from doing so.

“Let go!” You demand, pulling on your arm and tightening your grip on your blade, ready to stab through the fucker’s hand.

“Hey, hey, hey, it's me! Y/n, it's me. It's Jesus.” You freeze then and look up with teary eyes, your
chest quickly heaving up and down, to find Jesus' soft and reassuring smile, his features showing worry and relief.

"J-Jesus?" You dumbly repeat, your mind hazy with adrenaline. "Yes, my child?" He jokes with a small, hesitant smile, trying to lighting your mood a little bit. You let out a small, broken giggle, a few tears rolling down your face, and curl yourself up against his chest.

"S'good to see you too, kiddo," he gently greets you, kissing the top of your head.

You both stay in each other's embrace for a few before you reluctantly let go of him to look up at his face. You can see his smile in the light of his flashlight and immediately feel safe even though you're still out in the middle of a forest, in plain sight, and the cold of the night is cutting into your skin.

"Paul, I-" "We'll talk tomorrow, yeah?" He cuts you off, his eyes scanning the area before settling back on you. "Right now, we need to get you warmed up and you need to get some sleep."

"H-How did you- How-" "How did I find you?" He asks with a small smile and you nod your head. "Sweetheart, you're, like, five minutes away from Hilltop. I saw movements in the woods, and I wanted to check it out, figured it might be you."

five minutes away from... hilltop? damn, how did you not realize?

"Let's go, yeah? No offense but, my nose is gonna fall off and I kinda need it to stay." You smile and nod your head again. "Yeah," you whisper, letting him take your hand in his gloved one and you relish in the warmth it brings you as you blindly follow him out of the woods like a lost puppy.

Once in front of Hilltop's gates, Jesus asks the men guarding the entry to let you two in. The gates close behind you and you silently walk to one of those temporary installations you're assuming they've re-purposed as small houses, like the one doctor Carson uses as a medical bay. You know that one well.

The door opens with a small squeal and Paul steps aside to invite you in, stepping in after you and closing the door behind him. He leans against the cold steel and watches with a small smile as you curiously take the cabin room in.

"You wanna talk about it?" He asks, his voice soft and careful.

You tense a little at the question and let out a shaky sigh before shyly walking over to the bed sitting on a left corner of the room, flopping down on it and looking down at your bloody hands, tears starting to fill your eyes again.

"I- I uh," you clear your throat. "C-Connor… Connor's gone," you whisper with a nod, like you're trying to affirm it to yourself.

You hear Jesus sigh and the sound of his boots hitting the linoleum floor as he walks around and pulls a chair from the small dining table in the middle of the room to drag it directly in front of you, sitting down on it before carefully taking your shaking hands in his.
He gives your hands a squeeze, silently urging you to finish your thought. “I… I fr-froze, I…” You frown and let out a shaky breath. “I saw it… I saw it a-and I… I got scared. I panicked and he- he died be-because of it.” You keep your head down as you speak. You're exhausted and you haven’t felt so bad about yourself in a long, long time.

“That's not how things work, y/n.” Jesus gently lifts your head up with his left hand, making you look up at him. “You know that, you're a smart girl, I know you know.” He leans forward and presses a kiss to your forehead.

“Go take a shower, shut your brain off for the night and crawl under these blankets, get a good night sleep and, if you want, we'll talk tomorrow. Deal?”

“Okay.” You get off the bed and give him a tired smile. “Thank you, Paul.”

“You're always welcome here, you know that,” he smiles back at you and teasingly pinches your cheek, making you giggle. “Go get some sleep, Rovia, I'll see you tomorrow.” Your smile widens the tiniest bit at the sound of your last name. That's all you have left of your family and you carry it with pride.

“You're safe here, I promise,” Jesus assures you. “I know,” you whisper, your smile still in place.

“You can still lock the door if it can make you feel better,” he lets you know as he walks towards the aforementioned piece of solid steel. “Plus, it's a kind-ish way to tell Harlan to go away when he comes to wake you up at six with one of his weird songs,” he adds with a chuckle, and you shake your head with a little laugh at the picture he’s just painted.

With one last smile, Jesus bids you goodnight and gets out of the cabin, leaving you to yourself.

Taking your watch off, you gently put it down on the nightstand next to the bed you'll be sleeping in tonight before running to the bathroom, craving a warm shower more than anything else at the moment because, believe it or not, having Connor's blood on your skin and clothes is not making things any easier for you.

*weird, how that is, huh?*

20th January:

00:34 A.M //

After a few minutes of intense showering, silently crying as the blood on your skin felt as if it was here to stay, you finally get out, dry your body and your hair before slipping into a soft black hoodie with a fuzzy, white cotton fabric on the inside that was waiting for you on the made-up bed. You've decided against wearing anything but a pair of panties and the hoodie tonight and, while it may seem like such a small little detail; it's a huge step for you not to sleep in full gear or, at the very least, a full set of pajamas.
You blush as a high-pitched squeal comes out of your mouth when you stretch, a giggle making its way past your lips afterwards as you crawl underneath the thick and deliciously warm blanket on the bed, crashing face-first into the most comfortable mattress you've ever been on.

With a yawn, you turn the small light on the nightstand off and turn on your left side, looking out the window on the wall in front of you. There's a few small fire outside giving the people guarding the place some light, the flames appease you and, soon enough, another yawn slips past your lips, making your eyes water before you close them.

Not even a second passes when Negan pops up in your mind and that heavy weight at the pit of your stomach returns. You try not to think about it too much but still unconsciously curl-up on yourself to try and get some comfort.

You know this is all some kind of twisted game to him; letting you run just to watch you end up straight back into his hold. If it's a game to him it certainly isn't to you. You can't make sense of why you seem to gravitate towards him. You’re not stupid, you know he’s no good for you, it’s just that part of you really craves that pain and abuse because, as sickening as it is to admit; that’s what you’re used to.

You grew up with a mother that would be awful to you then turn around and tell you that she loved you more than anything. Try as they might, even the Dixons and Luna weren’t able to heal that, no matter how much you know they’ve loved you.

You wonder if Negan even realizes what’s happening. Part of you wants to believe that he wouldn’t behave the way he does if he did. The other isn’t so sure that’s he's not keenly aware but, again, you’re not sure you want to believe that he could be this cruel. You’re desperate for him not to be.

You're not sure of anything anymore, hell, you never were the most confident person, but now? Now it's all tangled up and you've never felt so damn vulnerable. Your mind hurts and it's the worst kind of pain there is to you, you'll trade it for the most intense physical pain there is if you could, without hesitation.

With those heavy thoughts, you end falling into a deep sleep, your head aching with the constant over-thinking.

9:15 A.M //

Your eyes gently flutter open, a small yawn bubbling in your throat and slipping past your
lips. You jump when you hear an all-too-familiar chuckle echo in the otherwise silent cabin and shoot up straight on the mattress, so quickly that it makes you dizzy for a second.

Your eyes widen when you spot Negan sitting on a chair around the wooden dining table a few feet away from you. You swallow to get some moisture in your dry throat, your brow twitching with a confused frown. “Wha-”

“You're one hell of a heavy sleeper, baby girl,” he cuts you off with a boyish smirk, clearly amused by your confusion.

*how the hell did he get here? what the fuck!*

Your eyes glued to him, you shyly bring your legs up against your chest underneath the blanket covering your body, suddenly hyper-aware of your lack of a bra and that the only thing covering your lower body is a pair of freaking Batman panties.

You look at the table he's seated at and spot a box of cereals, bowls, two spoons, empty glasses, and what you assume to be orange juice and milk.

*is he seriously waiting for you to get up and have breakfast with him? is he fucking serious right now? what is even happening? are you having a fever dream? did you die and go to hell? so many questions!*

“You hungry, doll?” Negan asks and you quickly shake your head no, but your stomach betrays you and lets out an embarrassingly loud growl, making the man across from you laugh and making you blush furiously.

“See, that, that right there is your stomach telling you to fuck off with your li’l lies, sweetheart.”

*shut… the… fuck up.*

You hear him get up and your head immediately snaps up, your body curling up and pushing itself further against the bed’s headboard, trying to create as much distance as possible between him and you.

He ignores your silent protest and roughly snatches the blankets covering your body away from you making you whimper as you push your legs further against your chest, now completely exposed to him, your cheeks darkening some more.

“Up ’n’ fuckin’ at ’em, baby girl,” he exclaims and extends his hand out to you but you're too focused on watching his eyes which are glued to your full, fleshy thighs and the outline of your butt.

He sighs when he realizes that you still haven't moved and he grabs your forearm, dragging you out of bed, his chest keeping you from falling face-first when your feet clumsily hit the floor. “Hey there, pretty girl,” he greets you, his voice low and a smirk on his lips, making your blush darken some more.
“Hi, Ne-Negan,” you choke out, hating how overwhelmed you are to have him so close to you. How good it feels, like you've just gotten your fix after months of withdraws.

His chest vibrates as he chuckles, and he gives you a wink before taking your hand and walking you to the table where your breakfast is waiting for you. You really shouldn't but you can't help but compare his touch to Jesus'. It's just so different; Paul is full of good attentions and it shows in his gestures but, Negan? You never know with this man, he can be sweet and carrying then, in a blink of an eye, turn into the worst person you'll ever come across, and it scares you just how much as it intrigues you.

you'd totally die first in a cheap horror movie. just thought you should know.

Negan sits you down on a chair and walks to the opposite side of the table, taking a seat right in front of you therefore making you highly uncomfortable. This is way too intimate for your liking, you fucking hate it. “Can we... Can we open the window, please?” You quietly ask, pulling at your fingers. You just want the noises from outside to help and break the awkward tension.

“Nah, doll, you're gonna have to get used to this anyway.”

yeah sure- wait... what d'he say?

“Wh-What?” You tilt your head, unsure of what you've just heard and what it might imply. “From now on, you'll take every single damn meal with me so that I can make sure you fucking eat somethin', and, on the plus side; it'll give us a chance to spend some quality time together,” he casually explains like that's something you've both agreed on, making you want to jump on him from across the table to stab him with your spoon.

A bowl is pushed right in front of you and filled with cereals, your eyes blankly watching as milk pours down on them, well, at least it's about to but you stop the flow by shoving your bowl of cereals away, making Negan sigh and glare at you.

“Not hungry,” you mumble, irritated by just about everything at this point.

“Sure you're not,” he scoffs, clearly annoyed as he drags the bowl filled with cereals back in front of you and pours milk on them before shoving a spoon in it. “Eat,” he orders harshly making a single tear roll down your face before you can even feel it in your eye.

“I'm not... I can't-” You bite down on your lips and frown against the silent sob that rips through you and makes your upper body lunge forward.

You're quick to hide your face in your hands, your body shaking along with your muted sobs, Negan watching you break down again, nervously scratching his beard.

You flinch and weakly whisper “no, no,” when you feel his hands on your waist as he lifts you up and brings you against his chest, your legs automatically snaking around his waist. “Shh, hey, relax, sweetheart. You're okay,” he coos in your ear, slightly rocking you in his arms and you hate how easy it is for this man to lull you back to normal.
You feel him move the two of you around and you end up sat on his thighs as he sits down at the table again, dragging your bowl of cereals to him, getting a spoon full that he brings up to your mouth. You grimace and turn your head slightly, tensing on his lap.

“C’mon, baby girl, at least four,” Negan demands, and you audible swallow around the lump in your throat. “Two?” You try, your voice quiet and your eyes pleading as you look at him.

He gives a breathy chuckle and shakes his head. “Nuh-uh, princess. Four and you’ll drink somethin’ too.” You zone out a little, bringing a hand up to trace the neat outline of his thin beard with the very tip of a shaky finger.

You give a subtle flinch when Negan wraps his free hand around your wrist and watch in awe as he brings your hand down to his mouth to plant a kiss on your palm. You can’t help but squirm a little at the soft gesture and feel him smile against your skin before he’s moving your hand away to look at you.

“C’mon, doll, ‘fore they get all soggy and gross,” he says, nudging the spoon filled with milk and cereals at you and you give in, slightly opening your mouth to let him feed you. Your stomach growling in contentment.

This moment is oddly relaxing, he makes conversation with you, avoiding touchy subjects and mainly making awful jokes to then make fun of you when you choke on your food as he makes you laugh.

When the bowl is half empty, he lets you go as he can clearly tell that you’ve had enough, and he doesn't want to push you any further. He always wonders how you've made it this far when he sees how badly you struggle to care for yourself, how hard of a time you're having to simply feed yourself, the most common of things are a challenge to you yet he knows you do much harder stuff on the daily.

You start moving to get off his laps but freeze when he groans, afraid that you might have hurt him, completely oblivious to the fact that you're pressing yourself right into his crotch. Negan quickly lifts up and gently puts you back down on the ground, teasingly squeezing one of your butt-cheeks, making you blush when a whimper involuntarily escapes your lips.

You get away from him and start walking towards the small dresser in the room to finally put some pants on, but Negan hums disapprovingly as he sips some orange juice, eyeing you from his chair at the table. You turn back around and look at him, confused as to what you're doing wrong.

“Don't.” He finishes his glass and gets up. “You'll put pants on when I'll be done with you, not a single second before, doll. Here,” he nods towards your messy bed, “take a seat, we need to talk.”

Your head is shaking left and right before he even finishes his sentence, your feet carrying you further back into the room, as far away from the bed as possible. “Y/n...” There’s a warning in his voice and the way his eyes are narrowed, that make your heart jump in your chest.
“See, the damn thing with you, baby girl, is that you don’t seem to fucking understand that I’m in charge here.” You frantically shake your head some more at that, silently disagreeing with him.

Your breath catches in your throat when Negan suddenly stands and your hands twitch, hitching to ether ball up into tight fists or come up to cover your ears. Fight or flight.

“I’ve been worried about you all fuckin’ night long, thinkin’ about you out there all on your own, not knowing where the fuck you were at,” he tells you, his voice a little rougher around the edges now. “That dickhead Greg calls in the early mornin’ to tell me that a stray li’l cat of mine was tip-toein’ ‘round Hilltop last night and they’d taken her in for the night.”

You silently nod, unsure of what to do and unable to find your voice, your eyes glued to Negan’s every movement. “I get it; yesterday was a shitshow that piled-up with the fire-y pile of shit that Tuesday was.” You shakily breathe in as memories of your short confinement and what had transpired before that crawl back to the surface.

“You… You made me- made me k-killed th-that man,” you whisper with a frown, finally addressing the huge fucking elephant in the room.

“I do that with all my guys, y/n,” he informs you. “Though I ain’t gonna lie I fuckin’ regret doin’ it to you but it’s done, can’t go back on that, and it’s the kind of shit that makes or breaks you.”

“I can’t get it out of my head,” you confess, your teary eyes finally meeting Negan’s. “I can’t s-stop thinking a-about it a-and now… now Connor’s g-gone and…” Your shoulders slump and your head tilts, your eyes pleading.

Your hands shoot up the second you see Negan move, your breathing frantic. “You really b-believe I’m th-that naïve I don’t know wh-what you’re doing to me? You keep t-throwing me against the wall so that you can b-break me and b-build me back up the way y-you want me,” you start ranting, something snapping in your head.

“Y/n.” You ignore the low warning in his voice, too caught up in your own head to care. “You knew the second you saw me, didn’t you? Negan found himself a broken bird and he loves pulling at its wings. You really don’t give a shit about me, do you? You’re just like my mom except that she actually loved me once,” you whisper the last part, your eyes looking at nothing as you try to process the conclusion you’ve just come to.

“Don’t you fucking dare-” Negan growls, clearly not appreciating the comparison you’ve just made. “Oh my God!” You cut him off with a tired and teary laugh. “I hate you, Negan. In fact, I think I hate you just as much as you hate me,” you conclude, swallowing the tears threatening the spill out of your eyes.

Negan has you crushed between a wall and his body before you can even blink, his breath hitting your lips. “You don’t compare to that bitch and you sure as shit ain’t gonna speak for me like that ever fuckin’ again, y’hear me, y/n?” You’re so overwhelmed by the sudden contact that all you can do is weakly push at his chest with shaky arms.
With a single hand, he effortlessly snatches both of yours off his chest and holds them at the wrists between the two of you. “For fuck’s sake; breathe, sweetheart,” he reminds you as you hiccup on your frantic intakes of air.

He narrows his eyes at you, and you hate to admit it, but you feel ridiculously small under his stare. “One fucking day,” he tells you, his free hand gripping your jaw. “

I’m gonna give a whole goddamn day all to yourself, you’re staying here for another night if you fucking want but, tomorrow, when I come back for you, your ass better but right here, waiting for me like a good girl, and you better not have another fucking crap attack. We fucking clear, li’l one?”

You try to speak up but your mouth just keeps on opening and closing without a single word ever coming out and you're pretty sure that you must look like a fish out of water right now, but Negan doesn't seem to pay attention to that at the moment, he's more interested in getting an answer out of you.

“Y/n, we clear?” He asks one more time. “M-M’s-sorry,” you choke out, gasping for air, struggling to let your chest expand properly to draw breath.

“I know y’are, s’not what I asked. Focus, darlin’; are we clear or not?” Negan presses on and you nod. “C-Crystal cl-clear,” you manage, your eyes frantically looking everywhere but directly into his.

You feel his nose nuzzle yours and lift your eyes up, curious to see if his expression has softened a little and it has; not a lot, but it's definitely there.

His forehead comes down to rest against yours, his lips grazing yours, not kissing you just yet but it's so close it makes you want to cry. You don't understand him sometimes, well, most of the time, really. He looked like he was about to crush you in the palm of his hand just then and now he's back to being gentle and it's confusing the hell out of you but you're in too deep to even question it at this point.

“Not gonna lie, this ain’t what I’d envisioned for ya, baby girl,” he quietly confesses but you're too tired to ask what it means. Instead, you slip your left hand out of his grip and shyly bring it up to his chest, clinging to his white t-shirt to bring him a little closer to you and the gesture makes him smirk.

Negan takes a long look at you, silently asking for your permission to kiss you and you give him by grabbing the back of his neck and pushing his lips against yours, a needy noise slipping through as your mouths finally meet.

“You know,” he breaks the kiss, resting his forehead against yours and keeping his lips right on yours as he speaks, “you ain't gotta be the perfect li’l angel, darlin'. A crooked halo ain't what's gonna send me runnin' for the hills. It suits you pretty damn well if you ask me,” he grins and goes straight back to kissing you, pushing his tongue past your slightly parted and swollen lips, making you whimper, your grip on his shirt tightening in a needy gesture.
He possessively grabs your thighs and lifts you up for your legs to snake around his waist, immediately using the position you two are in to press his crotch into yours, making you jump and whimper into his mouth, your hands roughly grabbing the back of his neck as you let all the frustration he’s created out on him and he laughs into your mouth, clearly aware that you're beyond angry and frustrated with him.

“Aw, my li’l kitten’s getting her claws out, huh?” He taunts. “I hate you, Negan,” you pant out, your cheeks darkened, and your lips swollen because of his rough kisses.

“Sure you fuckin’ do, sweetheart,” he spits back, his lips crooked in a sneer, before roughly bringing his lips back down on yours for a heated kiss, his hands starting to wander down on your body, squeezing here and there, making you squeal into his mouth and bite down on his bottom lip to pull at it greedily, making him grunt.

Your grip around his waist tightens when Negan moves you off the wall and walks you to the bed, dropping you off on the messy, slept-in bed, following you down to hover over you, his lips never leaving yours as he does, the kiss only getting deeper and needier.

Your hands shyly slip underneath his t-shirt and you can feel him shiver at your touch. It's the first time you actually get to explore his body, so you try to memorize every little detail your hands come across. You're surprised at how toned he feels; you can feel his muscles rippling beneath the skin as he keeps on kissing you. The envy to see him shirtless almost overwhelming as you keep on pawing at his upper body.

Just as his lips make contact with the skin of your throat, a loud banging on the door makes you jump and Negan grunts in frustration.

“Boss, we're all done and ready to go,” Simon informs him through the door, never opening it, knowing damn well that he can't come in without Negan's authorization.

“Fucking...” The rugged leader trails off and groans into your neck, sending shivers down your spine that you know for sure he’s picked up on. “Get your asses to the trucks, I'll be right fucking there,” he barks for Simon to hear and a muffled “alright, boss,” follows.

Negan's head pops up right in front of yours, a smile on his lips as he examines your darkened cheeks and your puffy lips. He chuckles. “Listen, doll, you can either stay here 'til tomorrow or, well, shit, you could always come back home with me right now and we fucking finish this.”

“I- I wanna s-stay here. P-Please?”

“Alright,” he sighs out. “Shit... Alright, doll.” With that, he gets off of you, careful not to crush you with his weight in the process, and stands back up in front of the bed as you slowly sitting back up on the mattress, embarrassed at how far you two took this kiss.

You watch as he swiftly grabs his leather jacket that he’d thrown on the small couch in the corner, putting it on effortlessly and grabbing Lucille which is waiting for him right next to the
Your mind is invaded by the thought of him going back to the Sanctuary and running to one of his women, and it makes your blood boil how much the mere thought of it stings. You can't help the small, sad whine that escapes your lips and it immediately catches Negan's attention.

He quickly turns around and walks back to you on the mattress, tears rolling down your cheeks at an alarming rate. “Hey- Shit, baby girl, what's going on with you?” He asks, clearly confused. You shrug, your head dropping down as your hands nervously pull at the blankets beneath you but he's not having it, his right hand brings your head back up to force you to look at him.

“You wish that you could actually trust him instead of being all too well aware of the fact that he's not the type to commit and that erasing you from his life will be all too easy for him to do while you'll never be able to shake him the fuck off.

It makes you sick to even think about him with someone else and you hate what that implies. You hate what your jealousy shows, hate the way you feel about him, and you hate that there's not a damn thing you can do about it. It's like you've fucking imprinted on him or something and that's just about the worst thing you could have done to yourself.

“Hey, dolly.” Negan calls for your attention and brings your head back up for you to look at him and, once he's sure that you won't look away, he extends his pinkie finger out to you.

“Tomorrow, you're gonna let me make you a proper dinner and spend the rest of the night with me, we’ll do whatever you wanna do,” he finishes more seriously, his pinkie waiting for yours to seal the deal but, instead, you let out a small giggle, happy about his approach on the situation, and grab the back of his neck to bring his lips back down on yours, making him smile against your mouth.

“That's a real good fucking way to seal a deal, baby doll, but you still gotta pinkie swear otherwise it ain't official.” You blush and wrap your smaller pinkie finger around his and he brings your face back to his to kiss you one more time. “Thank you,” you whisper against his lips.

“I'm gonna be busy all fuckin’ day, darlin’, and when I come home, I’ll just go straight to bed so I can come back and get’cha. Stop worrying that pretty head o’yours, I can hear ya think from here, sweetheart,” he reassures you with a smirk and you avoid his eyes, embarrassed at how obvious you must have been for him to just get it spot-on like that.

“Remember what I said about taking it step by step, doll? It doesn't mean that I’ve changed my
fucking mind about you and what I want for you. I'm an asshole, that's for fucking sure, no questions here, I don't know how to handle the way I feel about you and you end up getting caught in the crossfire of me trying to sort my shit out. You don't deserve it, just so we're clear, but I'm a selfish sonuvabitch—"

Another bang on the room's door interrupts once again and Negan lets out a frustrated laugh. “Alright, baby girl, daddy's gotta go beat some fucking idiot's ass but you better believe that I'll be back for you first thing tomorrow morning.”

“Y-Yeah, alright.” You seem so reluctant to let him leave that he can’t help but bend back down one more time to steal another kiss.

“I don't fucking know what the hell you're doing to me or why the fuck I feel the way I do about you, sweetheart, but- Fucking shit, one thing I do know? I give a shit. No matter how fucking terrible I am at showin' it; I fuckin' care, darlin’.” He kisses your forehead and swings Lucille on his shoulder, winking at you before walking out, whistling the same soft tone he always seems to whistle. The one you can never quite put your finger on.

You watch him through the window as he walks out the open gates of the small community, flashing his middle finger at who you assume to be Gregory, the supposed leader of the community though Jesus says that he's the biggest coward there is and, if what Negan has told you about the man calling him this morning to tell on you is true, than you can already tell that you won’t get along well with the guy.

That aside, you can't help but smile at the moment you’ve just shared with Negan, it has to be one of the rare times that the two of you going at each other's throats actually resulted in something… Did Negan seriously give you a date? This is so weird, but you try not to think about it, your anxiety is already doing a great job trying to ruin the way you feel with a ton of what-ifs and doubts.

You're starting to know Negan, and the way he spoke to you just a few seconds ago is a far cry from what you're used to. He seemed truly genuine and that makes you anxious for some reason. You don't want to let your guards down not to get hurt again, but you also wish that you could just let yourself enjoy that fuzzy feeling you're getting without questioning it too much.

Luckily, a knock on your door snaps you out of your thoughts and you don't even have time to give whoever’s behind the door permission to come in when they’re already bursting in your room. “Hello, darling. I'm Gregory, I'm running things around here and since Negan told me that you'll be staying with us until tomorrow, there’re some ground rules for you—”

“Damn it, Gregory-” a flustered Jesus bursts into the room shortly after the older man and stops in his tracks when he sees that you're not even properly dressed. “The girl's not even dressed yet, for God’s sake. Get out.” The blue-eyed man pushes Gregory out and apologize to you, clearly embarrassed, before leaving you to get dressed.

so that… happened. of course.

12:30 P.M //
You've spent the rest of your morning working at the garden with some really sweet people from the community and you have to admit that it was nice to be able to interact with genuine people, people who care about each other's wellbeing and comfort. You’d completely forgotten what that felt like; being cared for.

You've just finished washing your hands in the bathroom in Gregory's mansion, 'cause yes, apparently the big ass building sitting in the middle of the community “belongs” to him.

*and you thought Negan was dramatic. seriously.*

Walking out of the huge mansion, you immediately spot Jesus waiting for you, sitting at a picnic table right beside your cabin, and wave at him from the stairs before quickly making your way to him but a firm grip on your wrist keeps you from going too far. You turn around to identify who’s holding you back and let out a sigh when you come face to face with Gregory, a lit cigar between his lips.

*fucking…*

“I believe we got off on the wrong foot you and I, darling,” he says nonchalantly, not letting go of your wrist, whilst taking a long drag out of his cigar, blowing the toxic smoke right in your face, making you cough. “I take it you don't smoke, darling. Good, women shouldn't smoke -”

*oh no you fucking don't.*

“Oh my God, shut up already! And let go of me, old man,” you scowl, snatching your wrist from his grip and make your way to Jesus, a grimace on your face at the lingering smell of the cigar.

You spot a smile on Jesus' face as you get closer to him and it makes you chuckle a little. You sit down in front of him and cross your arms across your chest. "Go ahead, you butthole, laugh at my misery."

“I'm sorry, y/n,” he apologizes though the grin on his face tells you he’s not feeling too bad.

You throw a tiny piece of wood at him and you both laugh for a little while before you start your meal in a comfortable silence, breaking it from time to time to talk about your morning. That's all you really needed, a friend to talk to, a place to relax, a small moment to forget and get your head on straight.

“So, you wanna talk about it?” Jesus carefully asks when he can tell that, after just three bites, you’re done with your meal.

Just like the night before, you tense a little at the question and pick at the crust of your barely touched sandwich. "Wh-Where do I start?" You ask with a nervous chuckle and a frown.

“Well, I hear the beginning’s always good,” he teases with a small smile, getting a soft laugh from you. “Seriously though, I don't know. Begin wherever you want to begin, y/n. I got all the time in the world, I'm not going anywhere, and this conversation stays between the two of us, promise.”
“Alright… Yeah… Alright.” And so, you start talking. You tell him about everything that weights heavy on your mind, not just what happened yesterday. You tell him about your past, about your parents, you tell him about Negan, you tell him everything you need to get out of your system and, goddamn, does it feel good.

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4:00 P.M //

It’s just you and Paul in the otherwise completely empty and trashed streets, he somehow got you to tag along for his supply run and, needless to say, after what happened yesterday, you weren’t really all that hot for it but he promised you that it’ll only be the two of you and you know that he can handle himself out there so it reassured you a small bit.

Your knuckles are white as you hold your bow with a firm hand, afraid to have a repeat of yesterday no matter how hard Jesus tries to comfort you and even though your little supply run has been nothing but a complete success so far. You’ve both found a bunch of medical supplies, food, water, clothes and a bunch of other things, you even took a good few dozens walkers out all by yourself.

“One of my closest friends died at the hands of Negan,” Jesus breaks the silence, his words making your head snap up to look at him as you both keep on walking.

“When he found us, he didn’t mean us any harm- Well, at least I don’t think he was planning on killing one of us but I… I’d decided that we should fight back, people kept on telling me that it’ll only get our people killed, that we weren’t big enough of a number to fight against him and his men, but I guess I was completely blinded by anger, y’know? And I tried to play it smart when really all I was doing was digging my friend’s grave.”

“What… What d’you do?” You carefully ask, curious but not wanting to overstep. “Does it really matter? He died because of it, Negan said that the only reason why he didn’t kill me that day is because he wanted me to learn that my actions have consequences for the people around me.” He lets out a dry chuckle. “Believe it or not, he wasn’t half as bad as I’d thought he’d be.”

You stop in your tracks then, Jesus following your lead and finding your eyes. “Wh-Why are you telling me this for, Jesus?”

“I did something stupid because I was angry and someone else took the blow for me, but I had to learn to forgive myself for that, y/n. Connor? He didn't die because you were being stupid or reckless, he died because you're a human being and you froze when panic took over you, there's no shame in that. There's no shame in being human, you didn't mean him any harm, it just happened, and you can't keep blaming yourself for things you don't have any control over, alright? It takes
time, but you'll only get there if you let yourself feel it.”

“I'm so sorry about your fr-” A groan interrupts you and you both turn your heads to scan the area, quick to spot a few walkers wandering around the streets and swiftly take your bow out, aim and take your shot, the arrow going through a walker's rotten skull as it falls limp to the ground, finally lifeless, a sigh of relief escaping your lips as adrenaline starts to kick back into your system.

“Wanna kick some butts before we go back?” Jesus asks with a small smile. “You bet,” you answer with a small smirk.

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21st January ;

5:30 A.M //

A knock on your door makes you jump as you're just out the shower, only wearing the white t-shirt Negan left you yesterday and a pair of white cotton panties. You panic when you hear the door open and close, your heart skipping a beat when you hear an all too familiar laugh.

You shyly get out of the small bathroom to be greeted by a grinning Negan, your cheeks immediately getting set on fire when his eyes shamelessly wander up and down on your body.

“G-Good morning, N-Negan,” you quietly greet him. “Good fucking morning indeed, doll,” he smirks lewdly.

“I- I uh… I'm n-not ready ju-just yet…” You trail off, hoping he’d understand that you want some privacy to get dressed. “Yeah, no shit darlin’,” he affirms with a chuckle, walking closer to you with a smirk. “Still, where the hell’s my morning kiss?”

“I dunno, I don't think it's here today,” you smile with a timid shrug, your cheeks burning up.

“Well shit, that's just a fucking shame, ain't it, sweetheart?” He tilts his head. “Yeah, it is,” you whisper with a coy little smile.

Negan takes another step towards you, closing the distance between your bodies, before leaning his forehead against yours just like he did yesterday, just like he always does when he's about to kiss the air out of your lungs.

“You’re all spunky this morning, huh?” He observes with a smile. “You’ve been on my mind every goddamn hour of the fucking day and you show up smellin’ like the sweetest sin, lookin’ every bit of it in my goddamn t-shirt on and, good fucking lord, love, are those piercings I saw through that damn shirt?”
You bite down on your lip, embarrassed that he saw your breasts through his t-shirt and that you now have to find a way to tell him that you've gotten both of your nipples pierced when you were only fifteen. 'Cause that doesn't sound dodgy.

"Don't bite your goddamn lip, doll. S'my fucking job," he scolds, making you hastily let you of the piece of flesh.

“So, you gonna tell me or do I have to check for myself, baby girl?” He sadly redirects his interest towards your breasts. Surprisingly.

“I uh… Y-Yeah, I- I have…” You look up at him through your lashes and feel like crying under his stare. “I got my nipples pierced,” you quietly mumble, way too quickly for anyone to even understand that you're speaking English right now, but he understands, loud and clear. He always does.

“Fucking hell-” You cut him off by leaning up and giving him what he asked for a few minutes ago; a morning kiss which he gladly takes it, and it starts off all sweet and chaste as you're the one initiating it but he's quick to turn it into something way less innocent and a lot dirtier.

He's about to turn this simple kiss into another one of your heavy make-out sessions and you have to force yourself to push him away because you don't want the kiss to get to the same place it did yesterday.

“W-We should go home,” you pant out and Negan can't help the big grin appearing on his lips when he hears you refer to the Sanctuary, the place he's built, as home.

“Yeah? And where's that, baby girl?” “Don't push it,” you whisper with a raised eyebrow, making the man chuckle.

“That a challenge, doll? Sure as shit sounds like one,” he taunts. “It's whatever you want it to be, Negan,” you answer with a natural sass, slightly rolling your eyes before walking back into the bathroom, locking the door behind you to make sure that a certain someone doesn't burst in on you putting your bra on, it's already embarrassing enough that he knows about your piercings now.

yeah, that was really fucking awkward, let's never do that again.

7:28 A.M //

The ride home was actually pretty nice, Negan made you laugh and blush more times than you can count, it felt right to finally be able to have a proper conversation with him without it ending up with the two of you spitting venom at each other's face.

But, as he kills the engine of his truck, it feels like the atmosphere shifts in a matter of a second
and you hate it. “Doll, what I said yesterday?”

he didn’t mean it, of course he didn’t fucking mean it, i told you, you stupid bi-

“It’s not really the kind of shit I talk about all willy-nilly ‘cause I don’t usually feel the need to but-” he turns on his seat to look at your teary eyes, his eyebrows furrowing when he spots a tear rolling down your face.

“Hey, fucking hell, doll- Why’re you crying?” “M’s-sorry I just- I thought- I thought that you-you were about to-to take it all b-back. M’stupid.”

Negan lets out a dry chuckle. “Well shit,” he whispers, “I fucked up pretty bad with you, didn't I, angel face?”

He gently grabs your face when he doesn't get an answer out of you. “Look, yeah, I feel real fucking awkward saying all that shit, but it doesn’t mean that I don't fucking mean it, doll. I would save myself the fucking embarrassment if I didn't mean any of it.”

“O-Okay... Okay,” you whisper and nod, trying to take in this new information, information which is, by the way, a whole lot to take in coming from Negan.

“Now, princess, daddy's gotta go on another supply run but I want you to stay here and get some rest. Take the day off.”

“I... I could c-come with you-” Okay so, maybe you’re a little anxious about him leaving again.

Negan chuckles and shakes his head. “Just be good 'til I get back. I should be back by the end of the afternoon, tonight at the latest, so you just wait for daddy and behave in the meantime. You can do that, can't you, baby doll?” You nod your head affirmatively and bite down on your lip without a thought, making the man next to you grunt again.

“Doll. Lip.” He points out. “Sorry it's... It's nervous,” you explain, fidgeting with your fingers and shifting on your spot on the bench.

The hardened Savior smirks at your flustered expression before sending you a wink. “Alright. C'mon out, sweetheart.”

At that, you both get out of his truck and, before you can even close the door on your side, he's got you pinned against the warm metal of the vehicle and his lips are on yours in a second, his tongue pushing past your lips without invitation, your hands flying to the back of his neck.

“You'll be good, baby girl?” He asks as he moves on to bite down on your throat, making you whimper and shake beneath him.

“Y-Yes, I'll be good,” you whine as he bites down on your pulse point and you both get taken by surprise when your knees completely give out under you, your body clearly enjoying the sensorial stimulation it's just received and Negan can't help but grunt and smirk into your skin as he laps at the fresh teeth marks he's left behind on your sensitive flesh.
There's something completely and utterly fucked up about you enjoying getting bit, you know that, though Negan doesn't seem to give a shit about the entire context, yet you can't help the way your body is reacting to it, no matter how wrong it is.

“Dinner. Tonight,” he reminds you, his voice muffled into your skin. “Y-Yes,” you dumbly nod like there was even a question there.

With one last kiss, Negan slowly peels himself away from you and you're about to walk inside to go and check on your friends but don't even get to take three steps away from the truck when he gets a hold of you again. “Oh, and, baby?” The ruthless leader gets right behind you and whispers in your ear.

“If you feel like takin’ a nap, you go ahead and take it in my bed, s'all yours for the day.”

Negan quickly kisses the shell of your ear and gives your butt a slight smack before walking away, swinging Lucille on his shoulder, whistling with a cocky smirk on his lips and you thank whoever might be listening that no one’s around right now because you would have died of embarrassment, yet you get an odd feeling that you might not have minded all that much.

what the hell is this man doing to you?

Chapter End Notes

HI, YES, HELLO! QUICK P.S.A 'FOR YOU LEAVE; DO NOT GET YOUR NIPPLES PIERCED IF YOU ARE UNDERAGE, I'M A MORON THEREFORE I DO NOT COUNT! AS A GENERAL RULE; DO NOT ALTER ANYTHING ON YOUR BREASTS IF YOU ARE UNDERAGE! ALSO, HI, YOU SHOULDN’T BE HERE IF YOU’RE UNDERAGE, YOU MUST GO TINY CHILD, THIS IS NO LAND FOR THE LIKES OF YOU. COME BACK WITH AN I.D!

Also don't do drugs, kids. I don't know her but I hear she's bad.
8:25 AM //

“What you had out there wasn't a fucking life, y/n!” Randall snaps once again, his voice rougher than it usually is, and you're starting to pull at your hair.

You have no idea how the hell you’ve ended up in such a heated argument with Randall yet; here you are. “It was to me, Randall!” You shout back, past the point of remaining calm for your friend’s sake.

A simple “hello” and a small smile from you turned into a messy and completely unjustified fight with the ex-tattoo artist. A simple goddamn word turned into a monster and you have absolutely no other choice but to deal with the venom it’s spitting at your face.

You know Randall needs to vent; you know he probably will apologize later on, and you know that he most certainly has no fucking idea what the hell he's talking about right now, so you let it happen.

You let him be angry, let him scream and give him room to wiggle his arms around as he goes on and on.

After what happened to Connor, you feel bad for running off without even speaking to him or, at the very least, try and make sure that he was alright. You now realize that you didn't even take the time to make time for him, and he's one of, if not the, most important person in your life nowadays.

“Why are you fighting it, I don't fucking get you sometimes,” he spits out, forcing your attention back to him.

“Fighting what, Randall? What exactly is it I’m fighting?” You ask with a sigh, rubbing at your temples as you try real hard to stay collect yourself but you can feel your jaw starting to ache under the pressure you’re putting on it and your head starting to throb with a blooming migraine.
If there's one thing you loathe it's being pushed around and yelled at unjustifiably.

“This!” The blonde man snaps, his hands moving all over like he’s making any sense and you're the one out of your head. “The life we're trying to give you, y/n! Why would you fight safety, food and water, please, explain this shit to me 'cause I don't fucking understand it.”

You look around the small garden you're both having an argument in the damn middle of, and don't seem to be able to find anything... Good? About this place. This garden is mostly concrete, the only reason things are actually able to grown is because they have small crates filled with dirt and whatever else you need to harvest whatever they're growing in this place.

I wouldn’t be surprised if they were actually trying to grow guns and bullets...

“Of course you don't,” you scoff, bringing your attention back to him again, your eyes narrowed and your blood boiling under your skin. “You all have everything you want and need right here at your fingertips but at what cost, huh? You're nothing but someone's soldier, Randall! That's all those people in there are,” you point at the compound with an accusatory finger. “I'm not like you, I'm not like them, and I'm not like him. I'll never be like him.”

“You should,” Randall says with a tone you've never heard from him before. “We're all Negan around here and that's how it’s supposed to be, y/n.” If it was anatomically possible, your jaw would have dropped to the ground right there and then.

“You didn't just say that,” you give a stunted chuckle. “I didn't hear that right, did I?” You ask, a plead in your voice and a knot forming at the pit of your stomach. “You are not Negan, Randall, what the fuck! You're talking like the other brain-washed idiots in this place. What's gotten into you?” You're at a loss, your eyes getting watery, but you keep it to yourself.

It feels like Randall just turned into a ball of anger and bitterness right in front of you and you hate it, absolutely despise it, because you know that he's probably drowning in it and he needs help to get his head back above the water, and you'd be damned if you're gonna let him drown without putting up a fight, doesn't matter if you end up falling deep in the water with him. You're already there anyway.

“Yeah, right,” he scoffs and looks straight into your eyes. “It's easy for you! You don't know what it's like to have him behind your back every goddamn second of the day, waiting for you to fuck up somehow. It's fucking easy for you! You don't have to worry about getting on his bad side since you're one of his whores now-” his rantings are cut short by your hand harshly meeting his cheek.

“Don't you fucking dare, Randall!” Your throat stings it's been that long since you've raised it in such a way.

You feel like you could throw up right there and then. You feel sick, and you're torn between just walking away or ripping his head off. Worst is, if you're being completely honest, he's not completely wrong now, is he? You and Negan do have something, you don't know what the fuck that something is, but it exists and that has to make a difference even though nothing related to the man is a walk in the park.
Randall's words are not justified, you're not giving yourself to this man and you don't plan to, at least not with him living the way he does now, that's for damn sure. You refuse to become another notch at his belt, he already has enough fangirls; you don’t want any part of that.

“I’m sorry, okay?!” You snap, not even feeling the tears pouring out of your eyes but Randall sees them when he looks at you and immediately feels a pang in his chest. “I am so, so, so sorry, Randall. I shouldn’t have left, I should have been there for you last night but I’m a fucking coward and I run when things hurt my heart and losing Connor-” A sob cuts you off and you gasp for air as your eyes finds Randall's unique blue and grey one.

“It fucking hurts,” you whisper, feeling that grief you held off on feeling yesterday slamming right into you. “If I could give him back and take his place I would, believe me I would, but I... I can’t! I can’t bring him back and I’m hurting but I can’t even begin to phantom what you’re feeling and I fucking hate myself for leaving you all alone to deal with that loss-” Your breath is knocked out of you when Randall collides into you, his arms tight around your body as he holds you to him like you might disappear if he lets go.

Your hands find the back of his shirt and you take fistfuls of the soft fabric, desperately clinging to him because you’re just as afraid as he is.

You feel him shake in your embrace, the two of you crying, pouring your hearts out to one another. “I’m sorry,” Randall rasps out. “I love you, and I’m sorry for sayin’ those things.”

“Love you too, Randall,” you easily return the sentiment, making the tattooed Savior the sixth person to ever receive those three little words from you.

“He’s just gone. He’s gone and it fucking hurts so bad,” he murmurs above your head. “We fucking grew up together and he’s just gone now.” You tighten your grip around the your grieving friend, trying your hardest to convey that you’re here and you’re not going to leave him again.

“You’ll be alright, it’ll be alright, Randall,” you whisper into his shirt with a nod, trying to reassure yourself too. “We’ll be alright.”

Reluctantly, you pull away to take a look at his face and your heart breaks when your teary eyes find Randall’s. There’s so much sorrow and sadness in them, it’s like he’s reflecting you.

You sigh and your eyes flutter shut when the tall man leans down and drops his forehead against yours. “Fuck, I was such a fucking dick. I’m so sorry, I didn’t mean any of what I said. There’s no excusing it but I am sorry, sweetheart.”

“S’okay,” you whisper, enthralled by his closeness. “I’m sorry for slapping you, I shouldn't have.”

“No, no, I deserved it, it’s just... I don’t know. I just saw you and I lost it, I'm such a-” “Stop it, I said I forgive you,” you cut him off, not liking the way he speaks.

“But just so you know, I will throw a chair at you next time,” you joke to try and lighten the air and you swear you could deflate with relief with you see him smile and hear him chuckle. “I'll
hold you to that, princess,” he grins, and you laugh before leaning to the side to plant a lingering kiss on his subtly cheek.

“You better,” you speak against his skin, not willing to pull away just yet.

“Morning, pumpkin, how we doin' today?” Simon's voice booms right behind you just as you're about to step inside your room, making you jump, a gasp leaving your mouth and a chuckle leaving his.

“God! Don't- Don't do that, you scared the crap outta me,” you scold him, holding a hand over your heart. “Sorry 'bout that, pumpkin,” he doesn’t look sorry at all.

“C'mon, let's go have a li'l chat, you and me, yeah?”

no, thank you.

“Wha-” Simon ignores any potential protest and drags you along with him to the kitchen. Your stomach lets out a low rumble at the thought of food and, of course, you can count on him to hear it and grin like a douche. “Ya hungry, pumpkin?”

“Y-Yeah, so-sorry,” you bashfully apologize. “Eh, no worries. We’ll got ya sorted out.”

He points at one of the stools surrounding the island sitting in the middle of the big industrial kitchen and you sit on it with a little difficulty, your body aching all over.

“There it is,” you hear Simon say as he looks through the kitchen’s supply room and see him come out of there with a bar of chocolate; a whole chocolate bar.

The seasoned Savior sits in front of you at the opposite side of the island, puts the candy down and gently pushes it towards you on the counter with the tip of his index finger. You hesitantly take the treat and look up at him, confused.

“Negan thought you might like those, so he brought back a stash for ya, pumpkin.”

You hope that Simon can’t see your cheeks heat up and see your legs bouncing giddily from where he sits. “Oh- Okay, th-thank you,” you try to stay casual but the smirk on the Savior’s face lets you know that you’re not doing the best job of it.

“You're welcome, pumpkin. M’sure Negan’d be more than happy to get a thank you too.” You bite your lip and quietly nod.
You can hear people working around in the warehouse and it's kind of reassuring that it's not completely silent, it'll be awkward otherwise.

“So, I assume you know Negan went on another little trip outside for the day, yeah?” Simon’s voice breaks through the otherwise silent room. “Y-Yes, he told me, yeah,” you nod, looking down as you pull on your fingers.

“Good. That’s good. So, he left me in charge since he took Dwight with him and left me a little something for the two of us to talk about, you okay with that?”

“W-Well, y-yeah, I- I guess.”

*please, don't tell me he's about to give us a class on sexual intercourse, please, god, no.*

“Alright, then!” He straightens up and grins at you. “So, li’l lady, you have completely free access to Negan's quarters today-”

*yeah, okay, cool, but no thank you.*

A deep chuckle makes you snap out of your thoughts and look up at Simon with a blush on your cheeks. It feels like this man can read your mind sometimes and you don't much care for it.

“And, they're completely empty. S’all yours, no one else is in there, pumpkin,” he finishes his sentence with a slight smirk, and you hate how easily he got what was bothering you.

what? do they, like, have a storage room for these women or...???

“What if I give you- Wait, no, okay. What if I share my chocolate bar with you, huh? Would you tell me then?” You ask, a little too hopeful that your childish plan may actually do the trick.

“Everyone has a price, pumpkin,” he starts, standing up from his stool, “and mine's a li’l higher than that I'm afraid,” he concludes with a laugh and a small smile appears on your lips, happy to see that, even though you've failed to make him spill out whatever information he’s withholding, he still played along and got a laugh out of it.

You watch as Simon leans against the island’s rounded edge right next to where you’re sitting and takes a long look at you, making you shift uncomfortably on your stool.

“You can do whatever you want today, pumpkin, just don't do anything you know you're ain't supposed to 'cause I would hate to have to tell Negan about it. You never know what kind of mood he'll be in whenever he'll come back from his li’l trip out in the real world. Believe me, you don't want to misbehave today, pumpkin.” His voice isn’t threatening but you can still pick up on the clear warning in his words.
The man pushes himself off the appliance and starts walking out of the kitchen, but you quickly jump off your stool and run up to him. “Wait, I-” You stop in your tracks when he turns, suddenly unsure of what to say now that he's looking at you again.

“I, uh… Is there anything I can do around the compound to help?” You quietly ask, subconsciously twisting your fingers.

Simon sighs. “No matter how much I fucking appreciate someone as hardworking as ya, pumpkin, Negan's made it clear that he wants you to get some rest today so, no; there's nothing around here for you do to.”

Your shoulders slump a little, a tiny frown creasing your brow. “But… I won't tell. Please, just give me something to do. Please?” You timidly insist, looking down at your intertwined fingers as you pull on them.

“Listen, pumpkin, I can't be running the place looking after you, not today-” “But you won't have to!” You cut him off. “I promise, I- I don't need to be l-looked after, Simon.”

“Look, y/n, I can't risk you getting a single scratch, alright? Negan made it pretty damn clear that he'll chop my balls off if he finds even the slightest of scratches on ya when he'll get back, so, I'm sorry, but it's still a no.” Simon puts his foot down and you know you've lost that battle.

“Yuuuuuuuuugh….”

“You might want to stop rolling your eyes so much 'fore they get stuck in the back of your head, missy,” Simon remarks with a chuckle, making you roll your eyes again. “Sorry,” you mumble, a little upset and a whole lot frustrated.

“Alright,” he starts with a long sigh, “you really want something to do, pumpkin?” “Yes!” You quickly answer, blushing slightly when your sudden outburst of enthusiasm makes Simon laugh.

“Okay then, how 'bout that; it's currently…” He pauses to look at his watch, “nine thirty, so, let's say you get some rest 'til noon, you eat a li'l something, and then I'll give you some shit do to if you're still feeling up to it, deal?”

“Can't I just start now, Simon?” You whine, all too aware of the fact that you sound like a petulant child right now. “No, you either take that deal or you get nothin’, pumpkin. What's it gonna be?” He asks with a raised eyebrow.


Simon extends his hand out to you and you shyly grab it for him to give a firm shake, almost crushing your smaller hand in the process. “Now, you wanna go get some rest in your room or in Negan's quarters?”

“Wh-What's the difference?” You ask with a tilted head. “It's way more comfortable and calmer there and, hell, the place is empty, he even gave you access to his apartment and that doesn’t happen. Like, ever. You should make the most of it, pumpkin.”

“A-Alright, c-can you… can you walk me there, please?”
“'Course, pumpkin, but let's move it 'cause I got shit to do.”

9:36 A.M //

Simon has just closed the door of Negan's office, leaving you standing in the middle of the room, after he gave you a tour of the entire place; it's mostly bedrooms and a seriously overdone common room, the one you were shameless making out in with Negan just two nights ago and, of course, you couldn't help but to replay the scene over and over again as Simon was showing you around the place.

You're glad to finally be in Negan's apartment because it has to be the only damn part in his quarters that doesn't smell of fucking nail polish and cheap perfume. Though, the place definitely smells of him; leather, gun power, whiskey and cologne, something that's all Negan and a dead giveaway that the man spends most of his time in here. You find comfort in that.

You clumsily take your combat boots off and carefully shimmy out of your jeans, letting them pool at your ankles before stepping out of them. You feel comfortable here, like you belong.

You take your time and look around the apartment. His office is huge, a big mahogany desk with a black leather chair behind it; that you'd already seen, but the chimney, the couch and recliner? That's new. Your eyebrows shot up when you find a little kitchen tugged away behind a wall that hides it completely from view if you don't walk into the little living room. His office, living room and kitchen are all in the same space and it's beyond you how you've never noticed.

You quickly find the door to his bedroom and wander inside, keen to take your time exploring since the last time you were in it, you didn't really have the luxury to look around the place because, not only were you pissed about being in here but also, and mostly, because Negan had other plans for you and they clearly did not include a grand tour.

You blush as your eyes drop on the king-sized bed sitting in the middle of the room, recalling what happened the last time, the first time, you were in this very bed and how shitty you'd felt the next morning. You still can't believe he asked Simon to bring you back to your bedroom that night...

“Whatever, it's done,” you whisper to yourself, trying to shake off the feeling as you walk towards a huge shelf filled with books.

You smile as you trace a single fingertip over the old books’ spines and grab one at random before crawling underneath the soft blanket on the huge bed, almost purring in comfort as you settle on the silky mattress cover and open the book.
You barely get the thick book open when something falls out of it, making you jump in surprise and, with one look at the book, you realize that it's not even real; it's a box.

_of fucking course you had to pick the only damn book that isn't a fucking book... of course! 'cause why not!

You put the box next to you on the bed and look down between your thighs where two shiny rings fell out.

_**please don't be what I think you are, for the love of fucking god, don't you do this to me...**_

You take both the rings in your shaking hand and closely look at them, guilt washing over you. These are wedding bands; Negan's and Lucille's.

_**oh... Lucifer is real and he's sabotaging me.**_

You whisper a “sorry” to no one before putting the two rings back into the book-shaped box and quickly get out of the bed to put it back with the other books.

You decide to go back to bed, not feeling like reading anymore. Your thoughts heavy. You're not sure what's going on with you right now, but you don't like it, it feels... too complicated.

You just feel so goddamn empty whenever Negan isn't around, and you hate it. You’ve never minded feeling hollow before, but then he came into your life and he changed everything. You somehow got attached to him and now you can't stand what he does to you. He completely fills you when he's around you but whenever he goes away, it's like he takes it all back, like he won't allow you to stay warm if it doesn't come from him.

With a heavy sigh, you close your eyes and let yourself drift off to sleep surrounded by Negan’s smell, hoping that your mind will be calmer and more rested after a quick power nap. One can only hope but you wouldn't bet on it.

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5:20 PM //

You've done everything Simon gave you to do. In all honestly, he only gave you really simple and safe tasks, but at least you weren't doing nothing all day long. You’ve checked the armory, loaded the guns that needed to be loaded, cleaned the ones needing cleaning, made the inventory of the pantry, and now you've decided to do something that's been bugging you for a while; fix one of the trucks you haven’t had time to repair before.

You've already fixed one up on your first day at the Sanctuary but didn't get the time, nor did you have the energy, to tend to the other and it's been bugging you ever since. It just felt like you'd
started a job and left it unfinished, and God knows how insane that can drive you. So, here you are, underneath the giant truck that's been haunting your dreams and nagging you for leaving it untouched in the corner of the immense garage of the compound, covered head to toe in sweat and grease. Overall, you feel pretty damn good.

You're actually done with the repairs now and moved on to cleaning some parts that need cleaning here and there- Well, at least you were until Simon's voice boomed into the big, open space, making you jump underneath the damn truck, resulting in you hitting your freaking head.

“Ow! What the-” “Get the hell out from under there,” he barks, panicked like he's just caught playing with a ticking bomb or something.

You sigh and slide out from underneath the vehicle, holding your head and frowning when you feel something running down the palm of your hand and between your fingers. You're bleeding.

*oh, cool. that's cool. you had one fucking job...*

“Fuckin' hell, y/n!” You wince at the echo of his booming voice, your head throbbing in protest. “I said not a fucking scratch and I find you underneath a fucking truck and now you're hurt! What the hell's gotten into you!” Simon freaks out as he runs up to you and helps you back up.

“Don't yell at me!” You snap, wiping your dirty hands on your jeans with a huff. “You scared me, and I bumped my friggin' head, that's all, I'll clean it up. Good God,” you sigh, aggravated by his attitude, and angrily clean your hands with an old handkerchief before throwing it on the floor and walking out of the garage.

“Oh, and, by the way,” you start, stopping right behind Simon, but not turning around, “I fixed the damn thing, t'was just a leak.”

“Thank you but-” “You're welcome,” you don't let him finish, not in the fucking mood to be treated like a child, and walk away, the sun outside fully hitting your eyes, making you hiss. Okay so, maybe you've hit your head harder than you thought.

Dragging your feet on the concrete as you walk back to the compound to get back to your room, you stop dead in your tracks when you spot Randall, Faith, Arat and some other people that you don't know shit about -and you don't really wanna if you're being honest- all sitting down around the usual table in the yard, laughing and chatting.

Randall spots you pretty damn quickly but, just as he's about to stand up from his seat, you shake your head and walk away from the small group. You don't feel like interacting with anyone today, aside from Negan and the little episode you've had with Randall earlier this morning, you didn't talk to anyone at all today besides Simon and it's only because you had to.

Something just doesn't feel right ever since you've stepped foot back in this place, it feels empty without Connor around. You need to process that he’s gone for real and seeing his usual spot at the table filled by a stranger makes your eyes sting. He’s not gone on a supply run; he won’t be back tonight.
You reach the shower room with a heavy sigh and look in the big mirror on the wall above the sinks. There’s a small but deep looking cut right above your right eye, it’s steadily bleeding and getting caught into your eyebrow. You wince when you touch it with shaky fingertips.

“Darn it,” you sigh, feeling exhausted and the day is far from over. You have a night to spend with Negan.

“Well, don't you look mighty fine, kitten.” You gasp, your heart almost leaping out of your chest when you hear Negan's voice echoing in the quiet room.

“Jesus! What's with people and scaring the crap outta me today, you all need to stop, okay? This is such a horrible trend; I do not support it.”

He chuckles and crosses his arms over his chest. “I'm the only one allowed to creep up on you. Who the hell scared ya, sugar?”

“Doesn't matter, just... don't do that, please,” you whisper, absently pressing your fingers against the weeping wound above your right eye.

“Hey now, look at me, baby doll.” When you don't immediately look up at him, he grabs your face with a gloved hand and forces you to, your fingers leaving your wound as he does.

You can see his eyes narrowing and his brow furrowing as he examines your face and eyeing the blood running down the right side of it. “Doll-” It’s a single word yet you can already detect the change in his tone. “I- I know. It-it's my fault though,” you quickly defend.

“I- I bumped my head while I was f-ixing a truck and- I know that I wasn't supposed t-to do that b-but I- I needed to do something. I'm... I'm sorry,” you quickly explain, a tear rolling down your face, making your head ache even more, afraid that he might get angry at you or Simon.

To your surprise, Negan doesn't snap, his expression even softens, and he eventually lets out a small chuckle before kissing your forehead. “C'mon, baby girl, let's go get you all cleaned up,” he speaks against your skin.

“Well I... I was about to take a shower so-” “No,” he cuts you off, stepping back from you just enough so that he can look into your eyes, “you're comin' with me so I can get you cleaned up properly. We need to take care of that wound, li'l one.”

You take a second to inspect him as he speaks. He doesn’t look injured but there’re a few tiny bloody freckles peppered across his face and the blackness of his closed leather jacket doesn’t allow you to see whether it’s covered in blood or not.

Your inspection is cut short when he hooks his right arm underneath your bum, steadying you with his left arm splayed across the middle of your back, before lifting you up and pushing you against his chest, keeping you tight against him, your legs finding his waist all on their own accord like they always do.

He carries you like that through the place for everyone to see and you can feel your cheeks burning up just because you're in his arms, completely out in the open for everyone to see and judge, but Negan clearly doesn’t care and that fills you with a warmth you can’t identify.
Your face is hidden away in the crook of his neck, but you can hear people getting quiet around you as Negan walks the two of you around, his grip on you tightening as if he's afraid that someone might steal you from him.

You feel him going up a set of stairs, your body rocked by the movements, and your face only comes out of hiding when a whisper against your temple lets you know that it's okay.

Looking around, you realize that you're in his apartment, the office/living/kitchen space specifically, the light of the already setting sun coming through the wide, uncovered windows slightly blinding to your aching eyes at first but you slowly adjust as he sits you down on his desk, your eyes finding Lucille leaned against the wall right next to the door.

The bat is covered in blood and pieces of flesh, walkers' hopefully.

You're not sure what he's doing, he kinda just sat you down on the top of his desk and walked off. You saw him going in his bedroom and, eventually, your curiosity gets the best of you yet again and you decide to quietly walk to his room.

When you get there, you spot the door linking the bedroom to bathroom open, the yellow glow of artificial lights coming out of it, but you don’t see nor hear him anywhere.

“Doll, c'mere,” you finally hear his voice echoing in the bathroom. “Uh, o-okay.”

Hesitantly, you walk through the open door and spot Negan leaning against a fancy marbled counter-tops, a pretty faucet sank in the middle, and a giant mirror sits on the wall, showing Negan's reflection. You examine him for a quick second, he's taken his leather jacket and his glove off which lets you see his ever-so-slightly blood-stained white tee. It’s nothing too heavy but it is there and you’re not sure whether you should ask about it.

“Tell me if it's warm enough for ya, sweetheart,” he demands, jutting his chin out towards the big bathtub that's now filled to the brim with water and bubbles.

You shyly go and dip a finger in it, blushing when a breathy sigh escapes your lips at the warmness of the water. It's been a decade since you've last taken a bath and this is torture for you. “It's perfect, th-thank you,” you quietly let him know, gasping when you feel his hands snake around your waist, your back hitting his chest and his breath hitting the back of your right ear.

“You're welcome, y/n,” he speaks right against the shell of your ear and kisses the flesh right behind it, making goosebumps blossom all over your skin.

“I'm gonna let you get undressed while I clean Lucille up, you can take a quick shower if you wanna start to wash some of that grim off. Just call me when you're in the bath, okay, baby girl?”

“O-Okay,” you whisper and shyly turn in his arms, your nose bumping into his when you come face to face. “Thank you.”
Hazelnut orbs scan your face for a few before settling on your lips then back on your eyes. "You got it, sweetheart." His voice is low and so gruff that it makes you want to scratch your own throat.

Almost hesitantly, Negan lets go of you before walking out of the room, not bothering to close the door behind him and, for some reason, you don't really mind. You're just happy that he knows better than to make you strip in front of him.

Your body aches with exhaustion as you strip, making you whine in discomfort every now and then but you manage and watch as your panties pool around your ankles before kicking them to the side and, after eyeing the big shower tugged away in the far right corner of the room, you decide to go for a quick shower so that the water of the bath doesn’t turn grey the second you’ll sink into it.

Shower done, you hear Negan call out; “Careful on that floor with your wet feet, baby girl,” from the other room and smile a little before clumsily getting in the warm water of your long awaited bath.

You sigh in relief the second the warm water and fluffy foam hug your body, and you sink into it until you’re neck-deep, only leaving your head and wet hair out. You make sure to hide your breasts with foam before calling out for Negan as he requested and you burn so hot when he steps inside the room with a grin on his face to come and crouch right in front of the tub, that it’s a miracle the water doesn’t start boiling.

You watch as he silently leans towards the end of the tub to get the sponge hanging on the faucet, tensing a little when Negan dips his hand in the water by your feet to soak it.

“Here, pretty girl,” he carefully grabs your wet hair and twists them into a messy bun on top of your head before wrapping a scrunchy around it, giving him access to your neck and face. “You cleaned my room, baby girl,” he states matter-of-factly.

“Yeah, s-sorry, I just… There was some dust so… I thought… I'm sorry. D-Didn’t mean to overstep,” you quietly tell him, pulling on your fingers beneath the water and foam as you nervously worry at your bottom lip.

“I'm not mad, doll. Relax,” he reassures you and flashes you a wink when you ever-so-slightly look up at him, a few wayward strands of hair sticking to your face. “I really appreciate it, that's all.”

You let out a small “oh”, your face dropping down with a blush to look at the bubbles and white foam covering most of your body, and you can't help but think that he may actually be able to see your butt right now.

Without another word, he starts washing your face with the soft sponge, his movements way more gentle and careful then what you're used to as he washes the grease, sweat and blood off before letting your hair fall back down to wash them again and you swear you feel yourself purr when he starts massaging your scalp.

You're not used to this. You're not used to people caring for you and taking care of you like that
and you usually don't like being pampered but when it comes from him, it's just different. You relish in it.

You don't know if it's because you don't get to see this side of him often and there it is; out for you and only you to see, or if it's because you just like the man in his entirety and sharing this kind of moment with him is something you crave, so bad that it's bordering on unhealthy. Probably both.

“What're you thinkin’ about, princess?” Negan asks with a smirk as he finishes rinsing your hair off with the detachable shower head.

“Nothing,” you shrug. Chewing the inside of the corner of your mouth. You shyly tilt your head to look at him as he turns the shower head off and puts it back in its place.

“I got into an argument with Randall today,” you whisper with a frown, Negan crossing his arms on the edge of the tub and leaning on them, his attention all yours. “It's, uh… It's still bothering me,” you tell him with a small shrug.

“Yeah...” He sighs. “I'm gonna have to take the kid for a walk tomorrow. He's bein’ real fuckin’ stupid at the moment and I can't have that.” he says more to himself than to you and the idea of him taking Randall for “a walk” makes your skin crawl.

“He’s just lost someone very close t-to him,” you remind him, “his behavior isn't anything to be worried about it, it's normal, Negan. Give him a few days.”

“Ya think?” He asks, sounding genuinely interested in your input. “Y-yeah, you'll see. He'll get better. He just… He just needs good company and a little patience, he-he'll get through it,” you state, worry showing in your voice.

It hurts to see your friend hurting but you know that it's normal for him to be and that you have absolutely no right to keep him from feeling it, no one has the right to do that.


Negan's left hand finds your right cheek, making you turn your head to look at him. “No, you don’t,” he corrects. “But you will be when the time’s right,” he affirms with a single nod and then his lips find yours with a gentle press.

On their own accord, your hands find their way to his face, his beard tickling your wet fingers, and you can tell that he's trimmed it a bit.

You're the first to pull away much to his dismay and yours, but you need to get out of this bath. “C-Can I… Can I get out now?” You ask, a little short on breath.

“The water cold, baby?” He asks as he dips his hand in the now lurk-warm water, making you blush when his fingertips touch the skin of your left inner thigh.

“N-No it's just that… Well, I- I did take a shower before getting in but I clearly d-didn't get it all and now I'm k-kind of bathing in my own filth a-and that's kinda gross.”

“Yeah, you're right. S'fuckin’ gross, baby doll,” he chuckles, making you pout and splash water at
him. “*You're* gross,” you tease with a small giggle and he laughs along but you can tell that his eyes have darkened as he leans back in to find your lips again.

“We're both fucking gross, princess,” he mumbles against your mouth.

You gasp and let out an embarrassingly high-pitched squeal when both of hands sneak under the water to grab two handfuls of your butt cheeks before lifting you up, goosebumps covering your skin as the cold of the room seems to upset your warmed-up body.

You blush a deep red at the feeling of being fully naked against Negan's body and his hands harshly groping your bare butt cheeks. His grip on your wet skin so tight that it kind of hurts but also you find some sort of odd comfort in it.

You whimper against his lips as he walks the two of you out of the bathroom, completely discarding the fact that you're completely soaked right now, heading straight for his bed and gently laying you down on the mattress, his lips never leaving yours, his fully clothed body covering your completely naked and wet one.

“Y’mind if I take a look at ya, baby doll?” He asks, not wanting to see something you don't want him to see yet, as he starts to nibble at the crook of your neck, his face never looking down as he waits for your permission to let them drift.

“N-No, it-it's okay... I think.”

“Y’tink? Nuh-huh, y/n, I need a clear yes or a clear no, ain't shit happening 'til then,” he gently but firmly explains as he brings his head back up to rest his forehead on yours.

“I- It's just that…” You let a small, sad sigh as your eyes start to get teary, and you get frustrated when you feel a single tear rolling down your cheek. You don't want to cry, not right now, but your head keeps throwing the things Jason said back at you and that’s all you can think about.

“Y-You're gonna make fun of me,” you whisper and don’t miss the offended look crossing Negan’s features. “Why in the holy fuck would I do that, baby? Who the fuck made fun of you?”

“I- I just… I don’t know.” “Yes, baby, you do,” he insists with a frown, trying to push you to take that step, let go and give him a name.

“I don't want to talk a-about it. Please?” You plead, your eyes briefly finding his before fleeing.

“Allright, doll,” he breaks with a sigh, bringing one of his hand up to your cheek to wipe a tear away as he uses the other to hold his body up above you. “I’ll let that shit go for now.”

“What do you mean for now?” You ask, a small smile finding your lips. “You want me to tell you about my issues? You better be immortal or something 'cause the list gets pretty long.”

“Yeah?” Negan teasingly asks with a smirk. “Yup,” Your eyes widen a little as you hold his stare.

“Well then,” he lowers his face until his lips find your bottom jaw on the left side of your face, “guess s’a good thing I ain't planning on goin' anywhere any time soon, baby girl.”
You're about to give him one of your witty comebacks but are cut short when he starts sucking on that torturous spot below your jaw, making you mewl and shift underneath him, his hands finding your bare waist to keep you still as he works on leaving a dark love bite on your skin.

“Negan, please!” You're not sure what is it exactly you're pleading for, but it seems to satisfy him if the smirk you can feel against your skin is any indication.

“Please what, pretty girl? What is it you want?” The hardened leader asks, his voice even scruffier than usual, as he keeps on biting on the skin of your throat, leaving dark marks all over the delicate skin, purposeful marking you.

“Please touch me, daddy!” You sound so desperate, your voice is already wrecked, and you know that you should be embarrassed right now, but you can't seem to bring yourself to give a damn about how stupidly needy you sound. Plus, Negan seems to be enjoying it quite a lot.

“You okay with me looking at’cha, princess?” He asks again, his mouth right next to yours as he speaks, wanting your consent before crossing that line. And, even though your eyes are screwed shut, you can hear the cocky smirk he's wearing in his voice.

“Yes! Please, just... Just do something.”

Permission to look down at your bare body given, you feel his warmth leave you as he straightens up and you take a short, shaky breath in to try and calm your nerves a little.

A moment passes and you don't hear nor even feel anything so you open your eyes, tears already filling them as your mind keeps bashing you with awful words but they quickly fade away when you see Negan standing in front of the bed, knees digging in the mattress as he looks down at your bare body, his bottom lip trapped between his teeth and his eyes darker than you've ever seen them.

The way he looks at you is intimating if anything. He looks like he's observing his prey and you're not sure how you're supposed to feel about it.

“Fuckin’ hell, baby…” He growls out, the sound surprising you, and the intensity of it combined with his gaze makes you squirm on the mattress.

“I-” Your mouth closes when he comes back down over you on the mattress, his eyes on yours, and you whimper when you feel his hands running up from your waist to land right underneath the swell of your breasts to push them together, making you squirm beneath him at the foreign gesture.

You spot an all too familiar smirk on his lips, his eyes locked on your face, scanning it and stopping to linger on the fresh cut above your right eyebrow, your lips and then lower down to your throat that is practically covered in bite marks and deep, dark hickeys, making a proud grin stretch across his mouth.

After a little while, Negan pushes his upper body up, now straddling you, straightening on his knees a little so that he's not actually putting any of his weight on you, as he lets his eyes wander further down until they land straight on chest, eyeing the barbells going through each of your
nipples.

You're about to tell him to stop staring but only a needy noise comes out of your mouth when both of his thumbs start to draw circles on both of your hypersensitive buds, the whimpers and mewls he's getting out of you only encouraging him to keep going and he starts to roll them between his thumb and forefinger, groaning when your back completely arches off the mattress, pushing your breast further into his hands, your hands clinging and tugging at the satin comforter beneath you.

“Good fucking God, baby girl. Look at you, you're a fuckin' mess and I've barely touched you,” he grunts out, his voice rough and deep.

“Ugh, m'sorry,” you manage, your voice higher than you've ever heard it. “Are ya?” He taunts with that awful smirk of his still plastered on his lips.

You choke on a cry when one of your sensitive nipples is suddenly encased into Negan’s mouth, the tip of his tongue running all over it and his teeth gently pulling on the barbell, making you whine, your hands itching to pull at his hair but you restrain yourself, not sure where those impulses are coming from.

“D-Daddy, can I, p-please, t-touch you?” You ask, panting and confused as to why you even felt the need to ask for his permission, it just didn't feel right to do it without and it seems to be more than pleasing to him because he grunts against your sensitive flesh, making your nipple pebble some more and your back arches even further to push you more firmly into his mouth.

“F’course, baby girl. Go ahead,” he gives you the green light between kisses he leaves on his way to your left nipple to give it the same love he gave to its right twin.

Your right hand flies to his hair the second he's given you permission and you whine and pull on the salt and pepper strands, making him growl as he fully sucks your nipple in, flicking his tongue between the swollen nub and the barbell going through it.

After what feels like minutes of making you squirm, mewl and whine under his ministrations, he finally leaves your sore nipples alone and goes straight back to assaulting your mouth, his tongue pushing past your already slightly parted lips, not giving you a damn second to catch your breath, but you don't mind one bit.

“You're so fuckin' pretty,” he whispers against your lips before straightening back up, taking his time to admire you and take you all in now that he finally has his girl in her birthday suit.

“My pretty baby,” he breathes out and you're unsure if he meant for you to catch that, but you most definitely did. “Fuckin’ hell, you have no fuckin' idea just how fucking beautiful you are, it's a goddamn shame, sweetheart.”

Carefully, he shuffles around and changes his position so that your legs are now outside of his and he's kneeling between them. His eyes never leaving yours, he softly grabs the back of each of your thighs, his eyes scanning your face for any signs that you may want him to stop or that you might be uncomfortable with what he's doing but he only finds confusion there. No panic or fear, just complete and utter confusion.
“What are you… I don't… I don't think you're supposed t-to look d-down there-” And there’s the panic, your chest heaving frantically and your hands fistng the sheets in a white-knuckled grip, though you don’t make a move to stop him.

“You trust me, baby?” Negan asks you, his eyes never leaving yours as he leaves a soft kiss on the inside of your right knee.

“Yes.” The steadiness of your voice as you don’t hesitate with your answer is aweing. “Then let me show you, and if something feels wrong you just say the word and it all stops, baby girl.”

“I- I just-” Your eyes comedically widen when you see him lay down on the bed, his head uncomfortably close to one of the most intimate parts of your body, and having your legs held wide open isn’t helping your cause. “You're not-” A strangled gasp cuts you off as your hands fly down to pull at the silky comforter below when Negan's tongue boldly runs past your lips until the very tip of his tongue ends up grazing the very top of the hood of your clit, making your back arch completely off the bed.

“Fu-u-ck! Daddy, please-” You start cursing and panting, completely unable to form a proper sentence as he goes at you like a man starved.

Between the feeling of his fingers digging into your soft, full thighs to hold you open, his tongue following the edges of the hood of your clit over and over again, the feeling of his beard scratching the sensitive skin of your inner-thighs, his free hand pulling you open to his tongue and the other resting and pushing against your belly to pin you to the bed and force you to take what he’s giving you; you feel like a wreck.

This is all new and foreign, and you had no idea that those feelings actually existed and now they're completely overwhelming you, setting every fiber of your being alight.

You take a deep, shaky breath before pushing yourself up on your elbows to look at him but fall right back down when you see just how dark his eyes are as he looks straight back at you, feeling his mouth crook with a smirk against your flesh.

The noises filling the room are so obscene to you but it's like fucking music to him. He's addicted to it, he loves the sounds you make, loves having you panting and whimpering beneath him. He’s never felt so goddamn powerful in his life. You're a quiet one, he'd figured as much, and that's something he's already set his mind on challenging day by day.

Your legs start to shake, and you call out for him, still unsure of what's happening to your body. You need him to reassure you, it's all still pretty scary to you.

You cry out and slap a hand on your mouth when the fucker seals his lips around your clit and maliciously sucks on it. Negan frees one of his hand to reach up and snatch your own away from your mouth, his mouth still working rhythmic suctions on your oversensitive bundle of nerves.

Tears are prickling the corners of your eyes and your belly spasms, your feet kicking until Negan pushes forward, completely taking them off the mattress as he straightens on his knees, taking you with him.
He has you bend in half, your knees crushed to your breasts as he keeps on sucking away at your clit until tears finally start to fall and you bring your free hand up and down to fist his hair and pull which earns you a growl and a bite right where your crux meets your thigh. You whine at the sting but he’s quick to soothe it away with a lap and a kiss to your abused clit, chuckling low as he makes his way back up to you, his mouth quick to find yours.

“Like whiskey ‘n’ honey, you fuckin’ are,” he mumbles against your lips, your lower body jumping when his right thumb lands on your clit and start drawing patterns on the throbbing bundle of nerves to push you over that edge your body is so badly craving to fall down from.

“C’mon, baby girl,” he growls out, making shivers run all over your body. “Let it go, it's okay,” he reassures against your parted lips as you gasp and whine into his mouth, never quite giving him full-on moans.

You whimper and hide your face in the crook of his neck, your hips moving to a messy rhythm on their own accord, desperately chasing that pressure Negan is putting down on your clit. It feels as if you have no control over your body whatsoever and it kind of scares the crap out of you.

“It's alright, baby, cum for me. Right now, cum for daddy.” When you try to squirm away from him, he doesn't let up and simply follows you on the mattress before bringing your knees up on his shoulder to keep you wide open, his thumb never slowing on your weeping clit.

“Okay, baby,” he coos, his voice is rough and breathy. “Just let it happen. Go ahead, be a good girl and cum for daddy, princess. Then I’ll let ya sleep a li’l, we’ll have dinner and watch a movie, yea?” You whine and suck your lips in to muffle a scream when he leans down to bite down on your pulse point, your legs shaking, and you can feel something like a coil in your belly about ready to snap and break you in half.

“C’mon, give it to me. Fucking do it now,” he orders in a growl, his voice filled with authority; and that does it.

You completely unravel at his command, your toes curling to the point of cramping, your back aching so high it presses you completely flush to Negan's chest which allows him to keep on sucking at your throat and you screw your eyes shut, a sharp, high-pitched, little cry making its way past your lips before you can muffle it.

“Yeah, that’s it, baby. Good girl, y/n, let it all out. Just for me, yeah?” His voice does nothing but fuel the fire. “Just for you-” You cry out, feeling yourself flutter around nothing, the sensation new and alien, something that makes your fuzzy brain freak a little.

After he's helped you ride out your high, Negan's thumb finally slows and eventually comes to a stop when he's sure he's milked your orgasm for all it’s worth, leaving you a mess on his mattress. Your chest is quickly heaving up and down, some of your still damp hair sticking to your forehead, your nipples still painfully taut, and there’s a constant throb between your legs and a soreness to your freshly, heavily marked throat.

“You're such a good girl, baby,” he coos, kissing your lips again but more gently this time around.

“M’tired,” you whisper with a small yawn, feeling lighter than you have in months.
“Yeah?” Negan chuckle, the sound thick with the arousal cursing through his veins, and you hum.
“Well, get some rest, pretty girl.”

“Stay with me?” you shyly ask, your cheeks still burning. “Yeah, f’course, baby.” He plants a lingering kiss to your lips. “Let me just take a shower real quick, be back ‘fore you know it.”

He watches as you bite down on the corner of your mouth, your eyes still glazed-over but now showing some anxiety. The way you’re looking at him; he knows he’ll never be able to deny you a damn thing. Hell, he never really has so far, and that’s beyond him.

Negan has stopped doing the whole “feelings” thing when the world went to shit, he found empowerment in casual sex and blood until he stumbled upon you and, suddenly, none of it made fucking sense anymore. He’s a grown-ass man fucking around with a different woman every night, he became the teenagers he used to force onto the ground for push-ups whenever they’d holler at girls during gym classes and that’s a kick to the nuts when you put it that way.

And that’s the thing; he’s never thought about it that way until you appeared.

“N-Negan?” Your small voice brings him out of his thoughts and back to you. “You’ll be back, right?” God, you fucking hate you scared and needy you sound.

“I promise. Gimme ten, baby girl,” he winks and steals one last kiss, making you giggle, before scrambling off the bed. He fetches a clean black shirt and a pair of boxers out of his dresser. “There ya are, princess,” he hands the items to you.

“Make yourself comfortable. Be right back,” he assures you before walking off to the bedroom, closing the door behind him.

Fresh out the shower and his ragging hard-on dealt with, Negan opens the door leading to the bedroom, the towel around his narrow hips the only thing covering him, and stops in his steps when he sees you fast asleep in his bed, snuggling his pillow tight.

“Fuck…” He carefully walks to his dresser and slips a pair of boxers on before swiftly slipping in bed with you, relishing in the way you whine and immediately snuggle back into him when he wraps his arm around you and brings you to him. Your back flush with his chest.

“Shh, s’just me, baby girl. Go back to sleep, dinner ain’t ready yet,” he hushes you and leaves a kiss on your temple before tightening his grip around you, his left hand sneaking around the shirt you’re wearing to caress your belly, relishing in the softness of it.

Yeah. You’ve had him wrapped around your little finger since day one.
‘... just some shiny new toy to chew on ... he’ll be quick to toss ya in the trash the second he’ll realize you ain’t what he needs.’ Negan frowns in his slumber as his sleep-heavy brain catches bits of a conversation he doesn’t understand the context of before he’s startled straight out of it by a loud banging sound, his heart picking up when he reaches over for you and is met with warm, empty space.

Rubbing the sleep from his eyes, Negan slips out of bed, only bothering with a loose pair of grey sweatpants before dragging himself out of his bedroom and towards the source of the sounds that woke him oh-so-fucking-rudely.

‘Negan!’ He cringes when Sherry’s voice assaults him the second he opens the door leading out of his bedroom. ‘What the fuck are you ladies doin’?’ He asks, sleep drifting from his eyes when they found you across the room.

You’re looking down, twisting and pulling at your fingers and- Fuck. You look like you’re on the verge of tears. ‘Okay, what the fuck-’

‘Tell her to get out, we need to talk,’ the brunette asks, clearly not picking up on the shift in Negan’s posture. The man frowns at the order.

‘K, first of all; you watch your fuckin’ mouth when you’re speakin’ to me, sweetheart, ‘cause I don’t go ‘round speakin’ to you like that, do I?’ He doesn’t wait for an answer. ‘Second; whatever the fuck you’re causin’ this fuckin’ ruckus for can either wait tomorrow, if I’m in the fuckin’ mood, or it’s actually important and you spit it out now. She ain’t goin’ anywhere to accommodate you.’

If Sherry seems oblivious to the change in the air, or is simply unaffected by it, you can’t say the same for yourself.

You were sleeping soundly in Negan’s arms when a knock on the door woke you and you didn’t
think twice about going and opening it, moving like you belonged in this space. Needless to say; you weren’t too happy to find Sherry standing there with a big tray in her hands and she didn’t seem pleased with you being on the other side of that door either, wearing nothing but one of Negan’s shirt and boxers.

Then started the literal verbal assault. She freaked and started calling you every name under the suns, judging and throwing sharpened words at you about your appearance. From head to toe, she hasn’t missed a single spot, judged every scar, especially the red, swollen ones in your left forearm.

“S’okay, I’m just gonna go,” you quietly break through the silence, Sherry scoffing. “Yeah, you do that—” “Alright that’s enough!” Negan’s voice booms, making you flinch even though his wrath isn’t directed at you.

“Y/n,” his eyes find yours and he tilts his head, “baby, c’mere.” He extends his hand and you hastily take it, showing your face against his chest the second he pulls you close, to avoid the other woman’s judging stare.

“Now, Sherry, what’s you got fuckin’ your pubes in a tube?” Negan nonchalantly asks, clearly unfazed by her attitude. You wish you were too.

“Excuse me- You’ve sent us off against our will for the day and I come back- We. We come back home to this… this—” “Watch it,” he warns, his hand lazily rubbing soothingly back and forth on your right cheek, it’s twin squished to his chest as you keep your head turned away for the scene.

“What is she doing in here? You never let us come here so why is it here?!” Okay, you won’t admit that but hearing someone refer to you as a “it” feels like you’ve been punched in the throat.

Negan feels you tense in his arms and, without a word, lifts you to carry back into his bedroom. He doesn’t say anything but a quick “you wait right there, baby girl,” and plants a kiss to the crown of your head before leaving you there, closing the door behind him.

You’ve barely settled against the bed’s headboard, your legs pulled up to your chest, when the shouting starts. You thought Negan’s voice carried but Sherry’s is something else entirely. It’s growling against screeching and they’re both winning if you have any say on it.

Minutes feels like hours until, finally, it all stops with a deafening shout and the door slamming shut so hard it makes the paintings on the walls rattle.

Though you’re not so sure about the other women, you now know for certain that Sherry has something for Negan and, God help you, it makes you want to tear her apart limb by limb.

On the other side of the door, Negan is leaning against his desk, his jaw rippling under his skin every time he grits it. “[…] it doesn’t matter ‘cause you’re gonna fuck up anyway, you always do […]” Sherry’s words keep echoing in his head, the truth they hold taunting him and that’s not something he can slay with his trusty bat.
He knows you don’t belong with him, of course he fucking knows. He's a piece of shit, he's nothing good and you, well, you're his complete opposite, but he wants you, and he's willing to break the rules over and over again, consequences be damned, if it means he gets to hold you again like he has tonight.

If he wasn’t so tense, he’d laugh about the fact that the twenty and a half years of difference between you two isn’t even on the forefront of cons in his mind because his behavior is the most fucked-up thing about your relationship. Honestly, he can't stay the gap bothers him that much either. You're a big girl, you're legal and can make your own decisions. Hell, it's not like you're afraid to tell him to fuck off.

Running a hand across his face and through his hair, Negan straightens up and goes to lock his office’s door for good measure, picking up the tray of food as he makes his way back to his bedroom, eager to get back in bed with you and hopefully save the rest of the night if he hasn’t already lost you.

The second the door of his room clicks shut behind him, he turns to find you sitting in the middle of his bed, your knees against your chest, tears rolling down your face, looking a little lost and whole lot hurt.

“Hey, baby,” he whispers, ditching the tray of food on top of his dresser before carefully approaching your side of the bed and sitting down next to you.

“I’m trying… I’m trying to- to be good, I… I j-just- I don’t understand-” a throat-aching sob interrupts you, and you quickly bring a pillow on your thighs to bury your face in it and cry into the soft, plush mound only for it to be snatched away from you.

"Hey, c’mon. C’mere, sweetheart,” Negan coos before lifting you up and sitting you on his lap, not waiting for you to even try and decide for yourself.

You don't complain though and immediately hide your face into the crook of his neck, seeking some safety and comfort. Negan finds himself taken aback by the moment.

He's so used to people being terrified of him, to hurt and kill, that he's completely forgotten the most important thing there is; he's a human being and that shit comes with a bunch of horrible feelings that no one seems to know how to fucking handle.

He can’t say that he’d missed the feeling ‘til now but, having you in his arms, all soft and warm, clinging to him and trusting him to hold you until the tears stop, is awaking something within him that he hasn’t felt in fucking decades.

With all the violence, sex and blood he’s used to, the softness of the moment is like a slap to the face.

Here he is, hushing you, one of his hands rubbing your back through his shirt whilst the other rests on the back of your head, keeping your face buried into his neck, and, he’ll admit, he feels powerful in the moment but differently so than whenever he kills or fucks.

There’s something intoxicating about the way your thighs softly give where is legs are digging into
them below, about your smell completely overpowering him. Hell, even that’s something you’re both on complete opposite sides of the spectrum.

You smell sweet where he’s all spicy cologne and gunpowder. Even when you’re covered in blood, there’s that damn spot to the right of the crown of your head where that smell always stays. He can never tell what it is but he loves that he always finds his way back to it every time he gets to have you close.

“Are you mad at me?” You quietly ask against his neck, afraid to look at him.

You feel him tense a little under you and screw your eyes shut, terrified of being told that you’ve done wrong. “Why the fuck would I be mad at’cha for, baby girl?”

“I woke you up,” you whisper. “I woke you up and… and I... Sh-Sherry-”

“Hey,” the hand at the back of your head guides you out of hiding and your red-rimmed eyes meet Negan’s frown. “I’ll deal with that in the morning, for now, you forget about her. She’s gone, it’s dealt with.”

“She likes you,” you state with a frown of your own, the words leaving a bitter taste in your mouth. “Everyone likes me,” he grins, and you push at his shoulder though a little knot forms at the pit of your stomach.

You guess you expected him to deny liking her too and the fact that he didn’t makes you feel even more insecure. “I’m a very lovable guy, in fact, you’re the only one I’ve ever gotten complains from.”

“Yea right,” you mumble, Negan chuckling at the unimpressed look on your face. “I’ll get her to apologize to ya tomorrow,” he tells you and, when your frown deepens, he can tell that he’s offended you.

“I don’t want her apologies, especially if they’re forced. It’s humiliating. She’s not a child, she knew what she was doing.” He can’t recall ever hearing you sound so sure and steady in the thirteen days he’s been around you.

A moment passes where Negan reaches up to trace your bottom lip with his thumb like he’s in awe of something you can’t place but you’re too engrossed in the way the rough pad of the digit feels against your flesh that your brain quickly stops asking questions.

“We alright, darlin’?” He asks almost quietly compared to the usual loud carry of his voice. “Yea,” you quickly whisper back, perhaps too quickly, and he knows you’re bothered, maybe even hurt, but decides not to chance diving into that and instead tries to stabilize things a little.

“How ‘bout you go pick a movie while I set dinner?” A quiet nod is the only answer he gets. “In my office, there’s a chest right behind my desk. There’s a bunch o’ tapes in there, dig in and pick whichever catches your eye, yeah?”

Again, you nod silently, and Negan can tell that you’re slowly retreating back into your own little bubble, but he doesn’t know how to stop it so he wordlessly lets you dismount his lap and leave the bedroom, watching you until he can’t see you anymore.
Dinner’s done and Negan can tell it’s been hard for you to eat the six mandatory forks-full he’s put in place, but he stayed patient and kept you distracted enough that you wouldn’t think too hard about your plate filled with chicken and pasta. He ended up finishing it for you and put the old western you’d found earlier in his chest.

Chest which he probably should’ve checked beforehand so that you wouldn’t have walked back in the room with wide eyes, asking why there’s a bunch of topless ladies on some of his tapes. He had half the mind to tell you and he won’t deny that his cock stirred at the idea of watching porn with you but the look on your face told him that now wasn’t the time to think with his dick.

Sitting cross-legged, your back facing Negan as he lays against the headboard of his bed, you seem engrossed by the old movie playing on the old t.v he’s put out and installed on top of his dresser, though he’s not sure if you’re not just fascinated to see a working television again. Still, you seem content.

He knows he’s lost you about an hour ago but now you’ve completely retreated back inside your mind, tugged away in your own little bubble. He can tell because you’ve stopped speaking. You nod and shake your head, you point at things and sometimes give a subtle little hum but, other than that, you’ve gone radio-silent on him again.

22nd January:

1:17 A.M //

You absently stare at the mirror facing the bed on the other side of the room as the nightmare you’ve just woke up with a start from keeps on replaying in your mind like a movie going in circles.

You keep seeing this small, dark room, there’re feet covered by a pair of black boots dangling in the air and an awful smell in the room, a smell that you're all too familiar with yet can't seem to be able to identify. You're lost and your face is soaked with tears as you look up only to see Randall’s lifeless body hanging from the ceiling, a rope tightly holding his throat, keeping air out of his lungs, and then everything just goes black and it all repeats itself like a perfect, wicked loop.

You open a door, walk into a room, the smell hits you, you spot a pair of feet and start to cry; Randall’s gone, and it never stops unless you wake up.

The only thing on your mind right now is the blond, tattooed man. You worry about him; it hurts you to see just how badly your friend is hurting, and you wish that you could make it better. You wish you could go back and push Connor out of the way, react, do something - anything - even if it means dying for him; you’ll do it without any hesitation to save your friend's life and let Randall be happy for another day.

You didn't mean for Connor to die but it happened anyway and now you have to live with that on
your conscience. How does someone like Negan does it? How do you keep on going knowing that you're the cause of someone's death? Is it different when you actually meant and set out to kill that person? You've killed before but only because you didn't have any other choice and, no matter how bad those people were, it stills keeps you up most nights.

Fuck. You can't breathe. You need to go; you can't stand being here. You need air.

__________________________________________________________________________

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“Are you fucking serious right now, doll?” Negan asks, clearly displeased, as he leans against the frame of the bathroom’s door, watching you carefully as you freeze in the middle of picking up your dirty clothes off his floor. Your words get stuck in your throat, caught off guard by his sudden appearance.

Stepping into the room, he harshly picks your jeans off the ground before you have the chance to get to them. “What the hell went wrong this time, huh? What is it?” He asks, his fist clenched tight around the piece of worn denim.

You flinch and swallow, unsure of what to make of his sudden anger. “I just—”

“I’m fucking worried about you, angel face,” he cuts you off, his voice oddly calm, making you look up at him, confusion marking your features.

“Why- Wha… What a-are you doing? What do you want f-from me?” You ask, not knowing what to make of his behavior anymore.

Negan’s chuckle echoes throughout the otherwise empty room. “Why are you so fucking scared of being cared for, y/n? How fucking poorly have you been treated that me givin’ a shit for once raises red flags for ya, baby girl?”

“Randall treats me right,” you whisper, your head dropping down, part of you not wanting Negan to hear that though you’re not naïve enough to actually believe he hasn’t.

“Yeah?” You can fucking hear his damn smirk in his voice, and then he pops up right in front of you, invading your personal space and pushing you against the counters in the bathroom, the marble cold and hard, making you wince in discomfort. “Does he make ya sing, baby girl? Where is he when you can’t fucking eat 'cause you’re stuck in your own fuckin’ head, huh?” He asks, poison in his voice as he speaks.

“C’mon now, doll. Tell me,” he insists when you don’t say a word, his face now uncomfortably close to yours, so close that your noses are pushing against one another and your lips are only a hairsbreadth away from crashing into each other.

“I- I don’t- I-” You feel like crying. You can't find a damn thing to say to him, it's all stuck inside
your head and nothing's coming out of your mouth. You're literally just gasping for air and the only coherent thing your brain can come up with at the moment is to get you closer to this man you've grown infatuated with. *Not close enough. Never close enough.*

With a shy push of your head, you leave a quick, chaste kiss on his lips, pulling away before he can even register that it happened. Though he’s quick to fall back on his feet, a smirk appearing on his lips as he brings you right back to him, his hands firmly holding your waist, before pushing his lips against yours, making you whimper.

You try to slow the kiss down, to put some distance between your half-covered bodies but it only prompts him to push you completely flush against him, his grip on your waist tightening, his fingers digging in the soft skin through your t-shirt, sure to leave marks, if not bruises.

“You're not his, sweetheart. You're fucking mine,” he whispers huskily into your mouth, his forehead resting against yours. “*But you're* not... Mine,” you point though there’s a hopeful, questioning tone in your voice.

The sigh he lets out kills you and you hate the feeling of his grip on you loosening. “*C’mon, doll, let's get back to bed. M’fucking exhausted.*” With that, he plants a kiss to your forehead and leaves the room like nothing happened, leaving confused and hurt.

God, you wish he would just tell you that him being yours is never going to happen, rip the band-aid off instead of leaving it halfway and keep you wondering like a moron. It feels like you’ve been stabbed in the chest and he’s left the knife in just so he’ll get to pick when he pulls it out and finally let you bleed out. You need him to stomp your fire out once and for all, but he just keeps on pouring gasoline on it before turning his back and leave you to burn.

The word ended and you still managed to get involved with the most unstable man you could find.

**2:00 A.M //**

You can't stop waking up every three damn minutes. Negan’s snoozing away right next to you, clearly unbothered by your tossing and turning but you can’t stand it anymore, so you decide to quietly get out of bed and sneak out, ignoring that you're still not wearing any pants nor a bra.

It's two in the morning, no one should be walking around the damn place at this hour anyway.

You quickly run into the bathroom to grab your pants, bra, socks and your combat boots before opening the door of his bedroom, wincing when the wood creaks in an obnoxiously loud manner. Taking a quick glance over your shoulder to make sure that Negan is still asleep, you let a small sigh of relief out when you see him still deep in his slumber.

You walk out of the bedroom and through his office, before sneaking out, quietly closing the door behind you before quickly walking out of his quarters through the big double doors leading to a staircase outside.
The cold air of the night immediately bites into your sensitive skin the second you open one of the heavy door and you regret not having socks on when your bare feet make contact with the horribly cold steel of the staircase’s landing.

“Well, I’m a smart person,” you whisper bitterly to yourself.

As you make your way down the stairs, you hear people laughing and immediately relax when you recognize Faith and Dwight's voices. You wince when your bare feet hit the hard, concrete ground of the yard and your little noises seems to be enough to catch Faith's attention as you see her rounding the wall hiding you away from her and Dwight, shinning a flashlight on you.

“Y/n?” She hesitantly calls out, putting the light down. “Honey, what are you-” She stops and looks up and down at you, frowning at your lack of clothing but her expression softens shortly after.

“What d’he do now?” The woman asks with a frown and a roll of her eyes. You’d laugh at her aggravation if you weren’t right there with her.

“What you got, Faith?” Dwight asks from afar before appearing from behind the wall, surprise showing on his face when he spots you with your clothes and boots in arms, only wearing a shirt.

“Heya, kiddo. Randall was lookin’ for ya last night-” You don't let him finish and run past him and Faith at the mention of Randall to quickly make your way into the compound, running through the place until you're in the hallway leading to the dorms and you don't give a shit if you make noise, you just want to see him. You need to know he’s okay.

You stop in front of the door next to yours and repeatedly knock on the damn thing in a complete blind panic. Your heart tripping over itself and it feels like you’re about to pass out or throw up, you're not too sure which one will come first, when the door finally creaks open in front of you, leaving you knocking on emptiness.

“Y/n? Oh, thank fuck,” Randall lets out, his voice raspy with sleep, before bringing you to him and tightly closing his arms around you, making you giggle and cry in relief.

“Randall. I-” You’re so frantic, gasping for air and bouncing on your legs, that you don’t even feel him carrying you inside until he puts you down and gives you a squeeze.

“Hey, hey, it's okay, y/n,” he gently whispers against the crown of your head. “Calm down, sweetheart, you're okay, I promise. It's okay,” he softly reassures in your ear.

“Someone took his place at the table,” you cry into the crook of his neck, completely panicked, and it takes him a minute but Randall eventually understands that you’re referring to when he saw you yesterday and tried to invite you to come sit with him and his friends at the table and you shut him down.

“Yeah. I know, princess,” he tells you, keeping his voice low. “Why d’you let ‘em?” The question takes him aback a little and he has to clear his throat before speaking.

“Cause he’s gone, y/n,” he cringes when your sobs come back with a vengeance, triggered by his words. “We have to accept that, sweetheart. We can’t be waitin’ for him. He’s not coming back.”
You vigorously shake your head as he speaks, a corner of your head screaming “lies, lies, lies,” though the rational part of you knows what the truth of the situation is.

You feel a little dizzy as Randall lifts you and carries you to his bed, rocking you a little in his arms on the way there as you cling to him like he’s your lifeline.

Everything is quiet as he settles you in, your eyes fluttering shut when you land on the warm spot on the mattress he’s been sleeping on before you gave him quite the wake-up call, and then he’s slipping under the blanket with you and you’re quick to snuggle into his chest, his arms encircling you the second you’re within reach.

“M’scared,” you sleepily mumble into his chest. “I know, sweetheart, but it’ll be okay. We’ll be okay,” he reminds you with the very same words you’ve used yesterday morning.

“We should leave,” you whisper, making him bend his head down to try and get a look at you. “You and I. We should run ’way. We could. W’should.” Your voice is getting smaller and smaller and he knows you’re on the verge of unconsciousness.

“Wherever you wanna go, whatever you wanna do, I’m down. Always,” he quietly tells you before leaving a lingering kiss at the top of your head and running a soothing hand up and down your back.

“You’re?” You slur out and Randall chuckles. “I could never say no to those damned puppy eyes of yours,” he admits, getting a sleepy little laugh out of you and the sound is enough to make him forget about his own heartache for a moment.

You shuffle closer to him and plant a sleepy kiss on the bees and flowers tattooed between his pectorals, going lax in his arms when he tightens his hold around you and wishes you goodnight.

7:15 A.M //

Randall’s eyes flutter open, the man groaning as the sunlight invading his bedroom blinds him before turning around to let his head fall into his pillow.

“Morning,” you greet him, your voice heavy with sleep as you gently sit on the mattress with a yawn. He smiles at the sound of your voice. “Morning, sweetheart. Ya know time it is?”

You hum and squint your eyes at the watch sitting on your right wrist, silently scolding yourself for having forgotten to take it off before going to sleep. “S’a quarter past seven-”

“What?! Oh, fuck no. I overslept,” he freaks, and you barely get to blink when the tall man next to you gets tangled up in his sheets in his hasty attempt to get out of bed, only to fall flat on the floor, making a loud thud on impact.

“Oh my God, Randall! Are you-” Leaning on your hands, you stretch over the mattress to peek at him and have to bite down on your lips when you find him with his face against the ground, his long legs tangled like noodles. You feel sorry for the guy, but his fall is something straight out of a cartoon.

“Stop laughing at me, you li’l shit,” he demands with a grunt mixed in a chuckle as he slowly
straightens on his knees. Your shoulders are shaking, and he can tell that you’re biting your tongue not to laugh, but the tears in your eyes betray the amusement you’re trying so hard that you’re red in the face to conceal.

“I’m so sorry,” Randall smiles at how hard you’re trying to remain calm. “Oh my God, I’m sorry!” A little snort escapes you but you’re quick to slap a hand over your mouth even though it’s already slipped through.

You take a deep breath, wipe your tears away and straighten back up with a clear of your throat before looking at him. “Are you okay?” You finally ask him, genuine concern in your voice.

“No, I’m not! You laughed at me. Gimme a hug and maybe, just maybe, I’ll forgive you.”

“Ugh, fine,” you meekly faint annoyance. “You drive a hard bargain, mister,” you smile and help him back up on his feet before hugging him tight.

“What a way to start the day, huh?” He says with a grin, keeping you firmly against his chest. “Yeah,” you chuckle against his bare skin.

“I don’t think we should leave you alone around guns or cliffs today.” Randall laughs at that. “Yea, s’just one of those days.”


“Well I mean, someone has to be,” you tease, peering up at him, resting your chin on his torso. “And your sacrifice is much appreciated. Truly,” he winks at you, earning himself a light poke on his left hip.

Silence fills the room as you both just stare at each other like deer caught in headlights until you clear your throat with a little frown and break eye contact to leave a quick peck on his left bicep.

“You should- I should leave you to get ready. I’ll wait for you at the cafeteria, sounds good?”

“Yeah. Yeah, totally,” he snaps out of the little moment with a sheepish grin. “Be there in five.”

“Alright,” you shyly kiss his cheek and walk out of his bedroom, walking in yours to get ready for the day too, your heart a little heavy for a reason you can’t quite figure out. Negan or Randall. Maybe both. It could also be Connor. Probably all three.

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The steel buckles on your combat boots clink with every step you take as you make your way to the cafeteria and, for some reason, today, the sound agitates you. The way it’s bouncing off the
walls of the seemingly empty halls is deafening. You try to ignore it, but it's hard.

In the mostly empty cafeteria, you sit down at one of the tables to wait for Randall and hope that Faith will show up too as you anxiously pull and twist your fingers around. The knot in your stomach tightening. Something doesn't feel right and you hate not knowing what it is.

Looking down at your watch you see that twenty minutes have past and Randall is still nowhere to be seen, so you decide to take matters in your own hands and go look for him.

*what the hell is he doing??*

You walk out of the cafeteria and quickly make your way to his bedroom but, when you get there, he's a no-show so you try the showers and find them empty and eerily quiet. That's when you start to freak out a little.

*okay. okay, maybe... maybe he just directly went to work, and he forgot to tell us, right? that's possible, right? or... or a bearded man told him he was a wizard and he left to go fulfill his destiny. dead people are walking around in the streets, so this isn't too far-fetched.*

At this point, you're running through the halls, trying to get to the warehouse as fast as you can but stop dead in your tracks when you hear Negan's voice booming in the big open space.

You carefully make your way there and frown when you see the Saviors on their knees, completely blocking the access to the outside, Simon and Dwight to the sides and Negan's women standing in a corner, all wearing almost identical black little dressed and looking down at the ground like scared puppies, all but for the exception of Sherry who's holding her chin high like she owns the place.

“What the-” You start in a whisper, but the words die on your tongue when you spot Randall kneeled in the middle of it all, his expression something close to feral, and you can feel your heart drop in your chest.

*what the fuck is going on?*

You step inside the opened area and the sound of your boots clinking on the hard ground is all that echoes in the heavy silence drowning the space. All eyes fall on you at the sound and Negan is quick to turn around before he's walking up to you.

Oddly enough, you find yourself standing your ground, straightening yourself up to show him that you're not backing down this time. No matter how hard it is for you to feel all those eyes on you, no matter how bad you hate this unwanted attention; you fight the urge to shrink on yourself.

“I can't believe you actually left daddy to wake up all by himself this morning, baby doll,” Negan speaks with a tilted head, his smirk more of an angry sneer.

“Yeah, s'almost like you’ve never asked one of your men to carry me back to my room in the middle of the night while I was asleep, am I right?” You taunt back, all too aware that you’ve probably dug your own grave right there and then, but he doesn’t seem fazed by the sting. He looks amused if anything.
The satisfaction you get from shutting him up only lasts a quarter of a second when Negan steps back and turns to land a closed-fist punch to Randall’s jaw, making the man fall flat on the ground.

“Hey! Don’t-” You're about to step in, your shaky right hand a hairbreadth away from grabbing your knife, when Dwight hooks his arms inside your elbows from behind to keep your hands behind your back.

You snarl and cry out, wiggling around to try and break free but feel completely cornered when he tightens his hold in your arms, making your back stiff-straight against him which keeps you from turning away from the scene playing in front of you. You can't move, all you can do is hang your head against your heaving chest, but even that can’t keep Randall and Negan out of your sigh as you silently beg for Dwight to let go.

“I'm so sorry, it'll be over soon. I promise,” the man behind you tries to reassure you but the hatred you feel for him right now is too strong for his words to do anything else but piss you off even further.

“Screw you! Leave him alone!” You scream out, trying to get free from Dwight grip once again but you quickly come to find out that it's all wasted energy.

“Who are you, Randy boy?” you hear Negan asks, his voice clear as crystal through the loud ringing in your ears.

“MRandall,” you catch the tattooed man’s mutter, his lungs desperately trying to get some air but all of Randall's effort to breathe are completely destroyed by a violent kick to the ribs that makes you whimper and helplessly tug at Dwight’s tight grip.

“C'mon, now, Randall. You know better than that, kid,” Negan scolds, almost like a disapproving parent but there’s mockery in his tone.

When he repeats the question and gets the same answer, he hits Randall and asks him again. It's a never ending loop of unadulterated violence that you're forced to witness. You hate that you actually find yourself wishing that Randall would just give it up and say the word.

After his outburst yesterday, it’s reassuring to see him fight to keep his own identity, but you hate the price he’s paying for it.

Finally, you run out of energy and go partially limp in Dwight's hold, all you can do now is cry your heart out as you're forced to watch the man you’ve come to consider your friend get beat up for no goddamn reason other than that another man's pride has been hurt.

Negan slowly stops his assault on Randall only to push the right side of his head flush against the ground with his boot, forcing the Savior to look at you, and you let out a gut-wrenching sob that makes your belly spasm when you see just how damaged his face is.

“Fuckin’ look at her, son. She’s crying her li'l heart out ‘cause of you. I don't fucking know why she fuckin’ cares so much about your useless ass yet here she is; fucking crying for you and I don't fuckin’ like having to watch my baby girl cry like that.”
You completely block out the pointed looks you're getting from Negan referring to you as “hi baby girl” and watch as he ever so slightly leans down. “Apologize to her,” he demands, his eyes never leaving your teary ones though you keep on looking down at Randall, feeling more helpless and vulnerable than you ever have.

Things only get worse when Randall looks at you and whispers an apology, his face contoured with guilt, only making you more frantic. You don't want to hear him apologize and you can feel your hands twitching, hitching to cover your ears. You want to shut your eyes, curl into a tight little ball and drown everything out.

You choke and hiccup on a sob when Negan gives a kick to Randall's already injured body before spitting on the ground right next to his face. No one batting a single lash as an innocent man gets beat up right in from of them. They're all cowards and you hate every single person in this place with every fiber of your being. It feels like your body is vibrating with hatred.

The fog somewhat clears when you hear a voice that you recognize as Faith's calling out. “Negan, that's enough!” She barges in, her posture screaming that she’s ready to swing and the tone of her voice not one to be questioned.

You have no idea where she was until then because she sure as hell wasn't in the crowd, Arat is though and you're pissed at her cowardliness. She didn't even try yet she claims to be different from Negan. Like hell she is. You're seeing red. You want to watch this place burn to ashes with those people in it.

Oddly enough, Negan actually steps off after Faith's intervention and Dwight hesitantly lets go of you. You push yourself out of his grip the second you feel it loosen, not giving him the chance to say anything, and immediately run to Randall, falling on your knees on the ground next to him and flipping him on his side for him not to choke on his blood as it seems his mouth is full of it.

“Oh my God. Oh my God, Randall.” Your voice is a shaky whisper and your hands are frantically moving all over him, unsure of how to make him better. “Honey- I'm so sorry- Oh my God, I don't- I didn't-”

“Hey-” He spits blood out of his mouth, splashing some on your knees which are not covered thanks to the wide holes at the knees of your jeans, “s'not your fault, sweetheart,” he assures, a smile appearing on his bloody face and it makes you want to scream.

You’ve never felt so much anger running through your veins as you help him sit up only to hear him wince in discomfort and pain. “Randall, I-”

“Alright now, let's go have a li'l chat, doll,” Negan interrupts you, harshly grabbing your left forearm and forcing you up before dragging you out of the warehouse, everyone going back to work as if nothing ever happened. Those people make you sick.

The fact that Negan is touching you makes you sick, the fact that Dwight played against you makes you sick, the fact that Randall got hurt so fucking badly makes you fucking sick.
“Let go of me you son of a bitch!” You protest with a cry, trying to break out of his painfully tight grip but he completely ignores you and keeps walking, dragging you along with him. Part of you is slightly relieved to see that Faith is tending to Randall when you chance a quick glance back.

You get to a staircase and are dead-set on not climbing up that damn thing, but Negan doesn't seem to give a flying fuck about your agenda and lifts you up to throw you on his shoulder in a fireman carry.

He climbs the stairs, you dangling on his shoulder, until he reaches his office and you start to panic. You don't want to talk to him, you don't fucking want him to touch nor even look at you, and you sure as hell don't want to be in the same room as him.

When he finally puts you down after closing the door to his office, the first thing you do is reach for your knife which you quickly pull out of the waistband of your pants and point the blade directly at him, anger running through your veins and your chest quickly heaving up and down as you pant for breath.

No matter how much Negan believes he's got you all figured out, he has no fucking idea just how aggressive you can get when someone hurts the people you care about and love and he knows it. He's in completely unexplored territory right now and he has no clue what to expect.

“Doll-” He tries, a hand up and his head slightly tilted. “That’s not my fucking name,” you snarl, your voice cold and it seems to completely catch him off guards.

“You,” you point at him with the blade of your knife. “You have no right! Who d'you think you are?! You can't treat people like that! What the hell is wrong with you?!”

You get closer to him, your eyes narrowed, your jaw clenched tight and your knuckles white around the body of your weapon, your head slightly tilting to the side as you're now a few centimeters away from him.

“I don't give a flying fuck of just how bad and fucking tragic your life has been, Negan, you're nothing because you've decided to be nothing! God, you're such a fucking hypocrite,” you spat out with a cold chuckle. “Walking around like you know better than everyone but really, you're just an insecure coward. That's why you terrorize people and bully them. Being a leader isn't what you make of it, it's not scaring people and forcing them into submission.”

When you grew those lady balls, you'll never know, but they carry you to get right in his face, your noses almost touching. “You're not a man, Negan, you're a little boy who thinks it's cool to have women laying around. You're pathetic is what you are, and meeting you was the worst thing that's ever happened to me,” you finish as calmly as possible, trying not to shove the blade of your knife into his neck and let him bleed out on his squeaky clean floor.

“I'd stop runnin’ my damn mouth if I were you, y/n.” You're so lost in your own anger that you breeze right past his threat. “Good thing you ain’t me then,” you push with a quirked up eyebrow, anger blinding you completely.

You don’t see the bat until it’s right in front of you, Negan letting her sharp barbed-wire graze the skin of your left cheek, leaving small yet deep and painful cuts behind but you don't make a sound. You don't even wince or flinch, you just stand your grounds and let him do whatever it is he thinks
he's doing right now.

“You look so fucking sexy when you're angry, baby girl, but you're pissin' me off right now and, believe me, you don't fucking want that.”

“S'that a threat?” You challenge him again, your brow still raised at him in defiance.

There’s a crash when he carelessly throws his bat on the other side of the room, over the couch and against the chimney, and then he’s wrapping his right hand tight around your throat and pushing against a nearby wall, only your tiptoes are touching the floor below when he lifts you up enough to get you to his height so that you don't break eye contact. His hand completely constricting your airway.

He has you pinned down against the wall, your jaw clenches as the lack of oxygen starts to become a problem for you and your feet start to kick around, trying to push him off of you while your hands grasp at his forearm, trying to rip his hand off of your throat but you're barely scratching him.

“You'd fucking love it to be, wouldn't ya, baby girl?” Negan speaks through his clenched jaw, carefully watching as you struggle to gasp for air, and he seems to be fascinated by what he sees.

“Yeah, you fucking love pushing my buttons, don't you?” He asks through gritted teeth, tightening his grip on your throat. “You just can't fucking help but misbehave and run your li’l mouth, can you, princess?”

If you could have, you would have yelp when he harshly bites down on the exposed skin right below your chin making you breathlessly whimper in pain. “Yeah, you fucking love when daddy gets mad, don't you, love?”

You’ll blame it on the serious lack of oxygen later but your brain clings to the fact that Negan has never called you “love” before and it kind of makes your cheeks burn up when the word leaves the mouth that literally just bit you.

“N-Negan- Please-” you plead barely above a whisper as you start to see dark spots forming in your eyes from the lack of air, your nails digging into the flesh of his forearm. You need to fucking breathe.

“I thought we were fucking clear, y/n. You're mine, not his,” he ignores your plea. “Why the fuck did you leave in the middle of the goddamn night, huh? And why the fuck did you run off to spend the rest of the night with him, sweetheart?” He asks, clearly angry and still high on adrenaline.

You open your mouth but all that comes out is a faint squeak. Tears are starting to roll down your face has the lack of oxygen in your lungs is starting to make your entire body freak but, thankfully, Negan lets go of your throat when he spots the fat, clear pearls, his hands coming up to frame your face as you immediately start to sag the second he lets go of your neck.

“M'sorry. M'sorry,” you whisper, gasping for air, your throat sore and raw, and your lungs burning up.

Your body shakes as it recalls the last time it felt that burn in your lung and it's all you can think of now. Your own mother's hand keeping your head below the water of your bath.
The sound of the door slamming shut makes your jump and cry as you look up to see Negan gone. Your eyes widening when you hear the lock in the door click shut. The room isn't small, at all, but you don't want to be locked in here and that's enough for you to feel like you've been locked away in a coffin.

You let yourself slip against the wall and land on the floor as the walls seem like they’re closing-in on you. Curled into a tight ball, you let yourself cry in your knees because you can't hold it in anymore, and wait for your lungs, your heart and your throat to relax. It feels like there's not enough air in this room, it feels small and full of bad things. You hate it.

No matter how much pain you're experiencing at the moment, you can't help but think about Randall. You wonder if he's being taken care of and if he'll be alright, if he's mad at you, but you also find yourself being hurt and upset over the fact that Negan literally almost pushed you to the point of passing out when you never thought that he ever actually would put his hands on you like that.

You hate that he's brought back that fear you’ve only ever had for your mother. That period of your life made you feel dehumanized and used, and you never wanted this feeling to come back. You're fucking terrified of it.

It feels like hours have gone by when your ears perk up at the sound of the door of the office clicking open and the first thing you do is tighten your grip around your knees, trying to hide away from the potential threat.

“Hello?” A soft, unfamiliar voice calls out before a lady's head peeks out from behind the door. “great. you got brain damage.

“Hi?” You hesitantly answer, afraid of who that woman may be, but you see her smile and get in before quietly closing the door behind her. She seems sweet.

“Hey there-” she stops in her tracks when she sees the angry red handprint on your throat. “Oh, for fuck’s sake,” she spits out, her soft voice contrasting with the harsh word. “Honey, are you alright?”

You frown, unsure of the concern she’s showing. “Wh-Who are you?” You ask, almost already certain of the answer. She really pretty, there’s no way she’s not one of Negan’s women.

“You're a smart one, I'm sure you already know, honey,” she softly speaks, her eyes shining with something you can’t quite place. “Yea,” you whisper, your throat throbbing and tender.

“I know, it’s bad but… Well, if that can make my case any better, I don't actually sleep with the guy. Like, ever.”

“You don't?” You ask, a little too surprised, which makes her laugh as she sits down on the floor in front of you. “God, no, sweetie. I'm married for fuck's sake, my husband's down there, working his ass off and I'm stuck here,” she explains, trying to seem casual about her situation but you know that look on her face all too well.

“Negan may be all about no means no, he's still not the type of man to just walk away. The asshole
almost killed my man and now I'm fucking stuck here. Still, he’s never tried to force or pressure me into anything so that's something I guess, though it's like praising a fish for swimming, y’know? Lucky enough, I don't have to interact with the other women. S'better for everyone’s safety that way.” You let a small laugh at that, relating to that statement, and take a good look at her.

She has a beautiful brown skin and apple-green eyes. She's a little taller than you, a little curvy and there're some curly dark brown strands of hair slipping out of the turban she's wearing on top of her head, baby hair framing her forehead.

“I'm y/n,” you quietly introduce yourself to her. “Oh, I know who you are, honey,” she tells you with a warm smile. “Hell, everyone knows who you are, girl. But it's nice to finally meet you in the flesh. My name's Laihla,” she gives you a name to put on her face, her smile never leaving her lips and making dimples show on either side of her mouth.

“It’s nice to meet you b-but… I mean… What are you doing here? D-Does he know-”

“No, he doesn't know, sweetie,” Laihla cuts you off. “Don't worry, you're safe. I'm here to help you actually. I never get the chance to help around here since I'm stuck in this hell-hole so when Faith gave me the info, I immediately jumped on the opportunity.”

“Faith? Wha-” “That woman is a spitfire, but she cares about you a great deal,” she tells you, making you blush.


“I uh… If- If you don't, y'know… What d-do you do around here then?”

She gives a little chuckle. “Well, Negan doesn’t usually keep girls he can't sleep with around, but he decided to keep me because, for some reason, we actually get along enough for him to talk to me. I used to be a therapist before all this crap hit the fan.”

“Wow... And you got a therapist for that?” You ask with a small smile, the thought that Negan’s therapist would need one themselves has always been a thing in your mind for some reason.

Laihla laughs with you and shakes her head. “That man has some heavy things on his mind, girl, you don't wanna know. Although, he talks a lot about you. Like, a lot. And, to be honest, it's actually kind of sweet. I mean,” she takes a long look at your throat and your glossy, puffy eyes, “he clearly doesn't fucking know how to handle that kind of emotion and seeing it in person makes the inner therapist in me seethe. I’ve seen my fair share of abuse back in the day and I'm so sorry that you've ended up all tangled up in this mess, sweetie.”

“It’s not…” You frown and shake your head. “It’s not like that,” you whisper, the word “abuse” echoing wrong in your head.

“The mark on your throat begs to differ,” she gently but matter-of-fact-ly points out and you know that there’s no denying it. Negan did hurt you just then, he put his hands on you and you're struggling to find excuses for him.
“Hey,” Laihla calls you back to her and gently puts one of her hands below your chin, spotting the dark bruise Negan's teeth left on the soft skin there but doesn’t point it out to. She can tell you’re already upset enough as it is.

“Look, we need to get you out of here, alright?” You absently nod your head to let her know you’ve heard her. “Good. Alright. Faith is down at the infirmary with Randall-” You perk up at the mention of the tattooed Savior.

“Is he alright?” You ask, a nervous knot in your throat. “Yes, darling, he's alright. A little fucked up but alright, I promise,” she assures you with a warm smile.

“You go down there and Faith'll take care of you two, alright? You just have to trust her.”

“Okay… Y-Yeah. Okay.” You take a deep breath and try to get up but you're so dizzy that you have to screw your eyes shut and fight off the urge to hurl right there and then on Negan’s floor when you do.

“Hey, hey- Here, I got you,” Laihla quickly closes the gap between the two of you to gently help you up, waiting for you to get your bearings before she lets you stand by yourself though she keeps a tender hand on your back just in case you get dizzy again.

“You alright?” She asks, eyeing your paled face. “Y-Yes, thank you,” you give her a tired smile.

“It’s no problem, hon. You sure you’ll be alright?” You nod and bend to pick up your knife where it fell when Negan grabbed you before following her to the door.

“Hey,” she draws your attention back to her. “You keep fighting the good fight, honey.” You nod and smile at her. “You too,” you whisper.

“Yeah,” she looks a little hurt for a quick second before she's clapping her hands together and giving you a smile, the look gone as quickly as it came.

“Alright, you gotta get going. Negan's out making sure everyone's working so we’re working on the clock here.”

“Before I go, is there anything I can do for you? Anything at all?” You ask her, needing to make sure that you’re not just looking out for yourself when that woman is risking her ass helping you even though she doesn't even know you.

Laihla seems to think for a minute before perking up and hastily reaching into the back pocket of her jeans which makes you realize that, unlike the other women, she’s not wearing a dress or a skirt.

“I uh… Yeah, actually.” She timidly steps closer to you and hands you a folded piece of paper. “Can you give this to Faith? That’s for my husband, we... we have this system going, that's how we communicate without Negan knowing, so, i-if you could-”
“I'll make sure it gets to him, I promise,” you assure her, carefully slipping the piece of paper in the front pocket of your jeans.

You jump when the green-eyed woman suddenly hugs you but relax when she whispers a soft “thank you so much,” before letting go of you and opening the door of the office, stepping out to check if the coast is clear and signaling for you to slip out when she deems it's safe.

“You be careful out there, y/n,” she tells you, sounding like a worried mother, and you smile and give her a nod.

“You too, Laihla,” you return the sentiment and hug her one last time before running off as quietly as possible, pushing the heavy door leading straight to the outside of the compound, the sunlight, even though it’s hidden by thick grey clouds, blinding you for a minute.

“Alright, I guess we're doing this,” you whisper to yourself and step off the staircase’s landing, trying your hardest to be brave even though the aching in your throat and chin remind you of just how vulnerable you were a moment ago.

You can’t be scared now though. Right now, all that matters is getting to Faith and seeing Randall. You have a message from a desperate woman in your pocket that needs delivering, too. You’ll make time to feel later.
**FLASHBACK // [THREE WEEKS BEFORE THE OUTBREAK]**

19th December 2010;

10:15 PM //

“Daryl! Merle! Damn it, that's enough, you idiots!” You shout, desperately trying to tear the two brothers apart.

What kind of impulsive idiots start a fight in the middle of a sidewalk which happens to be right in front of a police station, you ask? Well the Dixon brothers, of course.

“Come on, that's enough! Both of you!” You whine as you finally succeed to shove Merle off his younger brother, making him fall flat on his ass on the concrete. “You two always do this and I'm sick of it! Get your asses in the car, we're going home!” It's always the same damn thing, you're so used to it by now, it's almost ridiculous.

Merle gets arrested for driving under the influence, sometimes for fighting or randomly insulting people, he calls Daryl to come and bail him out, you pay for his stupidity and the two brothers end up jumping at each other's throats because Daryl is done with his big brother's reckless attitude and Merle is angry because his little brother doesn't approve of his reckless attitude.
And then, there's you; right in the middle of it all. You're always the one breaking the fights just for them to laugh it off in the morning. You fucking hate those two sometimes.

The walk back to the parking lot is uncomfortably quiet, you're upset and, to be perfectly honest, you're also really hurt. You, once again, took a hit that was destined to one of the brothers right in the stomach and it hurts like a bitch.

You don't know who's damn elbow hit you so hard and you don't care, at all. You don't want any of the two brothers to feel any more guilt than they need to feel, shit happens and that's that, but this very specific shit wouldn't have happened if those two idiots would stop fighting over a fucking fart.

“Y/n-” Merle starts but you quickly cut him off, swallowing tears of pain back, trying your hardest not to cry in front of them.

“Just get in the car, you bums,” you order with a small laugh before getting behind the wheel, waiting for the brothers to follow you in. Daryl is riding shotgun and Merle's laying in the back, grunting and holding his head as the alcohol he's consumed is starting to catch up to him with a vengeance.

Once everyone is settled, you start the car and get on the road, the only thing on your mind being going back to bed as soon as possible because, yes, you were actually sleeping like a baby before you heard the front door of the Dixons’ house open just in time to catch Daryl sneaking out.

He said that he didn't want to wake you up and didn't want you to have to deal with this shit again but you completely ignored him, grabbed one of his sweatshirts, put on a pair of black Converse and grabbed the keys of Merle's old muscle car, mumbling under your breath as you dragged Daryl along with you and headed to the police station in town.

At thirteen, you know you don’t belong behind the wheel of a car, especially not on the road, hell, your feet barely touch the pedal and you're pretty damn sure that the car you're driving is a stolen one, but you can't really bring yourself to care. You know how to drive, Daryl is too banged up to get behind the wheel and Merle is barely starting to sober up.

“So, what were you in this shithole for this time, Dixon?” Daryl asks as calmly as possible, but you know that they'll be at each other’s throats again in a few seconds.

“Hit on the wrong chick and her boyfriend was a fuckin’ asshole-”

“Jesus fuckin’ Christ, Merle. You need to grow the hell up, seriously,” Daryl snaps, clearly annoyed by his brother's control issues.

“Are you fuckin’ kiddin’ me?! I need ta grow up? Watch your fuckin’ mouth-”

“I said enough!” You stomp on that fire because it gets out of control again. “Both of you just shut up for one minute! I'm so sick of this crap, you two are brothers! Maybe you should think about
that for once,” you snap before turning the radio on, trying to tune the two brothers out.

You're angry, tired, hurt and upset, and all you want is to bury yourself back underneath the three blankets you sleep under every night.

The rest of the ride is completely silent except for Bon Scott’s voice coming through the speakers as he sings about his struggles in “Ride On”, and for Merle snoring away in the backseats of the car.

“I-” Daryl starts, pausing just to slightly turn the volume of the radio down. “I didn't mean ta hurt ya, y/n. I'm so sorry, I didn't see you and-”

“S'okay, Daryl,” you quietly reassure him, looking at him and giving him a small smile before putting your attention back on the road. “I know it was an accident. Don't worry about it, we're cool.”

“I ain't worried about that, m'worried about you,” he lets you know. “I don't want’cha to get hurt, specially 'cause of me or Merle. He doesn't want that either.”

“I know you do, Daryl. And I know Merle does too. You guys are my family and I love you,” you pause, taking the younger Dixon’s left hand to give it a reassuring squeeze. “As long as we have each other, it'll be alright.”

“Damn straight. We ride together, we die together,” Merle intervenes from the back, making the two of you chuckle.

“How drunk are you, Merle?” You quietly ask him. “M'not, like, at all. I actually felt every single hit, ya dick,” he addresses his baby brother.

“Serves y'right, asshole,” Daryl retorts with a smirk, making his big brother chuckle and there’s the whole “laughing it off” you were referring to.

“You're both assholes, let's just leave it at that,” you put in your two cents, making the men smile and chuckle in sync which makes a small smile appear on your lips.

You all relax a little and the rest of the ride back home is nice and calm. You like driving at night, you like the cool air and the pretty lights illuminating the small town. Something about it just appeases you.

“Y'heard about that new crazy fever everyone's 'been talking about?” Daryl asks, pulling a cigarette out of his leather jacket as an ambulance passes your car, sirens blaring. “Yeah, it's all over the news, kinda hard to ignore,” you sigh, swinging your left arm out of the window. “How bad do you think is it?”

“The fever?” He asks, and you give him a small hum in return. “Fucked if I know,” he shrugs, blowing the smoke from his cigarette out of his opened window. “I mean, how bad can a fuckin' cold get, ya know?”

“Some people don't have what it takes to fight off viruses, Daryl,” you quietly remind him, the
sadness in your voice betraying you and he understands that Luna is on your mind. "Sorry."

"Ain't shit to be sorry for but Merle's face right now. He looks like shit," he chuckles, looking in the rear-view mirror at his sleeping brother.

"Don't be mean," you scold him though there's a smile on your face. "I ain't mean. S'just tough love, sunshine."

"Yeah, well, that sucks," you point out and hear him whisper a soft "yeah" but don't mention it, knowing that he didn't mean for you to hear it and not wanting to make him uncomfortable.

You know that he has a hard time with his dad and brother when it comes to affection since he’s lacked it growing up, and you feel for him. You sure Merle is just as bad, but he compensates by behaving like an asshole. You just let things be though, that's how it works with the three of you.

As long as nobody’s hurt; you let things be and try to be there as much as you can.

You and Daryl keep on making chit-chat as he burns through his nicotine stick. Merle is still snoozing away in the backseats much to his younger brother’s entertainment and you end up counting all the ambulances you see, sirens blaring, on the road on your way back. You've counted ten by the time you park in front of the Dixons' house.

"You comin'?" Daryl asks, making you snap out of your thoughts. "Uh, yeah... Yeah, be right there. Y'need help with him?" You ask, looking at Merle which is now slowing emerging from his sleep in the back of the car.

"Nah, I got him," he assures you, about to close the door of the passenger side when he pauses to look at you. "Hey, don't stay out here too long, yeah? S'cold out, don't want'cha to catch whatever shit's goin' around."

"Sure," you answer above a whisper, undoing your seat-belt and letting yourself sink into your seat in front of the wheel, waiting to hear the front door of the house click shut before you allow yourself to let a deep sigh out.

Your hands are shaking, your legs nervously twitching and you're starting to bathe in your own sweat as your skin itches and your insides feel like mush, but you ignore it. The first three days are the hardest, you just need to rest and let your system cleanse itself.

At thirteen, getting sober should not be a battle you're fighting, and relapses should not be a concern of yours; but it is, and they are. Your mother left you hooked on alcohol and then you found little pills in Merle’s room that made you forget about Luna’s situation, your own anxiety, your father’s absence and all that good trauma you’ve been left to deal with.

You tried getting sober once but, all on your own, you quickly relapsed, and it got ugly. Losing Luna is what really finished doing you in and, a little over a week ago, Daryl found you O.D'ing in their father’s hunting cabin. You’d never tell them that Merle’s drugs are what you were hooked on but, deep down, you know they know, and the eldest brother carries that guilt with him. The way he’d flushed his bags down the drain and begged you not to go down the path he has after Daryl told him about what had happened gave it away.
Merle is heavily into drugs and alcohol, but he’s been keeping away since the night he and his brother had to rush you to the E.R. Though he still drinks like a fish, he’s proved to be of great help at times. He really tries, you know that he doesn't want you to go into another relapse circle and you're thankful for his and Daryl's support because you know that, if not for them, you would have fallen right back into it all headfirst after day two. Because, no matter how much you love them and they love you, the pain you’re feeling is one only being high off your tits could numb.

Still, you don’t want that for yourself and not just because you’re only thirteen. You want to heal- You have been healing, and you want to keep going.

You’ve come to terms with the fact that you can’t get back what your mother stole from you, but you can build something new for yourself and the Dixons are the best foundations you could ask for. They’re more than family. They’re everything.

Clearing your throat, you push yourself out of the car, twisting the keys around your fingers to ease your nerves as you head inside only to be greeted by Daryl on the porch. You give him a small smile and walk up the three little steps up to him. “Merle’s out,” he lets you know.

“Good. That’s good,” you quietly answer him with a nod. “You alright, sweetheart?” The youngest Dixon asks, looking down at your shaking hands.

“No,” you manage through a tight throat, tears stinging your eyes, and Daryl is on you in a second, one hand on the middle of your back and the other holding the back of your head as he cradles you to him. “I feel sick,” you tell him, and he can feel your tears and sweat soaking through his shirt.

“Hardest part’s almost over, sunshine, I’ll help ya push through it. The rest too.”

“I know you will,” you sob into his chest, your head hurting and your stomach churning.

You faintly hear the archer whisper a “c’mon,” before you’re being lifted off the ground and carried inside. Before you can even start to process how you got there, you’re bending over the toilet’s bowl and hurling the content of your stomach out in it. There’s a soothing hand at your back and you cringe internally at the fact that it can probably feel the sweat soaking through your hoodie.

Next step is to undress you down to your underwear and then you’re being held under a warm spray of water, Daryl calming you and keeping your hands away from the shower knobs when you try for cold water. “S’itchy,” you whine, your voice slurred with fatigue.

“I know, y/n, but you need warmth right now. It’ll feel better soon, I promise.” You know he’s right, but your body feels overheated and the warm water makes your skin feel agonizingly itchy.

It takes some time, but you eventually relax and let Daryl help you clean yourself up, his eyes glued to your every movement, watching for dizziness or any other signs that you may be feeling sick again. Once showered, you slip out of your soaked underwear under the towel you have wrapped around yourself and are left alone barely long enough to slip into your pj’s, which consist
of one of your dad’s old Thin Lizzie concert t-shirt and a pair of boxers from one of the brothers, before Daryl is back in the bathroom and carrying you to his bedroom.

You let your head fall on his shoulder and mumble a quiet “thank you, D’,” into his neck to which he answers with a kiss to your temple and a “f’course, darlin’,” as he carries you back to bed.

You’re slipped back into your side of his bed and he climbed on his, making sure you’re perfectly covered by the three blankets and comforter you both sleep under.

“I love you, D’,” you sleepily mumble as you curl up on the mattress and nuzzle your face further into the pillow below. “I love ya too, sunchine.”

Daryl Dixon is not a man of words, not because he doesn’t see the point but more so because growing up with that “tough love” he keeps referring to made him very insecure about showing emotions. Still, with you, he never struggles.

It’s simple to love you, it always has been. You had him since day one when you’d wrapped your tiny, chubby little hand around his index finger and looked up at him from your father’s arms, your little mouth parted in wonder as you stared at him like he was everything.

At only thirteen of age, both brothers have seen you go through hardships they wish they could have kept you safe and away from. When Daryl found you in that damn cabin, seizing and choking- The wave of guilt that came crashing down on him still lingers.

He hates the scars on your forearms, on your thighs, legs and stomach. Looking at your sleeping form, he wishes he could take it all away and give you the chance to have a goddamn childhood, to rid you of all the nasty memories and lingering feelings he knows wake you up in tears at night. The really bad ones you never tell anyone about.

With a heavy sigh, Daryl clicks the lights off and shuffles until he finds a comfortable position to sleep with on his side, facing you – always facing you. – He yawns and scoffs a chuckle when he hears Merle grunting and snoring in the room next door.

You whine in your sleep, your forehead creased with a little frown until Daryl reaches over to take your left hand in his and you immediately settle with a sleepy mumble.

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PRESENT DAY // 22nd January 2017;

2:00 PM //
Your hands are shaking out of control and your fingers are clumsily tracing the drawings carved into your bow, your eyes reading the inscription on it over and over. “I’ll always be there for ya, even when I ain’t – D.”

Your feet are freely dangling out of an abandoned car you've found earlier on today as you're sitting sideways on the passenger's seat, your eyes filled with tears, your head, laying limply against the headrest, filled with guilt and shame.

You keep looking over your shoulder, expecting Negan to appear.

please stop.

You're out. You ran off. You couldn't bring yourself to open the door to the infirmary back at the Sanctuary, you couldn't prepare yourself to see just how much damage Negan had inflicted to Randall; you cowered away from it.

You told Faith that you'll sneak out on your own to “make it less obvious” but really, deep down, you know that it's because you got scared to face Randall. You hate that you're the cause of his pain.

You may not have been the one beating him up, but it sure as shit felt like it to you and you're sure that's also the way Randall sees the whole thing. You can’t blame him for it.

As you wait for your friends to arrive, you try to sort yourself out. You’re torn between feeling excited, happy, relieved and terrified beyond recognition at the idea of reuniting with them, especially the tattooed Savior, after what happened.

Part of you just wants to leave, go back to your own, much simpler life, whilst the other is determined to stay right here and wait for your friends. She wants you to be there for Randall like you promised him you would be. She wants to fix him up and start something new, something healthy. That's all you need, that's all you crave. It doesn't matter with who, you just want to feel safe for once.

There’re at least five dead bodies piled up right next to the car, five walkers you've put down, and you're still on the lookout for any more of them but it seems to be pretty calm out. You can hear growls in the area but they're away from you, so you don't bother with them. No need to go and poke the bear... the flesh hungry, blood thirsty, dead bear.

You're parked in the small town where Faith is supposed to be doing her supply run in today. She radioed in about an hour ago to tell you that she was on her way and informed you that Negan had seen that you’d broken out of his office and was pissed. From what you know, she played dumb and told him that she didn't know where the hell you went and promised that she'll look for you while she was out on her routine run.

You’re not gonna lie, it terrified you when she broke the news to you, it fucking petrified you actually, and you’ve been on your toes ever since, feeling like he's about to pop out of nowhere at any given second.
You're terrified even though Faith has made it clear that she handled the situation and, yes, you do trust her but the swollen bruise Negan's hand has left on your neck and how bad your throat burns only serve to remind you of just how far things went, how dangerous this man truly can be, even to you.

You hate how your mind processes this man. The man that’s made your life a living nightmare, laid claim to you without any regards for how that could potentially affect you. The man that treats you like something that only has dimension within his hold and takes you for granted.

The man you've only known for a week and six days, the one you've tried running away from only to end up running back to because it feels like your brain short-circuits whenever he’s not around… You can’t fucking function without him; the man who’s locked you away into a small, dark cell despite knowing about your past and the marks it's left on you- This fucking man... is the same one that deprived you of oxygen until you were ready to pass out just hours ago.

Why the fuck does that hurt? Why are you so surprised that it came to this? Why is being so far from him so fucking terrifying when it should be a relief? You should be glad to have miles between the two of you. You shouldn’t want to try and hear him out, see what he has to say, but you’re desperate for him to justify choking you within an inch of blacking out.

It feels like you don't even know who you are anymore, everything feels so wrong. It’s like you’ve been rewired without even realizing it was happening. For every con you find when it comes to him, your mind frantically comes up with a pro.

You let out a shaky sigh, quickly wiping the single tear that escaped from your eye before smiling weakly, eyeing the words your friend carved into the bow he’s made for you.

“Where are you, D? I miss you... I miss Merle, too.” You get lost in the past for a quick second before your ears perk up at the sound of gravel getting crushed under a car’s wheels.

Steadily, you slip from your seat and crouch down, staying low between the shoulder of the road and your car so that you're out of sight but can see what's going on.

Your shoulders drop and a relieved breath that you didn't even know you'd been holding makes its way past your parted lips when you recognize Faith's Jeep and see her stop in the middle of the road before getting out of the vehicle, softly calling your name.

Without thinking, you stand back to your full height only for the lady Savior to aim her gun at you. “Fucking hell,” she breathes out, lowering her gun. “You scared the crap out of me, kiddo. Jesus! Don’t ever do that again,” she scolds, tucking her weapon back into the waistband of her pants before opening her arms and stepping towards you.

You’re quick to take the silent invitation and run into her embrace, hiding your face in the crook of her neck, sobs rocking your body as you finally let fear consume you. “Hey. Hey, shh, it's okay, pretty girl,” she coos, gently rocking you left and right, kissing the top of your head, resting the curved bridge of her nose against your forehead, letting you calm down in her arms.
The sound of a door slamming shut makes you jump, and you hesitantly drag yourself out of Faith’s safe arm, your eyes quick to find what you know to be Randall’s boot a few feet behind.

You can feel him looking at you but keep your head down, afraid to see his face, afraid to see just how much damage you’ve caused and the disappointment you know you’ll find among the bruises.

Everything is silent, you can hear birds chirping until Randall's huge arms snake around your much smaller frame, making your ears ring, loud sobs tearing through your already damaged throat the second he gets close enough for his smell to reach you.

You hide your face against his chest as he lifts you up and he hides his on the side of your neck, the warmth of his tears hitting your skin only feeding your guilt and sadness. “What d’he do to you, baby?” He asks against your skin with a sob and your grip on him gets tighter, both your hands grabbing the back of his shirt to keep him as close as possible.

“N-Not n-nearly enough,” you sob out, shaking in his arms as you break under all the pressure you've been put under these past few days.

You feel Randall tense around you and tighten your grip on him some more, irrationally terrified that he’s about to drop you and walk away. “Stop, y/n, please,” he pleads into your neck, Faith silently watching the two of you from a few feet away.

You panic and cry when you feel him pull back, only calming down when he gets a gentle hold on your jaw to get you to look at him. His brow is furrowed, his jaw clenched, his shoulders clearly tensed, and his teary eyes are piercing straight into yours, but you can't look away.

“You really believe I'm holding a grudge, don't ya?” He observes more so than he asks but you still nod with a pout.

“Negan told me… things that I didn’t wanna hear and I punched him, baby. That's why I got my ass beat. Don’t fucking talk like that, please,” he asks of you, his tone pleading again as he pushes his forehead against yours to closely look at you.

You silently nod your head, your brain not really processing anything but the unreasonable yearning to please and mend conflict.

“What d'he do to you, baby? Why the fuck is there a handprint on your throat and cuts on your cheek?” Randall asks as a single tear rolls down his cheek which you catch with your thumb before it can go any further down his face.

“L-Lucille-” You start with a whisper, your eyes focused on Randall’s growing stubble.

“Excuse me?” Faith cuts in. “Sweetheart, did he raise that stupid fucking bat on you?” She asks, clearly aggravated.

“N-No. He… He j-just… gr-graced m-my cheek with the- the wire and he…” Your throat clicks as
you swallow around the limp in it, the soreness of the flesh making you grimace a little. “He ch-choked me,” you whisper.

The air turns thick, no one speaking until Faith’s radio starts to buzz, indicating that someone is trying to join her. She picks it up, silently asking you and Randall to stay really quiet. “What's up?” The dark-haired woman casually answers, impressing you with her easiness.

“Anything?” Negan’s voice comes through and you tense and start to shake, Randall’s hold on you the only thing keeping you grounded as your vision goes fuzzy. “Or am I gonna have to fucking go get her the fuck back home by my goddamn self, Faith?” He barks through the walkie-talkie.

“Are you fucking kidding me right now, Negan? I literally just parked for fuck's sake! I told you that I'll look for her and I fucking will.”

“Whatever, just do your fucking job and don't fucking forget who the fuck you work for, Fa-” He doesn't get to finish his sentence when Faith spits out a mean “Screw you, Negan,” before putting the little device away.

She sighs and pinches the bridge of her nose. “Fucking asshole,” she bitterly mutters.

“Stay,” you shyly speak up, reluctantly getting out of Randall's arms, Faith turning her attention to you. “You... You could stay. With us. We... We'd take care of each other. We would,” you look to Randall for back-up, but the look on his bruised face tells you that he already knows this is a losing battle.

“Honey, I already explained it to you, I-” she sighs and gives you a sad smile. “Listen, it's okay, alright? Believe me, I need to be back at the Sanctuary. I want to give you two time to actually put some real distance between you, Negan and his dogs.” She gently grabs your face and kisses the tip of your nose.

“He ain't shit to me, sweetheart. Hell, you better believe that I'm not about to let a goddamn man tell me what the fuck to do, and you shouldn't either,” she looks at Randall then back at you before flashing you the same sad smile. “You two should go before I change my mind though,” she finishes with a clear of her throat and tears in her deep, brown eyes, quickly wiping away the single one that escaped.

It breaks your heart to see tears in her eyes. You've never seen Faith cry before and, now that you have, you can officially say that you fucking hate it.

“Here,” you start, heading to the car you drove here in before running back and handing her a radio and a small piece of paper where you've wrote coordinates down. “Found those while I was waiting for you guys, it has some kickass range too so, I-I took it... I hope that's okay with you. I know th-that you're supposed to bring e-everything back to him but-”

“He can't be pissed about what he doesn't even know exists, honey,” Faith smiles, taking the radio from you and putting the piece of paper into her jeans before winking at you. “Damn it, I'm actually gonna miss you, ya li'l rascal,” she chuckles though it comes out sad and heavy, before
taking you in her arms.

“Don't go,” you try one more time, your voice tight and wavering. You thought that giving her that radio, knowing that she'll have it with her, would reassure you, help you let go; but it didn't. It's hard and it hurts so bad, it almost makes you regret ever meeting her.

She softly calls Randall over and you feel them hug each other even though you're still in Faith arms, firmly holding on to her until the tattooed Savior's hands gently pry you away from her making you sob out loud as you feel your body losing touch with hers, your hands clinging to her jacket.

“Wait, please,” you choke out. “Honey, it's okay,” Faith gives you a small, teary smile. Seeing you cry and struggle for her is making her heart hurt. “It's okay, pretty girl,” she whispers to you as Randall reassuringly keeps you against his chest.

“No! No, it's not okay, Faith,” you cry out, slamming your head back between Randall’s pectorals.

“Yes, it is, y/n. Now, you’re going to get in the fucking car and leave, am I clear?” Faith sharply orders, trying to sound firm but there’re tears rolling down her face and you can tell that she's having a hard time too.

“Please, sweetheart, just go. Please. We'll see each other again, I promise. I'll radio you every time I'm out all by myself and we'll hang out, yeah?”

“S’not the same,” you whisper, and she chuckles at your persistence. “Yea, but it’s all I can offer right now, y/n,” she explains with a smile before walking back to you and kissing your forehead.

“I don't want you to think that this is me abandoning you, okay? 'Cause it isn't. This is me doing what's right for the people that I care about, 'cause that's what you do when you love someone, right? You do whatever it takes to keep them safe, no matter how much it costs you. But this isn't me saying goodbye, y/n. We will see each other again and I'll check on you every day at sundown.”

“Okay. Yes.” You look up at her, getting out of Randall's arms just to hug her tight one last time. “Thank you, for everything” you whisper to her.

“Take care of yourself for me, yeah?” She asks you. “Promise. You too, for me.”

“Promise,” she whispers back before kissing your temple and quickly hugging Randall one last time, saying goodbye to him as well before bringing her attention back to her Jeep as you and the run-away Savior get inside the car you've found and drive away from your rendezvous point.

5:20 PM //

You and Randall have been driving for three hours straight, switching turns behind the wheel every hour to get some rest. Things are going pretty well, you're really low on fuel but the little supply runs you've been doing at every stop almost filled the trunk of the car and the fact that you've done that all by yourself is a little lift on your sour mood.
You’ve been handling the scavenging all on your own after you’ve threatened Randall to break both his legs if he didn’t stay put and wait for you in the car.

You feel horrible about his wounds. His face is all bloody and bruised, his bottom lip is split and his left browbone is now decorated with a deep cut at the tail, but the real damages are on his body. There’re some terrifying looking bruises on his ribcage and all over his stomach, even his tattoos aren’t able to hide the bruised and swollen patches of skin.

You're worried that he may have a shattered rib and, good God, you wouldn't wish that upon your worst enemy. That shit hurts like hell, especially nowadays when those kinds of injuries can’t be treated properly.

There's some obscure, country music C.D playing softly through the speakers since all there is on the radio is a broadcast for emergency telling you that "everything is under control" and that you must "get to the Atlanta safe zone" and blah blah blah. You and Randall almost went mental when you’ve heard that robotic sounding lady talking on repeat on every single damn station.

Everything is past the point of being “under control”. Hell, you wonder if it ever was.

“Are you going to talk to me or...?” Randall asks from the passenger seat, his eyes watching your every movement. “Sure,” you whisper. “What d’you wanna talk about?”

“How ‘bout what’s got you acting like I’m a stranger? You’ve been on edge ever since Faith left—”

“What d'you want me to say, Randall? I fucked up, alright?” You cut him off. “I always do. I fuck up and then the people I care about get hurt because of my stupidity, that's why I always stay by myself 'cause that,” you point at his bruised face, “that's what I do, that's what happens!” You snap and the car literally breaks down on you just as you finish your sentence, making you groan in frustration.

_the stars have aligned and the universe hates you._

“Fuck's sake!” You slam your hands against the wheel, feeling your blood boil over with anger that you refuse to let out.

You start mumbling to yourself as you let your head drop against the wheel, feeling tears welling in your eyes only agitates you further. “Y/n,” Randall softly calls out, trying to get your attention but you keep on mumbling about how stupid and useless you are.

“Y/n!” He tries again, the sudden boom of his voice in the car making you flinch, and he feels a tint of guilt but quickly reels it in. “Everything’s okay, sweetheart. Calm down,” he coos, looking at you, and lets out a soft sigh when he spots tears running down your face.

“How can you say that?” You ask, sounding almost disgusted, like you’ve just been told the most obvious lie you’ve ever heard. “Nothing’s okay. Nothing’s been okay for a long, long time, Randall,” you tell him in a whisper, your hands tightening on the leather of the wheel.

“You’re still here,” is all he can come up with, your words stunting his train of thoughts. “Yea,”
you scoff, swallow down a sad whimper.

Randall unbuckles his seatbelt to turn properly on his seat and face you, desperate to get you to look at him. “Don’t act like that means nothing,” his voice is almost pleading, and he’ll admit that he wanted it to come out stronger than that.

“Doesn’t it though?” You ask in a soft whisper, finally turning your head, letting the left side of it rest against the wheel in front of you, to look at Randall even though your eyes don’t quite meet his.

“Everything’s just so… Messed up. It's all broken, and it hurts so bad ‘cause I’m really trying a- and…” Your eyes finally find his and you shrug before looking away again. “I did this do you. S'my fault. I can’t stand myself anymore, I hate who I've become, and I hate those things I feel.”

The silence in the car is heavy, loaded with insecurities and sorrow. Randall’s eyes fall on the clear bite mark below your chin, right where it meets your throat which is too marked with a nasty, swollen bruise; this one hand shaped.

“I’ve known you, what… a week ‘n’ a half?” You silently nod, your eyes shyly finding his again. “Yea… Bounds form pretty quickly nowadays, with the world being the way it is ‘n’ all, but you… You had me in the palm of your hand from day one.” You give him a tiny smile at that, and he returns it, carefully reaching his hand out for you to leave or take.

To his surprise, you dislodge your claws from the wheel and slip your right hand into his left one, letting them rest between the two of you on the bench. “It’s okay to be angry, y/n,” Randall tells you, his voice low.

“No, it’s not,” you whisper back. “My mom was always angry, and Negan…” This time you’re too late to muffle your sad whimper. “Why do I always make people angry? I don’t… I don’t understand.”

Randall silently shakes his head at the pleading tone in your voice, like you’re begging him for reassurance, an answer of some sort, looking at him with wet, wavering eyes. “You’re not the problem, y/n-”

“Yes, I am,” you cut him off. “There’s something wrong with me, Randall.”

“No, there isn’t,” he insists, giving your hand a squeeze when he feels you slip away from him. “Then why do I wanna go back?” The question makes the tattooed man frown a little. “My throat hurts- He hurt me, and I still want to go back,” you quietly confess, tears steadily rolling down your cheeks.

“Can you explain that?” You ask him, a quiet plea hiding in your voice. “You’ve been through a lot-” “And there’s only so much I can blame on my past,” you cut him off, your voice strangled by the knot in your throat.

“There’s a lot to blame on your past, y/n. Trauma fucks with your brain, it wires it differently, you
know that— I know you do.” Randall’s voice is firm as he speaks, needing you to hear him.

You both stare at one another for a bit, you trying to ground yourself and process Randall’s words, him trying to see if you’ve heard him at all.

With a sniffle, you squeeze his hand and give him a tired, sad little smile as a single tear rolls down your face right into the leather covering the wheel of the car. “I can’t… I can’t stop thinking about what happened with… with Jason. It never leaves my mind. I don’t know what to do with it.”

Randall is about to speak when you shrug and shake your head, prompting him to stay silent, before shyly lifting his hand up to leave a little kiss on his knuckles, the softness behind the gesture making him smile.

Carefully, you put his hand back down and silently open the door on your side of the car. “I’m gonna see if I can find any fuel in those cars,” you quietly let him know, nodding your head towards the abandoned cars lingering on the quiet road.

“Let me come with,” he tries, ready to jump out of his seat. “S’okay, I got it,” your voice is a little rough as you speak and Randall wonders if it might be swollen.

Still, you’re quick to bounce back and put on a little smile before turning to him. “Sides, it's your turn to take the wheel, Chicago boy, don't think you can play me,” you tease him, and he goes along with it, taking the hint that deep conversation time is over.

“But, I'm wooooounded,” he playfully whines, closing his eyes and dramatically rolling his head back.

“Poor thing you are,” you gently mock before grabbing your ax beneath your seat and heading towards the old, rusty cars, leaving Randall to his own devices.

6:33 PM //

One last body falls limp on the floor and you drag it outside with the four others, piling them on top of each other to burn later, Randall watching your every move as he keeps an eye out for any more walkers.

“You should've let me help, y/n,” he argues, watching you move in the light of the car, the sun long gone.

“M'fine, Randall. If you wanna help so bad, give me a hand to bring our supplies inside the house, big boy,” you tease, playfully pinching his right cheek as you walk passed him to get to the car parked in the driveway of the two story farmhouse you’ve settled on.

“Oh come on, friends are supposed to kill things together. Moving is awful.”

"Friends are supposed to help each other. And no, Randall, friends are not supposed to “kill things” together, that's just you, honey,” you let him know with a smile as you carry three huge boxes filled with supplies inside the house, not even able to see where the hell you're going with the
boxes piled on top of one another. You may not be small, you’re still not quite that tall.

“Need help there, girl?” Randall teases as he strolls past you, carrying the four other boxes that were left in the car inside. Damn this freakishly tall person. Mean long-limbed boy-man creature.

“I’ll trip you, don’t try me,” you warn him as you both start to race to the house with boxes in your arms.

“Y’know, we could just get inside one after the other, sweetheart, no one has to get hurt,” he extends an olive branch though he’s still rapidly walking to stay ahead of you.

“Pff, yeah, right. There can only be one,” you exclaim as you quickly squeeze past him and inside the house, carefully dropping the boxes on the floor before smiling cockily at him, proud of yourself.

“Need help there, boy?” You tease as he gets inside and closes the front door with his feet before dropping the boxes on the floor, slowly clapping as he straightens up and you give him a little bow.

“You kicked my ass, I'll take it. Bravo, you li’l shit.”

You step up to him and give him a quick hug. “Of course I did,” you jokingly brag, making Randall chuckle. “And you forgot to turn the car’s lights off, mister-man,” you point out and feel him tense a little.

“S’okay, I got it,” you assure him, letting go of him before walking back out to the car. “You just want me to put all this stuff away on my own, y/n. I know your evil little plans; you can’t fool me!” He bounces back, smiling when he hears you chuckle outside.

There’s a fire going in the old chimney and Randall is sitting shirtless on the couch, waiting as you fetch medical supplies out of the boxes that are yet to be emptied.

He watches as you walk into the living room, your eyes glued to the box you’re holding, and he can see you vibrating with guilt from where he’s seated. “Hey,” he softly calls out, making your head snap up.

“Sorry- Sorry, I uh… Sorry.” You blush when your frantic mumbling makes Randall chuckle and shake his head at you. “Stop laughin’ at me,” you quietly mumble, sitting down next to him on the big couch.

“I’m not,” he defends himself and you squint your eyes at him, his smile turning into a shit-eating
You gently wash away the blood on his face with a glove and carefully clean up his wounds with anti-septic, making him wince a couple of times but he always reassures you that he's okay. The house is completely silent as Randall finds himself basking in the softness of your touch, not even wincing when you get to stitching up the cut on his left brow.

With one last look at his lip, you carefully dab an alcohol-soaked cotton ball on the small tear and decide to leave it be once you're satisfied that it's stopped bleeding. The flesh is swollen and slowly bruising but the tear is not half as bad as you first thought it was once you've cleared out the blood.

“Here ya go,” you softly exclaim, putting the dirty, used gauze that you've used to clean his face away before sitting back on the couch with your legs crossed, facing him. “All cleaned up,” you whisper with a smile, happy to see his face without blood on it even though there still are bruises and wounds cutting through his skin.

“Thanks, sweetheart. Now let me take care of you, alright? You go get settled and whatnot while I check to make sure we've secured everything, yeah?” You frown, opening your mouth a little, and Randall knows you're about to deny him. “Just, let me do this one thing. You've done everything today, now s'time for you to rest.”

It takes you a little minute, and he can tell that it takes everything you have, but you finally give him a little nod. “Thank you, Randall,” you lean forward for a hug and he carefully catches you before laying down on the couch so you're laying on top of him.

“Randall, m'gonna hurt you. Lemme go,” you whine, clearly embarrassed. “How the hell are you going to hurt me, exactly, sweetheart?” He asks with a frown.

“I'm too heavy. I'm gonna freaking crush you, you idiot,” you point out like it's obvious and try to push yourself off him again, but his hands keep you in place, rendering your efforts fruitless.

“Are you kidding me? I used to carry Connor around when he'd get drunk off his ass, you weight nothing to me, little grasshopper.”

You ignore him and carefully slip off before walking to the front door where the boxes of supplies are still waiting to be picked up and put away, looking through them to get some shampoo and shower gel out, a set of pajamas and a towel.

You stick your tongue out to Randall as you head up to the first floor where you've seen a
bathroom while you were cleaning the house up and - and that's really a plus - you actually were able to fix the shower pipe to bring hot water back, too.

*thank fuck the owners had their own resources. hooray for hard-working farmers.*

09:45 PM //

There're three bedrooms in this house, three freaking bedrooms, yet, somehow, you and Randall have ended up in the same one and you're now building a fort out of sheets, blankets and a scary amount of pillows... Okay, yes, it was your idea but the fact that Randall actually supported it a hundred percent only made it all go to being cute to bordering on insanity and you're now building a pillow empire of which you’re the all-powerful Queen.

You two found a bedroom with a huge bed nestled right in the top right corner of the room, a huge dresser made out sat at the foot of it, completely keeping the bed out of view to whoever would enter the room, and it created this super cozy feeling when you got on the mattress. It felt like a safe little space with a comfortable mattress as ground and, well, you both had the same damn idea at the same damn time which then turned into complete madness.

So, now, here you both are; Randall only wearing a pair of red and black flannel pajama pants, and you in a pair of white pajama shorts, a simple black hoodie covering your upper body - because it’s winter and you’re cold, goddamn it. -

Chicken flavored noodles were on the menu tonight because you both were way too tired to actually *cook* anything, hiding away inside your bed-turned-fort seemed more appealing than being adults, and you’ve been competing over who can make the most disgusting, obnoxious noises whilst eating. So far, you're winning.

“Alright, I give; you're the grossest person out of the two of us,” Randall admits defeat with a chuckle.

“You're gross,” you very maturely clap back with a mouthful of noodles. “Yeah I am, but this isn't about me right now, young lady,” he points out, wiggling his fork at you as he speaks.

You chuckle and throw your head back, smiling as you look at the thin white sheet covering the ceiling above. Randall actually took your claustrophobia into consideration when building this little fort of yours and, instead of putting blankets right above your heads, he put it up higher, only a few centimeters away from the ceiling, to ensure space.

You’re startled out of your thoughts and give an involuntary flinch when Randall reaches over and waits a beat for you to settle to carefully trace the cut going through the arch of your right eyebrow.

“We're twins,” he points out with a smile, referring to the very similar wound at the tail of his own left brow. You chuckle at that, eyeing his stitched-up cut. “Yeah, we’re eyebrow twins.”

“The strongest bond of all,” he adds with a grin and a chuckle when you snort out a laugh before resuming your meals.
You both finish your bowls in silence and Randall snakes his arm underneath the blankets serving as walls for your fort to put the plates down on the bedroom's floor before laying back down next to you on the mattress.

The two of you silently stare at the sheet covering the ceiling, your hands nervously playing with the hem of your t-shirt.

“Wh-” You start but quickly stop before asking questions you're not sure you want answers to. “What is it, sweetheart?” Randall asks, keeping his eyes on the thin white piece of fabric floating above.

“You said… You said that N-Negan said stuff you didn’t want t-to hear… What… What d’he say?” you quietly ask, already regretting it.

You feel your friend tense next to you for a moment before letting a shaky breath out as he sits up on the mattress. “I’m sorry, I-I shouldn’t have asked. It’s not… S’not my business,” you timidly apologize, afraid that you might have vexed him.

“I was heading to the cafeteria to meet you for breakfast, like we said,” your ears perk up as he speaks and you follow him into a sitting position, your legs crossed. “I ran into him on the way there and he looked pissed, so I asked him what was going on and he told me that he was looking for you, that he knew you'd slept in my room the night before,” Randall sighs, tilting his head slightly to the side of look at you from the corner of his eye.

“I told him to piss off and uh… He basically just- Fuck… He said that… that no matter how hard I try, I'll never be able to make you happy or keep you for too long 'cause you'll always end up running back to him.” The way he's looking at you, you know that’s not the worst of it, but you can’t bring yourself to make it stop.

“He told me about… things that had happen between the two of you the night before- And I ain’t judging you for it, sweetheart,” he quickly clarifies but you’re already lost deep in your shame. “It’s just… the smirk on his fucking face just- It set me off and, before I even thought it through, I punched him. Next thing I knew, he was dragging my ass to the warehouse to beat the holy fuck out of me.”

It takes you a minute before you’re able to speak, though you’re still processing what’s just been said. “Everything feels wrong,” is the first thing that comes out, your eyes finding Randall’s.

The ex-Savior turns to face you, his legs parted to frame your crossed ones. “I shouldn’t have told you-”

“No,” you interrupt him. “No, I… I need- For once, I need someone t-to just tell me what’s going on without being cryptic or- or sugar-coating it. M’tired of being lied to, it makes me feel so s-stupid.”

“You’re not stupid, y/n. But, some things are better left unsaid and heard.”
“M-Maybe so, but I’m s-sick a-and tired of people d-deciding what I g-get to hear and wh-what I don’t when it directly c-concerns me.” You look up at him then, your eyes stinging a little. “M’not a little girl, Randall. I already feel em-embarrassed enough a-as it is a-about the way I behave sometimes, I don’t- I don’t need people t-twisting the knife.”

“Y/n, sweetheart, there’s nothing embarrassing about the way you act,” he tells you with a displeased frown.

“Y-Yes, there’re a b-bunch of things. S-Starting with this s-stupid stutter! I c-c-an’t k-keep it un-under wrap and I hate it! It’s hu-humiliating and it m-makes me sound fr-friggin’ s-stupid! And th-the more I focus on t-trying t-to suppress it, th-the stronger i-it gets!”

Randall doesn’t interrupt, just carefully reaches over to place a soothing hand on your bare knee which you thankful don’t reject. “I’a-always crying, I b-blush t-too easily, I s-still s-suck on m-my thumb, I h-have a plushie in m-my bag th-that I h-hate sleeping wi-without but f-forced m-myself to now th-that I have p-people around m-me twenty-f-four-s-seven and I do th-this w-word-v-vomit th-thing when I g-get t-too a-agitated o-or nervous-”

Two hands framing your face cut thankfully cut your ramblings off and you frantically gasp for air, just now realizing that you’ve been crying.

“Your stutter does not make you sound dumb, let’s start there. A kid with dyslexia is just as capable of learning as a kid without it is, they just might go about it differently. You’re perfectly capable of expressing yourself, you just do it differently and that doesn’t make you stupid.”

Randall gives you a little smile, gently squeezing your cheeks in his hands, the gesture getting a small smile from you. “Y-you may cry more easily than most, but at least you feel that – most people don’t nowadays. I love your blush, I think it’s adorable. I’ve known you suck your thumb since the first night you feel asleep in my bed; ya see me treat you any different? And I don’t think you should force yourself to sleep without the one safety net you have when you already struggle to sleep enough as it is, but that’s just me.”

You’re beet-red by now, fidgeting with your hands and looking everywhere but directly at Randall. “Hey,” he softly calls your attention back to him, smiling when your eyes finally find his. “That’s the most you’ve spoken to me in one seating ever since we’ve met. I don’t think I’d mind word-vomit if it didn’t leave you shaking.”

What came over you, you're not sure, but something pushed you to lean forward and leave a quick kiss right on Randall's smiling mouth before pulling away like you'd been burned.

“Wha-” What the hell? What the fuck? What’s wrong with you? You don’t know.

“I’m sorry!” The apology is a high-pitched squeak at the back of your throat. “God- Oh my God, I’m so sorry-”

“Not to be an asshole, but I really don’t want you to be sorry, y/n,” Randall quietly cuts you off and you immediately snap your mouth shut, unsure of what’s happening. Your recent ramblings have turned your brain to mush it seems.
“It was w-wrong of me t-to kiss you l-like that.” You frown when the man sitting in front of you chuckles. “No. I mean, it didn’t mind,” he shrugs with a boyish smile.

“B-But… But you didn’t… I mean you didn’t…” You trail off, your eyes wide and confused.

“Kiss you back?” You hum, your cheeks burning. “Believe me, I’d kill for a redo, but I’m not about to take advantage of you, y/n”

Your brain gone on holiday, you make the decision to let your lips find Randall’s against, his eyes almost popping out of their sockets though he doesn’t make a move to pull away. “You’re not,” you whisper against his parted lips, your forehead resting against his, and it takes him a little minute, but he quickly pulls himself together.

You squeal in surprise when he pushes you down on the mattress, one of his hand holding your hip while the other rests on your unmarked cheek, holding your face as he deepens the kiss.

You don't even realize that your hands are moving, until one finds Randall's hair to undo the bun sitting at the top of his head whilst the other creeps along his chest, touching every bit of skin it can get to. The tattooed man above you groans into your mouth and you can't help but to softly bite down on his swollen bottom lip, careful not to hurt him. He seems to enjoy the nibble, a low grunt leaving his mouth the second your teeth let go of the full vessel to let it bounce back into place.

“Is this wrong?” You quietly ask against his lips, keeping your hand into his hair to keep him close to you. “You tell me, sweetheart.”

“I’m not sure of anything anymore but I… I just wanna feel okay for a little while,” you tell him truthfully. “Yea, I think we both need that, baby.”

And it starts all over again then. At first, it's sweet, he wants to make sure that you're comfortable and okay with what's happening, but then, when he sees that you are, it turns into a sloppy, on the edge of hungry and angry, kiss. Something you didn’t know you needed.

You don't know what the hell's gotten into you but, what you do know is that; it feels right. Being in his arms feels right, him touching you feels right, you touching him feels right. The two of you being here, together, feels right and you're not willing to question anything right now. You just want to feel okay.

You don't regret being here, you don't regret leaving the Sanctuary. You don't regret him.

sure, jane.
Walls Crumbling Down

Chapter Notes

[UPDATED AUGUST 6. 2019]

TRIGGER WARNING; This chapter deals with mentions of domestic abuse, past child abuse and death during labor. Please proceed carefully. As always, I'm here if you need to talk.

A/N; Sending all my love and thoughts to the people out in El Paso and Dayton. What happened was fucking disgusting and I hope you're all safe and sound out there.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

23rd January:

1:15 AM //

Goosebumps are covering your skin as you look out the window of the old farmhouse’s living room, your body missing Randall's heat as you've spent the night sleeping curled into his chest. You can see a few walkers roaming aimlessly in the fields surrounding the area but you're not too worried about them, you just have to be quiet and stay in the dark and that'll be that.

Your hands are softly rubbing up and down your bare arms, trying to provide some warmth but it doesn't seem to be doing it. Randall was so warm that you’ve traded your hoodie for a tee-shirt but, out of his arms, the cold air slipping in the poorly isolated house nipping at your skin.

Letting out a deep sigh, you walk away from the window and make your way up the stairs to the bathroom of the house, careful not to disturb the run-away Savior's slumber up in the process.

You softly close the door behind you, cringing when it ever-so-slightly creaks, and turn the light on, blinding yourself with the sudden brightness but your eyes quickly adjust to it once you've given them a rub.

Things with Randall were good, it ended with him giving you one last gentle kiss before lying down next to you and you both started making chit-chat, no uneasiness in the air. He has that boyish grin plastered on his face as he kept looking over your face, and you didn't feel anything but happiness in the moment.

After you had both fell asleep, you woke up in the middle of the night, curled up tight in his arms, and felt suffocating guilt when you peered up at him. You needed some air.

Looking at your reflection in the mirror of the cabinet above the sink right in front of you, you quickly inspect the small cut going through your right eyebrow's arch, the skin around it a little
tight as the wound slowly closes. Your eyes are all puffy, your nose running, and the skin below your nostrils is red and raw. You're exhausted. You need sleep but can't find it, your anxiety keeping it just out of reach.

For some reason, he's in your mind. He's all you can think clearly of, actually. You can almost hear the bastard's voice and it's starting to get to you, which you don't much care for if you're being honest.

You take a closer look at your face and gently trace the cuts Lucille left on the delicate skin of your cheek. They’re tiny and already scabbed over. You hope that, for once, you won't be left with scars to remember.

Looking at your messy hair, you find yourself blindingly reaching for a pair of scissors you remember seeing in the white cabinet above the sink. It’s like you’ve been switched on automatic as you start cutting into the thick mass of hair, letting them fall on the cold tiled floor beneath you, some landing on your bare feet.

Your hands shake as you put the scissors down before eyeing the hair clipper laying precariously on the rounded edge of the sink. You narrow your eyes at it and take it with a frantic hand, turn it on and start to shave the sides of your head before getting the back as best as you can. You keep your hair fairly short on top, the loose strands hitting mid-forehead.

The door of the bathroom opens, making you jump, and you silently thank whatever God that the clippers weren’t on when Randall opened the damned door because you'd have a huge bold stripe going from the back of your head to the front if they had. You already have enough fucking problems as it is without fucking up your haircut.

Though you don't mind a buzz cut, the only reason you didn’t go with it now is because it’s winter and you know by experience that having a bare head in the cold isn’t fun. All hail women rocking the buzz all year round.

“Sorry,” Randall whispers, taking a look at your new haircut. “Didn't mean to scare ya, there. Totally love the new look though,” he sheepishly compliments, and you feel your cheeks heat up as you run a self-conscious hand through your shortened locks.

“Thanks,” you shyly whisper back before looking at him and handing him the clippers. “Could you… Could you get the back, pl-please?”

“'F'course, sweetheart,” he accepts the task with a smile and eagerly takes the tool from you before getting right behind you, one of his hands gently pushing your head down to get access to the already shortened hair on your neck and up to the middle of your skull.

“Stay still, yeah?” He softly demands before gently starting to trim the hair on the back of your head some more. It only takes him a few seconds to finish and, when he does, he can't help but run his hand through the freshly shaved hair, loving the way it starts so short and gets the tiniest bit longer the higher his hand gets on your skull.
You timidly look up at the mirror above the sink and let out a small giggle, smiling as you run a hand through the loose strands at the top of your head. You may have kept them fairly short, but they’ve always been thick and the constant humidity in the air keeps them wavy which only adds to the fluffy look of them.

“That’s better,” you whisper as you run a hand on the freshly buzzed sides of your head and then the back. “You’d think, being at the Sanctuary, I’d have been able to take a minute… With all this agitation, I couldn’t even make time to cut my hair,” you point out with a small smile, looking at your now completely bare ears and feeling the cold air of the room hitting your naked neck. You definitely missed the short hair.

“You look really good, sweetheart,” Randall compliments, making your blush deepen.

The air thickens though when you feel the ex-tattoo artist’s eyes lingering on the reflection of the deep bruise on your throat and you find yourself reaching up to touch it, pushing your fingertips into the swollen flesh with a little wince.

“You wanna talk about it?” He asks, backing up to sit on the edge of the bathtub behind you.

“No,” you’re quick to answer, dropping your head to escape his eyes in the mirror in front of you and focusing on the white porcelain sink below. “No, I’m alright.”

A beat passes and it feels like you could suffocate there’s so much tension in the room. “Hey,” Randall gently calls out and you lift your eyes up to find his in the reflecting glass.

“Hey,” you whisper back, making him smile a little.

It’s odd, but you guess that part of you is feeling awkward around him after being intimate with him a few hours ago. None of it was planned, and you don’t regret a second of it but there’s this gut-churning guilt you just can’t shake off. Plus, this is all still very new to you.

Randall is only the second man you’ve kissed, this kind of intimacy isn’t a normal, regular thing for you just yet.

“Everything feels wrong,” you quietly speak, not particularly talking to Randall, just throwing the words out there. “There’s something wrong with me and I... I’ve always known that, I just- I guess wh-when... when you’re moving a-all the time, you don’t th-think about... Y’know. What’s g-going on u-up here,” you point at your temple with a frown.

“I took it too far too fast, didn’t I?” Randall quietly speaks behind you and your head snaps up. “Wh-What?”

“I can tell you’re regretting that kiss, sweetheart,” he lets out a dry chuckle that makes your heart tighten. “R-Randall, no-”

“S’ alright, y/n, I’m not mad,” he gently reassures you, your frown deepening. “Stop.” The word is
softly spoken but still reaches its target and the Savior straightens up a little, looking at you intently.

“I don’t… I don’t know-” Your swallow echoes through the room and you see Randall getting ready to stand and get to you. “I don’t know wh-what's happening i-in my head but I… I don’t regret k-kissing you, Randall.”

“It’d be okay if you did-” He tries. “But I don’t!” You interrupt him, taking him aback with the sudden boom of your voice in the small bathroom.

“I don’t regret you and you haven’t done anything wrong. I kissed you. Me. I feel bad because I don’t know what you want from me! I feel bad because the little I know you could want from me, I’m not ready to give yet. I don't know how this works, what I'm supposed to do. I’m scared, Randall.” Your voice gets tight by the time you finish speaking and Randall’s there in a heartbeat, engulfing you in his arms and holding your head to his chest.

Your hands find his bare back as you cling to him, your breathing erratic and your eyes stinging a little. “Breathe, y/n,” he gently instructs, running his free hand soothingly up and down your back.

“I’m not expecting anything from you, sweetheart.” You can’t control the silent sob you give, barely a squeak slipping out, your shoulders jumping and belly spasming with the force of it.

“I'm a grown-ass-man, baby. I get it. You've got nothing to be afraid of,” he assures you, keeping his voice low and soft, gently rocking you from side to side. “But the big ones are the scariest,” you cry in his chest and Randall understands that ‘the big ones’ you're referring to are adults.

“Am I scary to you?” He genuinely asks, a frown creasing his forehead. “No,” you quietly answer, your voice muffled against his chest.

“Who’s scaring you, sweetheart?” Randall cautiously asks, immediately feeling you tense in his hold. “The bad men mom brought home,” you tell him, and he can tell that something’s changed. Something about your demeanor has shifted and, though he’s not fully aware of the extend of it, he knows that he has to tread lightly.

“They’re gone, y/n. You’re safe now.”

“No, th-they’re not,” you whisper it so low, like it’s a secret you weren’t meant to tell, and he can feel you shake like a leaf against him.

Randall stays quiet, letting you cry yourself out in his arms as he keeps on gently hushing you and rocking left to right.

Eventually, he feels you go limp in his hold and carefully bends to kiss the top of your head. “Let’s get you back to bed, yeah, sweetheart?” You give him a silent nod and let him lift you up in his arms to carry out of the bathroom and back to bed.

You hear the light switch click as Randall turns the light off, the moonlight coming through the windows guiding him safely to the bedroom.
The second you pass the threshold of the room; you’re being let down from your companion’s hold. “Get in, I’ll be right there, sweetheart.”

You’re hesitant at first, looking from Randall to your improvised fort, and end up walking up to it whilst pulling on your fingers and chewing on the inside of your right cheek.

Crawling back under the warm blankets on the bed, you sigh and yawn when your head hits your pillow, your eyes struggling to stay open, but your mind set on waiting for Randall to join you because it’s not safe unless he’s there.

Without thought, you curl up on yourself and only relax a little when Randall appears with a soft smile for you which you timidly give back. Any other day, you would have tensed and hid at the sight of your white plushie lamb in the man’s comically bigger hand, probably would have given him Hell for snooping through your belongings but, as it is, you find yourself taking the soft toy the second he puts it within your reach.

“Thank you,” you quietly show gratitude before curling back up on yourself, the plushie held tight against your chest, tugged right beneath your chin.

Randall turns on his side to look at you and finds you looking back at him with a small smile and a blush on your cheeks. “You’re welcome, sweetheart,” he whispers back, his eyes scanning your slightly glossed over ones but there’s no lust there, there’re no tears either; it’s something he’s never seen before. He’s pretty sure you’re not entirely here with him right now.

“I’m really digging the new haircut you got going on, really suits you,” he compliments you, keeping his voice quiet. His eyes roaming your face.

“Th-Thank you,” you whisper back, absently biting down on the inner corner of your mouth, squirming on your side of the mattress.

You’re very unfamiliar with those kinds of words and not being able to take compliments isn’t the cute thing people make it out to be. It really stings and it cuts deep every single time.

“You’re welcome, baby.”

The blond man is surprised when you reach out for him and shimmy into his arms, leaving a shy kiss on his lips before curling into his chest.

He stays still and lets you settle against him, only bringing his left arm to drape over the right side of your waist when you stop moving. Your head is laying on his right elbow, his hand gently rubbing the base of your neck as he lets you leave lingering little kisses on a few of his tattoos here and there before tracing them with your very fingertips.

With his hand gently running through the freshly shaven hair at the back of your head, you start to relax and let your lids fall shut to the sound of Randall hushing you. Eventually, the combination of his presence, body heat and voice ends up lulling you back to sleep.
Smoke slips past Negan’s parted lips as he sits there, looking through the fence, wandering why the fuck he doesn't feel any better after fucking his way through most of the night. He doesn't get it.

He didn't get any satisfaction out of it, either, if anything; he feels even shittier now. He feels guilty as hell because he can't stop thinking about how much it would hurt you if you ever find out that he’s spent the night you left having sex with five different women.

A sigh makes him turn only to come face to face with Faith standing a few feet away, leaned against the wall of the warehouse.

“Go back to bed, Faith,” Negan calmly orders before taking a drag out of his cigarette. The woman scoffs and chuckles behind him. “Right, like that tone’s gonna work on me.”

The rugged leader can’t help but smile a little at that. She never was one to take his crap. “We still goin’ out first thing in the morning?” The brown-eyed woman asks as she walks up to him and steals his cigarette straight from his fingers to take a drag.

“F’course we are. What kinda fuckin’ question is that?” He asks with a confused frown before taking his nicotine stick back.

“Hey, don’t get your panties in a twist,” Faith says with her hands up. “You seem pretty damn content fucking your night away, just makes you wander if you really need y/n that bad is all.”

Her tone is casual and disarming, like she’s talking to an old friend - which she technically is - about past flings, but he can feel his entire back tense at her words. She knows damn well what she’s doing and, fuck, she’s good at it, too.

Crushing his cigarette beneath his heavy booted foot, he twists to properly face Faith who doesn’t even so much as flinch under his scrutiny. “You don’t know what the hell you’re talkin’ about, so I suggest you keep your fuckin’ mouth shut, doll.”

Again, she scoffs. “First of all; call me doll again and I’ll cut your nuts off and feed ‘em to the squirrels. Second; how’re you gonna stand there and tell me you give a shit about the girl when you reek of sex and your belt isn’t even fucking buckled.”

The hot-blooded pair stare each other down, waiting for one to look away or snap. Negan goes
first. “Stay out of my personal shit, Faith, and I’ll stay out o’yours.”

“It ain’t personal, not anymore. Not when you’ve felt a nasty fucking bruise the shape of your hand on her throat, Negan,” the lady Savior hisses back through her clenched jaw.

She watches as the man standing in front of her seems to process her words and she briefly wonders if he’s even aware of the marks he’s left on you. “You saw her after she left my fuckin’ room?” Is what he settles on and Faith closes her eyes, realizing that she’s just fucked up.

“Briefly,” she shrugs. “When?” Negan insists, his eyes narrowed at her now. “She came down to the infirmary but took off when she saw me,” the dark-hair woman lies through her teeth.

“You mean to tell me that you saw y/n hurt and you didn’t bother to go after her?” Faith knows she’s walking on thin ice. Negan is all too aware of the affection she carries for you.

“I was busy with Randall. Remember? ‘Cause you beat the shit out of him in a jealous fit? Remember that? How terrified she was?” She bounces back, watching a storm cloud over the hazel eyes watching her.

“She’s mine,” Negan growls out, behaving like an animal trying to intimidate another off its meal. “Says who?” Faith challenges, quirking an eyebrow at the man. “Says me,” he’s quick to fire back.

“Oh,” she chuckles, clearly not impressed by his anger. “Oh, right. Sorry. My bad. Hey uh, is she also allowed to fuck her way through the country or is it a you thing…”? She can see that a nerve has been struck from where she stands.

“Faith, shut your goddamn mouth before I do something I re-”

“Admit it, Negan, you're just pressed because she's not easy,” the lady Savior cuts him off. “She doesn't want polish on her nails, makeup on her face and jewelry covering the neck you've bruised,” Faith can see Negan flinch a little at that.

She watches as the seasoned survivor runs a hand over his face, a tell-tale of frustration. “Things fucking changed, Faith. It ain't like it used to be,” Negan says, his voice low.

“No, Negan, the only thing that's truly changed is that fucking dead people get back up and that's it. The rest is an excuse. Cut the ‘you have to evolve with the world that around you’ bullshit because that's exactly what it is. You people didn't change, you're the way y'all are because you had it in you since day one. You're fucking ugly, all of you.”

“Maybe. But don’t tell me you haven’t fucking changed ever since your daughter-” “Don't!” Faith firmly interjects, her jaw clenched tight and an accusatory finger pointed at the man in front of her.

“Don't you fucking bring my little girl into this, Negan. As a matter of fact, don't talk about her. Ever. Don't say her name and don't you fucking dare use her as a goddamn shield, you fucking coward!” The woman snarls before turning and walking away from Negan and through the compound to get back to her bedroom, anger making her blood boil and sizzle beneath her skin.
The second the door of her room closes; Faith goes limp as a wash of loneliness slams into her. At thirty-nine, she's stopped counting her losses but losing a child isn't something you can easily move on from. Every time she thinks about the little girl, Faith feels a weight in her belly, and it feels like her own body is playing against her.

She's terrified of this feeling, which is why she always keeps busy, but she knows; she knows it's there. It never fucking leaves her.

Taking her clothes off, she slips into an old shirt before crawling into bed. Swiftly snaking her hand beneath the plushy pillow laying on the mattress to pull out the walkie-talkie you gave her just yesterday and hug it close to her, hiding it beneath the blanket just in case.

Though she’s still sizzling with anger, Faith quickly falls asleep, old memories coming back to pock at her wounds.

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6:00 AM //

You wake up for the fourth time today and decide that, this time; it's time for you to get up and get around to getting shit done. You're sick of falling asleep just to wake up an hour later over and over again for no apparent goddamn reason.

Quietly, you get out of the warm bed, trying your hardest not to wake Randall up as he's still sleeping like a baby next to you, before leaving the bedroom. You softly close the door behind you, not making it click shut just in case it might be enough to wake the ex-tattoo artist and head downstairs, unsure of what to do next.

You look around the place, glance outside through the windows and end up settling on boiling yourself some water to make tea, examining every single picture of the previous owners that you lay your eyes on while the water boils.

"They look happy," you whisper to yourself before putting the framed picture back in its place and walking away to go and get yourself a warm cup of tea.

Sitting down on the couch in the living room, your legs against your chest and a fuming cup of tea between your cold hands, you look around; your mind reeling.

You’ve never, ever stayed in the same place for more than two days, it’s been a rule of yours, but this time around is different. With Randall by your side, you don't know if you'll be able to move as much, he's still badly injured and he clearly isn't used to being out here, in the real world,
anymore.

He's used to protection, easy access to food and water, hot showers, comfortable beds and wired fences protecting him. Those things are not part of the world out there. They're not part of your world.

Finding a place to settle in for the night, spending your days running around, sneaking around every nooks and crannies, fighting for your life and getting that rush of adrenaline. Feeling whole and satisfied at the end of the day because you made it all by yourself, leaving little notes for other survivors, cleaning houses for people to be safe in and marking them to let them know the place is clear; that’s your life.

Only killing if you have absolutely no other options, only taking what you need and leaving some things behind for other people to get; those are the rules. That's you. That's where you find your freedom. That's what makes you whole.

The Sanctuary, Negan and his men, all of it really, are your complete opposites. You hate it there; you hate those people. They're nothing but a bunch of brain-dead bullies, cowards who wait for things to fall right in the palms of their hands and, as for Negan... You don't know. Well, you do but your brain keeps on rebuking it. Yet there’s no denying how bad your throat hurts as you sip on your drink.

god, a therapist would have a field day with you.

A loud banging noise pulls you out of your contemplation and makes your head snap up only to spot a walker scratching at the window of the living room, looking at you whilst snapping its jaw hungrily, its hands smearing blood all over the glass.

With deep, annoyed sigh, you carefully put your now half empty cup of tea on the coffee table in front of the couch and make your way to the foyer of the house.

Reaching to pull your butterfly knife out of your pajama shorts' waistband, you swiftly pull the blade of the knife out before unlocking the front door, the walker immediately trying to force its way in but you quickly push it off with your left forearm before completely stepping outside with it, closing the door behind you.

You get a tighter grip around the handle of your knife before swiftly grabbing the back of the walker's head and effortlessly push the sharp blade of the weapon right between its eyes, the rotten body going completely limp and falling down on the porch in front of the house as you let go of it.

The rush of adrenaline makes your body shake and your heart beat faster, making it jump when you hear yet another groan which you decide to follow. The sudden release of hormone making decisions for you.

With perked-up ears, you follow the noise which leads you to the back of the house, a small gasp escaping you when you spot a few walkers feasting on a dead animal. You're not sure what it used to be; all you know is that it was a big one.

You cover your mouth to keep yourself from puking right there and then, the smell so strong you
can taste it and, goddamn, it tastes awful.

The groans grow louder, hungrier, and you're pretty damn sure that they've sniffed you out by now. Just because you're out of their sights, doesn't mean they won't know you're here. Hell, they actually have quite a shitty eyesight but those fuckers sure as shit can smell you from a mile away even without an actual nose of their face, that much you know by now.

You gotta learn the hard way sometimes. You sure fucking did.

You take a quick peek behind the wall to confirm your suspicions and yes, a few of them are heading towards you though they don't seem so sure. They don't seem quite confident as to what it is they're smelling, but you do know one thing; you're not waiting to find out. You're not dying today because you stupidly took a chance and ended up being completely wrong.

With a deep breath, you swiftly round the corner and make yourself visible to them. Some of them keep on eating the carcass of the dead animal, completely unaware or unbothered, but the ones you've already piqued the interest of start frantically grunting and try to reach out for you with their hands.

Their jaws snap your way and you have to admit that, when they all do it at the same time, it sounds and looks quite fucking terrifying.

You ignore your shaking hands, unsure if you're shaking because you're afraid or because of the adrenaline rushing through your veins, before swiftly grabbing one of the walkers and bringing it flush against you, shoving the blade of your knife in its rotten head and letting go of it to let the now dead body fall flat on the ground. You repeat the same process over and over again, taking them one by one and pushing them off you when they get too close for comfort.

A good five minutes later; you're covered in blood, you smell like death, your breath is erratic and there's blood all over you. From your bare legs to your arms, the small amount of cleavage that isn't covered by the dipped collar of your t-shirt, your throat and your face; you look like a real life horror show but it's been a long, long time since you've felt so damn good.

You love that feeling. Your heart thumping in your chest, adrenaline consuming you, your hands shaking and your knife dripping blood; it's insane but this is home to you, something you know by heart and are not afraid of. That's where you feel the safest, the most confident. You're nothing like the girl you were last night. This is your territory, your world, and no man could ever take that away from you. No one ever could. No one ever will.

Curiously, you take a few steps forwards to take a look at whatever the hell those drooling freaks were chewing on and realize that it's a deer. It must have gotten lost in the night and ended up here before it got cornered. Its smell must have attracted them.

"Poor thing..." You whisper, grimacing at the sight of it.

"Y/n?" You hear Randall call for you from the porch and decide to show yourself before he attracts some more unwanted attention.
When you round the corner of the house and get into Randall's sight he's smiling, and you wave at him. His happiness is pretty damn quick to fade when you get closer to him and he realizes that you're completely caked in fresh blood.

“What the hell…” He trails off, his eyes finding yours. “Just a few walkers, took care of it though,” you shrug with a smile before sitting down on the steps leading up to the porch. Your back turned to Randall as he stands behind you.

“What the fuck, y/n. Why didn't you wake me up? I could have helped you, you could have-” he starts, his voice sharp but filled with worry.

“I said I handled it, Randall,” you grit out, cutting him off. “Now, let's stop talking about it, okay? It's done, it's taken care of so shut up about it, already,” you snap, the adrenaline mingling with the shame you woke up with, the mix of the two making you overly defensive and snappy.

“Damn it... M'sorry, Randall,” you whisper, your shoulders slumping. “It's just… S'okay. I'm okay and I- I don't want you to think that I'm some helpless girl that always needs s-someone's hand, 'cause I'm not, I can handle myself.”

You hear Randall sigh behind you and then he's joining you on the steps, sitting right next to you and looking at you with a small but warm smile. “Is this about last night?” He carefully asks, his eyes searching your face.

You drop your head then, and he knows. “You weren’t s-supposed to see me l-like that,” you quietly tell him. “I dunno what happened. I’m sorry.”

“Your head went to a bad place, right?” He’s careful about the way he phrases it and it makes you smile a little. “Yea. Yea, it did,” is all you give him, not really feeling like going in depth about dissociation and regression and yaddi-yadda.

“I know you can handle yourself. I've never doubted that, at all,” Randall changes the subject. “I'm just worried about things getting out of hand 'cause, no matter how much knowledge you have out here, things can go south really quickly. I don't want you to think that relaying on people is wrong or that it makes you weak, because it doesn't.”

“How can you think like this? After Negan? After… After Connor?” You ask him with a frown, almost sounding offended by his words. “Your best friend relied on me and died because of it, and you? You relied on Negan to keep you safe, fed and warm and look where that got you,” you point at his beat up face.

“Not all people are like him, y/n. And, as for Connor, he was right to rely on you. What happened to him was not your fucking fault so stop with the constant bashing.”

“Yeah,” you scoff, standing up off the steps, “you keep telling yourself that while I keep reality out of your sight, don't worry about it.”
Randall watches with bewildered eyes as you walk back inside the house before snapping out of his stupor. "What the hell's gotten into you, huh?" He calls after you, following you inside the house, confused and irritated by your behavior.

“You don't get it, do you?” You snap, turning around to look at him with narrowed eyes. “I’ve heard people talk just like you, Randall, and now... now they're-dead and-and... This world is crap and people take advantage of you, all the time! I got stabbed at fourteen for a piece of soap. A piece of soap, Randall! You can't put your life into someone else's hands, you need to understand that. You're all you've got,” you finish with tears in your eyes, trying your best to keep them to yourself.

“I can't... I can't watch it happen again. I can't handle it. Not again, please.” You friend carefully watches you before grabbing your forearm and pulling you into his chest, a sob leaving your mouth the very second your bodies make contact.

Your hands desperately grip his bare biceps, your nails digging into the solid flesh, as if he'll vanish if you don't hold on to him. “Tired, Randall.”

“I know, sweetheart. I know you are,” he whispers against the top of your head, gently kissing it as his hands softly rub your back up and down, trying to soothe you.

You feel lost and it feels like every single drop of adrenaline you had in your body a few seconds ago just morphed into sadness and frustration. The tight little ball of anger you keep tugged away in a corner tightening with the impeding need to explode.

It took you everything to get out of bed this morning, it’s taking everything for you to fight off last night’s fog. You’ve ripped yourself out of that headspace and it’s agitating and hurting you because the transition wasn’t natural. But you don’t care. You don’t care because you’re ashamed of it and you don’t want to be stuck in this headspace when someone’s around.

It's sickening that, no matter how you feel, Negan always lingers in the back of your mind. You wonder if he would've been proud of you for putting down those walkers all by yourself. You hope that he'd be, and it sucks. You crave his validation and chase after his praises like an attention-starved puppy. It’s pathetic.

You fucking miss him, and it feels like your own mind is betraying you. You don't understand what's happening, all you know is that it hurts, and you don't much care for it. You want it to stop. You need it to fucking stop.

You let out a shaky sob against Randall's chest and draw a deep, shaky breath. “I’m sick,” you whisper. “I hate it. I hate what people d-did to me. They just take and take and take. I taught myself not to expect anything from anyone because it shouldn't be how things work, you're supposed to be nice to people because it comes from a genuine place but... I’m sick and tired of always doing everything.”

Another sob rips through your sore throat and you feel Randall hold tighten around you. “There’s so much blood on my hands,” you admit, your voice struggling to go higher than a whisper.
“S’always been me. I was thirteen the first time I killed a man. It was e-eight days a-after the outbreak. I was it because someone had to be. Whenever someone got bit, I had to be the one putting them down. S’always been me,” you repeat. “Put people down, dig their graves and bury them because no one else wants to have their friends' blood on their hands, no one else wants to be it.” In the back of your mind, your brain acknowledges that this might be the biggest thing you have in common with Negan. He's it, too. He just carries it differently, you guess.

“I was just a kid, Randall.” He can feel your body shake against his and desperately tightens his hold on you. “And I thought for sure I deserved it.” You break then, collapsing against him with a choked cry and Randall is quick to hoist you up in his arms, holding your face into the dip where his shoulder meets his neck.

“Y/n, hey, it's okay. Calm down, sweetheart,” he tries but your mind doesn't register his attempt.

“I threw myself in the middle of a horde just to go and get a few medical supplies, but I got back too late and someone died while I was away.” At this point you’re clinging to Randall like he’s your lifeline and he’s not doing much better himself.

“He turned and killed his daughter,” you sob out, tears running out of your eyes like they rarely ever did before, your nose is full and your heart is pounding in your chest so loudly the sound is filling your ears. “His-His name was Heath a-and his dau-daughter's was B-Bailey, she was my friend.”

“Hey, y/n, c’mon now. Stop it, sweetheart,” Randall tries again, planting a lingering kiss to your tear-soaked cheek. “Please, baby, I need you to stop. You’re hurtin’ yourself,” he pleads, and you take your head out of his shoulder, bringing a shaky hand up to wipe a tear off his face, leaving a trail of blood in his five-o'clock shadow.

The last thing Randall was expecting was the soft, timid little kiss you press against his lips, but he lets you go with it and even carefully press back to give you one too.

“I’m sorry,” you whisper, your voice croaky. “M’all over the place.”

“Don’t apologize, sweetheart. It’s okay,” he gently reassures you with a little smile that you give back. “You feel any better?” He asks, carefully watching your face, satisfied that the nod you give him is genuine.

“M’tired though,” you coyly admit, making the ex-tattoo artist chuckle. “Yea, I feel that and I’m not even the one who just got through a mental breakdown.”

Your give a soft, tired laugh at that and kiss Randall’s neck before letting your head fall limply on his shoulder. “It’ll be alright, sweetheart. We’ll make it better; you don’t have to deal with all of this alone. Never again,” he gently promises as he carries you back up the stairs and into the bathroom.

“Promise?” You tiredly ask. “I promise, y/n,” he assures you.
You and Randall are both showered and back into your homemade fort slash pillow empire, sipping on hot coffee the run-away Savior made while you were in your shower.

You’ve calmed down, feeling a weight has been lifted off after your outburst in the early morning. You’re exhausted now though, hence why you’re back in clean pj's and under the blankets; ready to get back to sleepy business.

“My mama died at the exact same time my lungs opened, she just... didn't pull through. My dad fucking hated me for it,” Randall suddenly says, and you catch yourself just in time not to choke on your coffee.

Holding your steaming mug in both hands, you look up at him with curious, tender eyes, waiting to see whether he wants to keep this train rolling or not.

“He didn't even name me, the nurses at the hospital had to do it. A nice woman named Maria gave me my name-” he pauses and lets out a small, dry chuckle. “My dad? He fucking hated me, and he never missed an opportunity to remind me. I got my ass beat more times than I can count. I grew up angry at the world, always itching for a fight until I met Connor. He gave as good as he got, never took any of my shit,” he recalls with a smile, and you feel one blossom on your lips.

“The only thing that saved me, that actually helped me turn my life around, was when I discovered tattoos. Turns out a kid could draw well enough to make some money. It's so stupid when you think about it...” he trails off, his eyes finding yours.

“It’s not stupid,” you tell him, your voice soft but your statement firm.

Randall chuckles and open his arms to you in a silent invitation which you’re quick to take. Handing him your mug to hold, you crawl onto his crossed legs, settling in the little dip between his thighs.

“Turned out... My mama wasn't able to pull through with my birth because people later found out that my dad was beatin’ her.” You can tell that this is hard for him to talk about and offer silent support by reaching up to soothingly caress his left cheek with your free right hand.

You smile a little when he slightly turns to kiss the butt of your thumb. “He got arrested when I was fifteen, never saw him again. My mom though? I fucking miss her every day. I don't fucking get it, s'like I'm missing a limb,” his voice cracks as he finishes his sentence and your heart sinks.

“She was your mother, Randall,” you softly remind him, nuzzling the tip of your nose against his. “She was your lifeline for nine months; you're bound to love your mother no matter how little you know about her. I loved my mom, and for what? She was terrible to me but, y'know, she was my mom and I loved her, I still do.”

“She doesn't deserve your love,” he informs you. “Oh yeah?” You smile, making him chuckle. “Then who does?”

“No one fucking does,” he boyishly grins, mending your heart a little. “You're so negative,” you whine with a pout and a giggle.
Everything falls back into place then, and you find yourselves sharing a few innocent kisses between sips of coffee.

“I'm here for you if you need help figuring shit out. Y'know that, right?” Randall asks you, his eyes searching yours.

“Yeah,” you smile. “Yeah, I know. I'm here for you too. Always,” you promise and give him your pinky which he takes in his much larger one with a soft chuckle.

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SANCTUARY;

6:45 AM //

Faith is rudely woken up by the sound of the door of her bedroom being slammed open. “What the f-”

“Randy boy fucking disappeared, Faithy girl,” Negan greets her with an unreadable emotion distorting his features, something between a snarl and a smirk crooking his mouth.

“What does that have do to with me, man? What the fuck, you can't just wake me up like that,” Faith protests before groaning into her pillow, not nearly awake enough to deal with this shit.

Negan chuckles and shuts the bedroom door before sitting down on the chair next to her bed, his head resting on his hands which are resting on top of Lucille's handle, her bloody, wired head digging into the bedroom's floor.

With a defeated sigh, Faith slowly sits up on the mattress, understanding that the man isn't going anywhere anytime soon. Deep down, she's afraid that he might see right through her and understand that she lied to him about not knowing where you are, that she lied about looking for you, but she keeps her composure.

She reminds herself to keep her calm and do what she does best; play Negan's game. “Are you just gonna sit there or..?” She trails off, already annoyed.

“I don't like being fucked with, Faith,” Negan says through gritted teeth, tapping Lucille's head against the floor, his shoulders tensing up. “S’a lotta people missin’, I can't fucking have that-”

“S'two people, Negan,” the woman points out with a quirked-up eyebrow, her annoyance crystal clear. “Ttwo people you clearly don’t give a shit about. How are you even surprised they've up and left? After the shit you've done to Randall?”
“He crossed a fucking line, Faith-”

“Y/n’s not your girl, Negan, so if that had anything to do with their relationship; scratch it. And I doubt li’l ol’ Randall tried some shit with you, the kid’s smarter than that,” she points out with a roll of her eyes.

The Saviors’ leader lets out a cold, frankly quite menacing chuckle before getting up off the chair he’s sitting on and walking closer to Faith’s bed, Lucille in hand, kneeling down to be face to face with the woman he usually considers a confidant.

“Y’know what? I'm gonna let that one go, again, and assume that you're being a fucking brat because of that bipolar shit you've got goin' on, yeah?” Faith's jaw clenches at that. “But just so you know, I won't let you off the hook so fucking easily next time, girl, no matter how fucked up it is up there. We clear?”

The brown-eyed woman stays completely still, her stomach in knots and her whole back tensing up. Did he just refer to her brain as ‘fucked up’?

“Fuck you, Negan. I don’t even fucking know why I bother with your bullshit anymore. I'm fucking sick of you.”

“Aw, don't be like that, girl,” he grins, satisfied to have gotten a rise out of her, maybe enough for her to talk. “I'll give you a big ol' apology if you tell me where my baby girl ran off to.” The hard-headed woman scoffs at that.

“I know you know, Faith. I fucking knew the second you gave me the worst crap story there is when I told you she was gone. C'mon now, I know you would never go look for her, you don't fucking want her here. I fucking know that but, guess what?” He smirks and tilts his head, getting slightly closer to Faith's face. “She's fucking mine and I really fuckin’ want her back.”

“What about Randall, huh? Isn't he yours too? Fuck, aren't all of us yours, mister ‘I have to own everything to feel like a manly man’?” She bitterly spits out, getting aggravated by his cocky attitude.

“Yeah... Yeah, you used to be, and you still kind of fucking are, doll,” he reminds her, and the words make her skin crawl.

“Here's the thing though-” Negan pauses, with smirk turning feral again, “I'll fucking kill every single one of you if that's what it takes for her to get her sweet bubbly little ass back home, by my goddamn sides, where she fucking belongs.”

Faith is taken aback by his words for a minute, her mind slowly processing them. Is he actually being protective of you? To her, it seems like it. Or at least a very fucked up version of that. Negan never talks like this.

“I can't… I can't tell you. I can't do this to her,” she finally cracks a little, his behavior putting her off.

Negan straightens up then, standing tall in front of her who’s still sitting on her bed, his eyes narrowed at her and his gloved right hand tightening around Lucille.
“Oh boy! Fuckin' hell, Faith! You are testing my fucking patience right now and I don't fucking have a lot of that!” He exclaims before violently slamming his bat against the wall behind him, making Faith slightly jump on her mattress at the sound. “I'm seriously sick of your shit, Faith!” Negan barks like she’s the one being unreasonable.

“Hey, fuck you! You can't just bash my fucking wall in like that! What the fuck?!” The dark skinned woman protests before getting out of bed, her hand reaching under her pillow to fetch the radio you gave her yesterday.

Negan's eyes immediately stick to the small black box. “You wanna know where she is so fucking bad? There, fucking ask her yourself, you fucking dick!” She hands the radio out to him, but he only laughs at her, looking at her in disbelief.

“I know you a little too fucking well to fall for that li'l trick, Faith,” he tells her with a smirk, knowing damn well that she wasn't actually about to give him the damn radio.

“Y'know what? I think you need some time off, yeah?” He taunts with a smirk still splattered on his face, Faith shooting him a confused look which quickly turns into fear when she gets where this is going.

“Yeah, y'know what I'm fucking talkin’ about don't you, doll?” He gets closer to her, his breath hitting her closed mouth as his mean smirk turns into a full-on wolfish grin.

“I'm gonna have to put you back into your little box for a li'l while, aren't I? Like the good ol' days- Remember? Damn, took ya a while to calm the fuck down and realize what's good for ya, didn't it?” he reminds her, knowing damn well that he's putting pressure on the right nerves.

“I'm not going back in this shithole, Negan,” Faith whispers before exploding, uncaring of her still sleeping colleagues. “I'm not going back! Fuck you!” She yells, pushing him away from her but he only moves a slight bit which seems to be really funny to him. It isn't to her.

“Faith,” he starts, gripping his bat a little tighter, “everything can go smoothly, or we can make this real fucking hard if that's what ya want. What's it gonna be? You're gonna walk there or am I gonna have to fucking drag you myself-” Negan chuckles, “in front of Dwight? S'that what ya want, doll?”

The dark-haired woman screws her eyes shut, trying to make it all go away, but she knows that it's all too real for it to just vanish. She knows she's gonna have to push her pride away for now and actually walk to the fucking cell. The same damn cell Negan threw her in when he first 'found' her, and she’d tried to kill him and his men after they’d killed one of her loved ones.

She doesn't want to go back but she's gonna have to and it sickens her. With a heavy sigh, she drops the radio in her hand, her head aching as she tries her hardest to make Negan disappear but he's still right here, in front of her.

He’s not the man she used to know. Yet sometimes he is. No wonder you’re so fucking confused about him if even she is.
The door of the cold, dark cell slams shut, creating a loud echo that makes Faith's head aches some more as tears start to roll down her face; she's terrified. All she can think of now is her deceased girlfriend and her long gone little girl.

Negan always says that he doesn't kill to kill; it's bullshit. Faith's seen him kill one of her closest friends for no goddamn reason, she couldn't actually believe that she used to know him, that she used to fucking work with him. They used to work with kids for God's sake.

She considered him a close friend and watched him bash her best friend's head in. They used to get along great and it seems like Negan doesn't understand just how fucked up he is now. To him, their relationship hasn't changed and neither has he, Faith begs to differ. He's not the man she used to invite over for dinner every once in a while and get drunk with after a long day of work.

She lets a sob out, bringing her legs up to her chest to hide her face away in her knees, trying to stop thinking, shut her mind up and make it all go the fuck away but it's here and she has to deal with it.

"I miss you so fucking much Brook, and I miss our little baby. I miss you two so, so much," she whispers into her legs, trying to appease her mind but it seems to be on overdrive right now and there's nothing she can do but wait for it to cool down on its own.

You're on her mind as well. Negan took the radio you gave her and she's afraid that he might actually use it and she's unsure whether you'll actually be able not to talk to him. She's seen the hold he has on you countless times. She knows about the whole "when I say 'jump', you say how 'high'," dynamic he's installed between the two of you and she knows how dangerous it is when it takes hold.

She's worried about you, wonders if you're alright, hope that you've found shelter. She wonders if you've spent a good night of sleep, if you're getting enough rest, if Randall is alright or if he's still in pain. It feels like she's going insane and there's absolutely nothing she can do about it.

With a sigh, she crawls over to the small, crappy bed against the left wall of the tiny cell and lets her body fall on the blood-stained mattress, her eyes blankly staring at the dirty ceiling above her; waiting. For what? She's not a hundred percent sure.
This morning was good, really good even. You and Randall slept until noon in each other’s arms, your little lamb back in your bag. Neither of you could have predicted the wave of sudden anxiety that hit you.

It started around one thirty p.m. You started crying and shaking and ran into the bathroom to lock yourself in there, leaving Randall to sit on the other side of the door, patiently waiting and checking up on you every now and again.

He tried talking to you, tried to get you to open the damn door but you kept on telling him to leave you alone, a request which he ignored every single time, afraid that you might injure yourself if he left. He just needs to be here, it reassures him to hear you, to know that you're still here.

Your anxiety is eating you alive. You're here, crying your heart out in an empty bathtub, your hands shaking and your head aching. Negan is all you can think about and you feel awful because Randall is wonderful and he’s right here, waiting with open arms.

Still, you can't stop feeling nervous about the fact that Negan's not around. He's nowhere for you to just reach out for and ask for comfort. Fuck, you miss him, and you can’t stop digging your fingers into the mean bruise he’s left on your throat because you need to feel him.

You miss his stupid dirty jokes that you don't fucking get, you even miss his dumb attitude. You miss his voice, miss him pulling you in for a quick kiss just because. You fucking miss him as a whole and you hate that he's not here. You realize that you don't feel well at all when you're apart from him, you don't fucking know why but it feels as if you just can't properly function without him around and it sickens you. Not having him near just doesn't feel right.

You’ve only known him for a week and a half – today would have been two weeks on the dot, – he treats you like shit, you can justify nor comprehend the pull you feel towards him and that scares the living hell out of you.

That man has you wrapped around his fingers and you want to escape from his grip as much as you want him to tighten it.

yeah, you're going insane... this is it, today is the day when you lose your fucking mind and there's no turning back, girl; you’re fucked. completely and utterly f u c k e d.

You feel like crap for literally shutting Randall out when he's been nothing but sweet and gentle with you. He held you all night and morning long, even in your sleep. It's unfair to treat him that way, that's also why you've been crying so much. In the moment, you didn't even think. You got scared and ran away.

With you it’s always been flight or fight or freeze and repress; no in-between.
Walking out of the tub, you make your way to the locked door of the bathroom and sit down on the cold tiled-floor, your back against the door. “M'sorry, Randall. I’m a mess,” you whisper through your side of the door, your voice teary and raw from crying and sobbing for hours on ends.

“Y/n, baby, please just- Just come out here, please? I really need to hold you right now. Please?” He pleads through the thick door, his forehead resting on the hard wood.

Your face sadly scrunched up at the pleading tone in his voice though your mind doesn't completely register his words. “You deserve so much better than to be stuck with me. You really do and I'm sorry, alright? I'm sorry,” you apologize again.

“I fucking need you to talk to me, y/n. Like you did this morning, you did so fucking good, sweetheart,” it should be embarrassing how much comfort the praise brings you.

"Look- Just, please, come out here. We can pack some things and move. There's a bunch of walkers in the area, it's not fucking safe just- Please, y/n, c'mere and give me a fucking hug 'cause I really fucking need it, baby.”

Randall lets out a relieved sigh and sits back on his socked heels when he hears the door click open and sees the knob turning. The piece of wood cracks opens shortly after and he feels like his lungs are finally receiving air again when you launch yourself into his chest.

Your face immediately finds the crook of his neck and your hands snake around beneath his arms to rest on his back, your fingers clinging to his shirt like it's some sort of life support. “M'sorry,” you cry against his skin.

“Shh, it’s okay, sweetheart. M'just glad you're alright,” he whispers into your hair.

You give him a kiss, and he gives one back, his a little surer than yours was, your noses mashing together and your tongues gracing one another.

The two of you stay on the floor in each other's arms where lingering kisses are exchanged as you both come down from the overall stressful day. You just let your fears and worries vanish for a short instant until your walkie-talkie starts to freak out in the bathroom.

“Hot damn, baby girl, you're in so much fuckin' trouble, y'know that? Hell, li'l Randy boy ain't gonna be able to just walk this one off either, that's for fucking sure,” you hear Negan's voice come through the radio and you can fucking hear his grin where you sit.

You and Randall look at each other then. He looks terrified and you don't look any better, in a cartoon all the pigment of your skin would have melted off and would be painting the floor below.

“Is that- Fucking hell, that's Negan. What the fuck! Faith fucking set us up!?”

“N-No... No she... she wouldn't do that Randall, she-” You try to reason with him. “Alright, then, I'm going fucking crazy and I'm hearing his voice now 'cause, I mean, you clearly didn't fucking hear what I just fucking heard if-”
“I heard, Randall,” you stop him, trying to make him snap out of his fear. “Listen, it's okay, honey,” you coo, softly pushing your head against his.

“It's okay, we're okay. Everything’ll be okay,” you softly whisper, and you can hear his breathing slowing back down, his body relaxing against yours. “He has the radio, but he doesn't have our location—”

“What if Faith told him—” “She hasn't, she wouldn't, you know that,” you gently interrupt him. “Plus, she doesn't know either. No one knows where we are and I'm not about to let him find out, alright? But, for now, we gotta go. Together, yeah?”

“Y—Yeah. Yeah, together,” he repeats, taking a deep breath.

You give him a reassuring smile and one last kiss which he gratefully takes before letting go of him, telling him to grab everything he thinks is useful and he’s instantly moving.

As he runs down the stairs to start gathering supplies, you stay in front of the open bathroom's door, staring at the small, harmless black box on the counter, your brain waiting for Negan to somehow jump out of it.

You never thought that such a small, seemingly harmless thing could ever scare the crap out of you like that yet, even though you are scared, scared for Randall's life and safety, scared because if Negan has the damn radio then it means that Faith must have gotten into trouble and you can feel your stomach eating itself up just at the thought of her being hurt because of you... For some fucked up reason, you can't help but feel better now that you've actually heard his voice, now that you've heard him call you baby girl.

No matter how dark his voice was, he spoke to you and that's all you needed. That's what you've literally been sobbing for.

Still, you may have mixed feelings about Negan, you may not fucking understand what the hell is going with you when it comes to him but, one thing you do know for sure is that you love Randall and you won't let him get hurt, or worse. You can't. Not him, not like that.

It doesn't matter what it'll take to keep Randall away from Negan's claws, you'll do it all. Again, and again, and again, and again 'til you can't fucking breathe anymore. You'll see this through if it fucking kills you. You'll die before he does.

Chapter End Notes

I'd completely forgotten that this chapter was a nightmare for me to get out back then
and, OH BOY, did it come back to me while re-writing it.
You're not sure, really not sure, if you've ever felt so much pain before. You keep racking your brain for a specific day when you might have felt something similar but can't find any and, damn, you're really, really trying. Nothing ever hurt you as bad as you're hurting right now, nothing you've ever felt can compare to it and that’s new.

You're unsure of what happened, how or why it happened, all you know is that two bullets went through your body and one of them is still in there, comfortably laying inside your right shoulder. The little shit pierced right through your ligaments and is now stuck in your clavicle.

Well, at least, that's what you assume since it didn't come out and you feel like screaming every time you try and move your shoulder a little. Oh, also, you're on your periods. Your atrociously painful periods that make you bleed like an open faucet.

You're not sure where the bullet is precisely, which is gonna make it even more painful and complicated to remove it on your own, but you know that it hurts like a bitch and that you now have to rely on your left arm to shoot which is bad news writing all over because the only gun you have is a small handgun that Randall found a few weeks ago and ordered you to keep by your sides in case of emergencies.

The fun part is; it's impossible to use with good ol' lefty because fuck you that's why. You’ve tried since you usually have no problem working with either hands, but this gun told you to piss right off and you're not sure how you feel about that now that your left hand is your only option.

Obviously, you can't use your bow since it requires both of your hands and shoulders, more specifically.

AND! To add the little cherry on top of your fucked up cake, the second bullet wound was a shot to the belly. You don't know if the bullet actually hit anything major or not, all you know is that; it hurts like hell and the British are not happy. The bullet went straight through, but you don’t know what it’s grazed on its way.

“F’cking pricks- Can't I just go one day without everything going to shit? Seriously,” you mumble angrily as you stumble forward and let your upper body drop flat against the hood of an abandoned car, smearing the white steel with blood.
You try to recall what led up to you getting fucked up like that, but it proves to be a really difficult task when you're profusely bleeding out and your entire body is aching for care and medical attention which you can't provide it with.

In this instant, you want to just stop. You want to give it all up and cry. You're hurt and exhausted, Randall is now missing and the fact that you have no way to ask for help, no one to run or turn to, is crushing you.

You and Randall have been moving all over the place for two months now, two whole months in which you almost ran straight back to Negan but successfully avoided it. You don't know why you always somehow end up feeling this urge to run back to him and apologize; you just do.

No, you have nothing to apologize for, but you feel guilty none the less. You ran away from him and now you feel bad because he's not around anymore, he's not here teasing the hell out of you, making your cheeks burn so much that it hurts. Hell, right now? Even his crude and sexual jokes that you don't even get and his annoying, ridiculously long and unnecessary speeches about how amazing and powerful he portrays himself to be sound good to you.

You have to be knocking on death's door for the guy to sound appealing and that almost makes you chuckle.

Fuck- You miss the Dixons. You've been grieving them for seven years and not a day passes by where you don’t find yourself thinking of them. You just they were her now.

You miss Merle. His attitude wasn't always the best and, to most people, he was nothing more than a bigoted redneck. But there was none of that when you two were together, he'd always himself be and that's how you knew. That's how you knew that Merle Dixon wasn't a bad man, he was just really messed up and he had really shitty ways to deal with a pain no one really ever seemed to understand or give a shit about.

As for Daryl... You just miss talking to him really late at night, miss falling asleep curled up in his arms. You miss the times he would talk you into messing with his brother while he was snoozing away on the couch after a night of heavy drinking and came back with glitters all over his body. You just miss him.

Daryl was everything to you, your connection different than the one you had with Merle. Functioning without him has been like having to learn to live with a missing limb. Doable but not the most comfortable.

You miss Luna, you miss Merle, you miss Daryl, you miss Connor- Hell, you miss Randall. You just feel so lonely, the feeling has been clinging to you for years now and you know fully feel what kind of damages it can do. The kind of dumb shit it can make you do. Like, let's say; get attached to the wrong person.

You groan against the rusty hood of the car your upper body's been laying on for the past five
minutes before pushing yourself back up, your left arm shaking under the pressure as you push yourself up and wince in pain when the bullet wound in your right shoulder throbs in protest, making you curse out loud.

“Randall!” You call out, panic and pain flooding your system.

You're losing too much blood and you know that you have to get a move on before you end up passing out in the middle of the road for the walkers roaming around the area to make a meal out of you.

You know they can smell you, hell, your blood is the only thing you can smell so you're not surprised to see and hear a bunch of them groaning around. You count five of them already following behind you, walking as fast as their rotten legs allow them to. Your wounds slowing you down a considerable amount, more than you can afford in this situation.

You do your best to keep your eyes peeled and most importantly open, as you make your way to God knows where- Anywhere you could catch a small break and be at least a little bit safe will do. You can't really give yourself the luxury to play difficult at the moment, not that you would on a good day either.

It's almost been two months since you've ran away from the Sanctuary and you don't regret it, at least you try really hard to convince yourself that you don't, that you're happy with the way things are going, but it's kinda hard to keep your spirits up when you're bleeding out and there's a bunch of walkers lusting after you for a piece of your flesh.

Plus, the last month hasn't been the best if you're being honest. A lot of things happened and almost all of them caused a fight to erupt between you and Randall. You have to be truthful though and admit that most of the arguments you two got into were because you would lose your shit over meaningless things.

The first heated and, really, the very first argument you two had was just after Negan radioed you. None of you answered the call because you both knew that that's all he was waiting for, for one of you to take the bait and join in on his stupid, twisted mind-game.

Although, after you'd told Randall not to worry and to just go and grab as much supplies as he could, you took a few seconds to just stand there, looking at the radio sitting right next to the sink in the bathroom, and the need you felt to grab it and talk to Negan was way too strong for you to be comfortable so you decided to go and help pack things up before doing something stupid.

Everything was going great until you've heard a big crash and ran to the bathroom where the noise came from and just stood there, breathless from running up the stairs, panic running through your veins because you thought Randall might have gotten hurt while moving something but nope, he was alright. You weren't though.

When you got to the bathroom, you felt your veins fill with unmeasured anger and sadness the second your eyes found the small black device smashed to pieces on the ground. There was nothing
left of it, nothing but tiny pieces and a cracked battery laying on the tiled floor. Negan was now completely out of reach again and you fucking **freaked**.

**“Wha- What d’you do?!”** You asked, your hands pulling at the short hair at the top of your head.

**“Smashed the damn thing,”** he answered with a shrug like it was the most obvious thing in the world. **It was. “We can't let him get any leverage on us, c'mon.”**

He was right. This was completely logical and smart, but your brain was on stupid mode. **“Are you serious?!”** You snapped, tears blurring your vision as panic started to slowly eat you alive.

**“Y/n, baby, s'okay. Having this thing around was dangerous you know that.”** He tried walking up to you and frowned when you stepped back away from him. Fuck, you can still remember how **hurt** he looked.

You both looked at each other for a while, none of you breaking eye-contact which, honestly, was surprising coming from you since you never were too good nor comfortable with the whole eye-contact thingy. You usually never last more than three seconds and that's the best you'd ever done so that was really intense for you to go through with, but you couldn't look away from Randall's eyes. Blue and grey against your own.

Eventually, you broke down and cried, knowing damn well that you had no reason whatsoever to snap at him the way you had. He'd done the right thing and you knew that but, the fact that the only way for you to communicate with Negan was now completely gone scared the hell out of you.

You’ve felt such a crushing loneliness the moment you'd spotted the smashed radio on the floor that you freaked out. You didn't mean to feel the way you did, it just happened, you just snapped and immediately regretted it.

**“I… I'm sorry, Randall. I didn't… I didn't m-mean t-to yell a-at you. God, m'so sorry,”** you'd softly let out, trying really hard to keep your composure after what'd just happened.

**“S'okay, sweetheart. Today’s been rough,”** he reassured you with a small smile before taking you in his arms to let you cry the tears you so badly needed to let go of.

Things were going amazing after that, the two of you growing closer and closer each day. After moving all over for a good month, you'd decided to find a place to settle in for a few so Randall could finish healing properly. He was in no shape to stay outside any longer and you didn’t want him to get hurt some more for the sake of old habits of yours.

That’s when things went a little sideways for a while. Fuck- You can’t even remember what you’d argued about, but you know that it had to do with Negan and things blew up.

You avoided each other as much as possible after that. You would spend your days outside and he would spend his sleeping and recovering from his injuries, working out however he could every now and then.
Though, the pettiness all came to a head when, one night, as you were sleeping peacefully on the
couch of the small house you two had found - you'd decided to leave the bed for Randall, knowing
that he needed the comfort, which almost made you two argue yet again but your deadly glare
quickly made him shut up and take the damn bed - you were woken up by raw coughing and
uncomfortable sounding groans.

You immediately rushed to Randall, afraid that he might have gotten sick or something, only to
find him lying on his stomach on the bedroom’s floor, struggling to get back up.

You remember rushing to him and helping him back on his bed, tears filling your eyes when you
spotted the mean looking bruises still lingering on his skin, covering his ribs. He thanked you and
explained to you that he was trying to get up and go get some water but fell flat on his ass and he
didn't want to call for you because he didn't want to wake you.

You ran to the living room and fetched a bottle of water out of your backpack before running back
to him and handing him the bottle, letting him drink while you took a close look at his wounds.
You touched here and there making him wince a few times, but he then told you that he was
actually feeling better than he did a few days ago. He was just really tired and upset because he
didn’t want to lose you over a “stupid fucking fight.”

You’ve snuggled with him under the sheets that night, the two of you apologizing to one another at
the same time, making you both laugh. You kissed him before wishing him goodnight.

You remember the happy little cry you let out when Randall chuckled and rolled on top of you,
kissing the breath out of you. You felt safer than you’ve had in weeks that night.

Things were back to normal the very next morning. The two of you were finally at peace and you
were finally able to enjoy each other's company again without starting a fight over a fucking fly.

Things were good. Being with him was good for you, it was healthy. But you still clang on to him.

What kept you going through the months, the thing that kept you on your toes and turned every
single little thing into an argument between you and Randall? Well, it’s the other radio you’d found
a week after the farmhouse debacle.

You feel guilty as hell for it to this day, but you broke back then and contacted Negan at dawn. The
relief that washed over you when you've heard him calling your name through the radio, asking
‘what the living fuck?’ and where you were. On that you didn’t break. You never gave him your
location but, God, you didn’t want to let him go. Speaking to him through the little black box was
so easy.

So, for those almost-two-months, you’ve been speaking to him every single night. He even read
you a book through a week. It’s crazy how close you felt to him and it made your heart crave this
affection constantly. But things aren’t really like that, things haven never been this good when
you’re both in the same space and the thought tears you apart.

He apologized for hurting you “… even though it probably doesn’t mean shit, baby girl, I'll never
forgive myself for laying a hand on you like that, you shouldn’t either and I’d love to tell you that s’not what I’m askin’ but we both know it is,” and, though you didn’t really forgive, you told him “water under the bridge.” You refuse to fall back into the vicious circle of someone hurting you, apologizing profusely, you forgiving them, and they do it again only to apologize once more.

You know that you missing him is wrong, really wrong. Not to mention super fucking unhealthy at this point, but you can't help it. It feels like you're losing your damn mind.

A sob escapes you as you look around and realize that you have no idea where the hell you are. You're on a long road with nothing but cars in sight and the smell of rotting bodies to fill your lungs. You feel like you’re gonna be sick.

With a grunt, you gingerly add more pressure on the bullet wound in your tummy to try and slow, if not stop, the bleeding down as much as you can but blood keeps on pouring through your fingers. The liquid feeling lava-hot on your cold hands.

You're exhausted, covered in blood, your body aches and you're in so much pain that it's starting to become unbearable. You end up falling to your knees and there’s nothing graceful about it like in the movie. You’re clutching at your belly, dirt and dust sticking to your face as you cry against the concrete, your nose stuffed and running.

Resting your forehead on the ground, you curl yourself up, your hands protecting the bullet wound on your belly as the blood pouring out of the wound on your shoulder slowly starts to drip onto your face and neck.

The weight of your backpack resting on your back seems crushing and- God, you wish Randall was here. You don’t know where he went, and you need to know he’s okay. Fuck, it feels like he’s abandoned you.

“No, he wouldn't d-do that t-to me. He wouldn't… He wouldn't do… that,” you whisper softly against the road, trying as hard as you can to reassure yourself, coughing when some dust flies into your mouth and gets caught in your throat, making your eyes tear up.

You hear them growl around you but, whenever you try to get up, you just keep on falling back down to the ground, making you cry in frustration and panic. You hadn’t really planned on getting gutted if you're being honest but, as the seconds pass and the growls grow louder and louder; you know. You’re dead meat.

You shut your eyes tight when you spot a walker crawling towards you, a tear, followed by a tone of others, roll down your bloody, mud covered face, leaving a clean trail behind.

i don't wanna die, i don't wanna die, i don't wanna die. not like this, please, not like this.

You start sobbing loudly when a crummy hand grabs onto one of your thighs, nails digging into your soft flesh and, on instinct, you try and turn but you can't move a fucking muscle to save your
life. Literally.

Gritting your teeth, you try and be brave but let out a squeal when you feel one of them breathing right down on your calf. You swear you can feel the very tips of its teeth before everything stops.

The growls stop and are replaced by gunshots, loud gunshots, a lot of them. You feel the weight of the now dead bodies lying on your frozen body and try to get out from underneath them, but you can't move. You're completely paralyzed and all you can do is cry.

You don't want to, but you clearly need to because you don't seem to be able to stop this train wreck.

“Mother of dick, that was loud,” you hear a rough voice speak and your brain immediately freaks out.

“Yeah, it was, but we have some time before more of 'em show up. Watch our backs, yeah?” Another says, this one a little softer and carrying a little accent you can’t place.

“Careful, Rick,” a woman warns before you hear footsteps approach you.

Your hand weakly goes to grab your butterfly knife which is still tugged away in the waistband of your jeans before softly snaking out from underneath your injured body only to stop dead in front of your face, your body too tired to even bring your arm up and protect yourself from whoever these people are.

You see a pair of brown shoes stop right in front of your face and another pair of feet covered by faded brown boots firmly planted right next to the person standing in front of you.

“You bit?” The man with the accent asks, his voice sharp but calm.

“No. I- No,” you manage to choke out, your head still laying against the concrete.

The person in front of you crouches down and tilts his head, finally letting see him when you look up and you're unsure of what you feel. He actually looks really damn good. He has dark, brown curly hair, blue eyes and a stubble that clearly isn't being neatly groomed like Negan's but still looks really good. It suits him.

You flinch when he moves you around like a ragdoll, looking closely for any scratch or bite. When he doesn't spot any on the back of your body, he decides to turn you on your back making you cry out in pain when your wounded shoulder and the bullet's exit point at the back of your belly make contact with the hard ground.

“Shit,” the man above you whispers as he takes you in. Your top completely soaked through with blood.

Your bow escapes your backpack and falls on the ground right next to you when you try to reach for it and the strange man, Rick, takes your knife out of your limp hand, making sure you don't
cause any harm to him or his people.

“Rick, if you can move her then do it 'cause we're starting to have some company over here,” you hear the lady from before say but can't see her. Hell, you can barely see the man inspecting you now and he's right in front of you.

“What happened to you, kid?” The man asks and you flinch when he puts one his hands down on the weeping wound on your right shoulder, your free left hand grabbing his wrist.

“I don’t,” you gasp for air and stretch out your neck, trying you stay awake. “I don’t know, s-sir.”

“How many people have you killed?” You frown at the question and run your tongue through your lips, dying to get some moisture back. “Uh- I… S-Sixteen. Sixteen people, s-sir.”

“Why?” He follows up with, watching you closely with narrowed eyes as you fight to keep yours open. “Had to,” you mutter with a nod, before taking a deep, shaky breath and looking at the blurry figure standing above you.

Your hand around the stranger wrist tightens when he shoves the blade of a huge machete, which you assume belongs to him, right in the middle of a walker's rotten head, making it fall limp on the ground right next to you.

yeah, sure, don't mind the open wounds and what not... s'cool... infections are in nowadays anyway.

In a moment of panic, after witnessing just how easily he handled this huge ass blade, you quickly grab your bow and drag yourself a little bit away from the man and his group, wincing in pain as you do but not stopping until you hit a car.

Your ears are ringing and your head is floating as you prop your back up against the side of a car before weakly aiming your bow up at no one in particular, just in their general direction, your wounded shoulder pouring blood as you pull on the bullet wound.

“Where d'you get that bow?” You hear a scruffy voice ask. A scruffy, grumpy voice.

“S'mine,” you spit back, watching closely as the man named Rick keeps his hand on top of his Colt which is tugged away in a holster on the side of his hips.

“Like hell it is,” the grumpy stranger snaps but you can't see him, even if you squint your eyes.

“It is!” You protectively snarl, swallowing tears of pain and panic back. Trying to hide the fact that you're fucking terrified right now. “S'all I have- It's all I have left,” you whisper more to yourself than to them, a tear making a daring escape from your eyes.

Before you know it though, you end up face to face with the sharp end of an arrow, it's right between your eyes. If he takes that shot, he gets the kill.

“You ain't gonna have shit left in a secon' if you keep fuckin' lyin' t'me-”
“Daryl, that's enough!” The woman scolds him though that arrow never leaves your forehead.

wait… what?

“That bow ain't hers to have!” The man barks and you finally muster up the courage to look up at him. As you do, you lower your own weapon and see him watch your movement, his back tensing when his eyes land on the inside of your right wrist.

Your first thought is that he’s seen the raised bits of flesh littered all over the inside of your forearm but then he has your wrist in his hand and is bringing it up to inspect it, the pain of the movement pulling at your wound making your vision go fuzzy.

The man moves lowers his weapon though he keeps a lingering finger on the trigger and his scowl deepens as he just stands there, his feet on either side of your body, his eyes narrowed down at the tattoo on the inside of your wrist.

“What the hell,” he whispers under his breath, eyeing the names tattooed in your skin. Daryl & Merle.

Your eyes scan the face of this stranger that suddenly feels too familiar and foreign at the same time. The body, the frame of it and its posture are alien. His voice sounds familiar, but the intonation is wrong. But the face? The face you know.

“D-Daryl?” You whisper, your breath shaky and throat tight as tears silently fall down your face. There’s too much information for your brain to gather. Nothing feels real.

“Y/n?” He asks just as intrigued and uncertain as you, his eyes finally leaving the ink on your skin to find your glassy ones.

The way he said your name is like a slap across the face. You get overwhelmed and end up completely crushed under the pressure of it all.

It hurts when your belly spasms with silent sobs as terror, relief, joy and pain mix with one another and come out as a storm of silent tears. You’re hurting so bad that you can’t even make a sound.

You flinch when a pair of hands snake beneath your body, one below your knees and the other around your back, a hand placed on the exit point of the bullet's exit point there to put pressure down on it, your own placed on the entry.

You go limp and it feels like you might puke when you get picked up off the ground. Your head limply rolling and settling in the crook of the possible stranger’s neck.

The man smells of sweat, dirt, blood and something else, something that you don't know how to describe, something with no name, but know by heart. It's the smell you grew up falling asleep wrapped into like a blanket.

Completely ignoring your pain, you push your head even further into the familiar stranger's neck and weakly get a hold of his jacket with your free, bloody hand.
“Daryl- Daryl, m'sorry,” you whisper against his skin, your body still shaking with silent tears.

“Shh, I got'cha. S'okay, sunshine,” he speaks barely above a whisper, trying to figure out what the hell is happening, trying to figure out if he's having some kind of terrifyingly realistic dream or if you're actually really here, in his arms... limp and bleeding out.

“Shit. C'mon, we takin’ her back,” is the last thing you hear clearly before your ears start to ring obnoxiously loud.

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Alexandria ;

5:46 PM //

“So, you gonna tell me who she is or what, brother?” Rick asks as he sits down next to Daryl which is sitting right next to the bed you're lying on, his bloody hand holding yours, which is just as bloody.

“Merle… he taught her her very first swear,” Daryl recalls with a small smile, making his friend chuckle next to him, before shaking his head to focus on the question.

“That night was fucking insane, y'know? The army was fuckin’ everywhere, shootin’ people in the streets...” the archer sighs, looking down at your passed out figure on the bed. “Y/n, she uh... Well, she's hardheaded, y'know? When she's got some’ in mind, she always finds a way and- She wanted to get us out of Atlanta, she tried. She knew somethin’ wasn't right. When the army started droppin’ napalm all over the fuckin' city, she decided to bail us out, thing was- Old man Dixon wasn't here so, there she was, telling us to go ahead, that she'll go and get the old man,” he lets out a dry chuckle at the memory before clearing his throat and straightening back up in his chair. “I told her to stay with us but, hell, she didn't want our poor excuse of a father t'die when he was pro’ly drunk or high while the fuckin' world was falling apart or whatever. Anyway, she ran back to our house and we ain't seen her again after that. I don't even know if she ever made it there.”

Daryl pauses and takes a long look at your bloody face before looking back at Rick. “I though... When Merle ‘n’ I joined our li'l group outside of Atlanta- We thought we might find her 'round the area, looked for her every goddamn day we were out huntin', couldn't find her though.”

“And there she is,” his friend points out with a little smile, making the roughened hunter huff a laugh. “There she is,” he quietly repeats. “Bleedin’ on my fuckin’ bed.”

“It ain't your fault, Daryl. Besides, she's alright now, we just gotta keep an eye on her. Denise's
“Yea, I know,” the youngest Dixon gruffly acknowledge. “Y’sure about that?” Rick taunts with a friendly smirk. “No, ’cause, last I heard, you didn't want to leave the girl alone with her. What’s that about?”

“I don't want her to go nowhere, a'right?” Daryl grrouchily mutter.

“Hey,” his friend starts, his hand gently patting his tensed-up shoulder, “I get it, man, but if you want her to be safe then you're gonna have to let Denise do her job.”

It took three hours to stabilize you. Three hours of pure agony, hearing you cry and plead whenever you’d wake up until Denise had to put you under for your sake even though Daryl tried to veto it, forcing his friends to drag him out of the infirmary.

He’s thankful that the bullet in your shoulder could be removed without too much difficulties but you’ve lost a shit tone of blood and Denise said that she’ll see with you for an ultrasound when you’ll regain consciousness. Something about her being worried about the potential damages the bullet that went through your belly could have caused.

She also said something about your periods’ loss being worriedly abundant which he doesn’t know what to make of. Damn, he remembers having to explain those to you when you were twelve and freaked out of your mind. He was too but Merle was worse, and someone needed to end the madness.

“She was hurtin’. Instincts kicked in. I wasn’t thinkin’,” the hunter defends himself.

“I know, Daryl, been there,” Rick reminds, the day he’s had to helplessly watch and listen as his son screamed and kicked as a bullet was pulled from his stomach isn’t something he’ll ever forget.

“M’sorry, don't mean t’be a dick or anythin’. I know you and Carl… I still remember her as a fucking kid, y'know? S’hard to just… get used to the fact that she's all grown an' shit now. She don't need nobody… She was only thirteen when this shit started, man,” Daryl reminisces out loud.

Rick nods at that, quickly taking the information in. “The bullet's out. Denise stitched her all up, she’s stable, Daryl. We just gotta keep an eye on her now, the hardest part’s done.”

The archer silently nods, his eyes once against finding the tattoo on the inside of your right wrist from across the bed. You were too young for a tattoo, but you loved them so much that you wanted to take them everything you went, that’s what you’d told him.

“You cool with her stickin’ around after?” Daryl asks, finally looking up at his friend, hoping to hear what he wants to hear.

“You trust her?” That’s not it.

Daryl takes a minute to take you in before screwing his eyes shut. “I don’t want any of our people in danger, y'know that but… Fuck, I dunno, man. I don't really know her anymore, y'know? She
ain't the little thirteen year old I lost seven years ago,” he admits with a heavy heart as he realizes that he, indeed, doesn't know who you are anymore. He doesn't know the young woman laid on his bed.

“Then we'll take the time to talk to her when she'll wake up and we'll figure things out. How d'that sound?” Rick proposes, looking down at the way Daryl’s bloody hand is clinging to your own, limp one.

“S'cool with me. How 'bout the others?”

“They’re just curious as to who she is to you, s'all. They’ll be cool with her if you say you trust her.”

The men exchange a silent nod and, with a pat on his friend's shoulder, Rick leaves the room, giving Daryl some privacy and time to gather himself and straighten his head.

11:00 PM //

Your eyes flutter open and immediately fill with fresh tears when a sharp pain shoots from your tummy up to your neck. With a little whine, you suck your lips in as you carefully sit down on the mattress you're on, gritting your teeth through it until your back finally finds the headboard and settles against it.

Looking around with glossed-over eyes, you blink away the tears distorting your vision. You have no idea where the hell you are but it's neat and looks way too normal for you not to ask yourself if you're having a weird dream.

You jump slightly on the bed when you spot the familiar stranger sleeping in a chair right next to your bed. There’s an I.V firmly held in place by sheer medical tape in the crook of your left elbow and you follow the thin plastic tube with your eyes up to the bag it’s connected to. You don’t know what the clear liquid in it is, but you do recognize the one laying empty of the little hook next to it. It’s an empty blood-bag.

Thankfully, whatever medicine you’re on is keeping you calm enough not to freak.

With a shaky sigh, you carefully look back at the man sleeping next to you. You know who he is, but you're terrified of the idea of all of this being a fever dream, of him not being real. You won't be able to deal with that; you just know it.

He looks so different. Worn out. His hair has grown so much, the way the strands fall on his face makes you smile. It doesn’t look dirty or anything, but you can tell he’s not that invested in keeping it shiny and untangled.

He looks peaceful as he sleeps but there’s this tension in his shoulders lingering. He’s like a tightly wound coil ready to snap. You wonder what he’s been through those seven years you’ve been grieving him, a single tear escaping your right eye.
You don’t want this man to be a stranger, you never thought he could ever be, but you don’t know him anymore. Seven years is a long damn time and a lot has happened. You know you’re not the thirteen year old he’ll remember. You don’t think you’ve changed that much at the core, but your surface has been scraped.

With everything you’ve been through, change was inevitable, but the thought of the man you grew up in the arms of becoming another stranger makes your gut churn uncomfortably. You loved Daryl Dixon. You’ll always love Daryl Dixon.

Your heart almost jumps out of your chest when the man in the chair starts shifting, a sleepy groan coming from deep in his chest as he blinks the sleep from his eyes.

Like a deer caught in headlights, you freeze when those familiar blue eyes find yours. It consoles you a little to see him look as unsure and tense for a minute before straightening in his chair with a clear of his throat.

“Hey,” your old friend greets, his voice croaky and heavy with sleep. “Hey,” you timidly repeat, swallowing around the knot in your throat.

“How’re you feelin’?” He sounds so unsure, like he doesn’t know how to speak to you because you’ve become strangers to one another- The thought makes a tear slip out.

You give a small, sad smile and a shrug. “Like I got shot twice,” you tell him, relief washing over you when he drops his head and chuckles with a shake of his head.

“Smartass,” he quietly comments before looking back up at you. The comment makes you smile and chuckle a little, the bullet wound in your belly hurting as you do.

“You were in shit shape when we brought ya back. Denise fixed ya up as best she should, said you were stable but to keep an eye on ya,” he explains and you absently nod your head, your eyes aimlessly wandering around the neat bedroom, trying to collect your memories.

“I don’t remember anything after I… ‘fter I passed out,” you admit, your eyes low. You can’t believe you’ve made it out alive.

“S’proly better that you don’t. You didn’t sound like you were in a good place when you woke up,” he tells you and, again, you silently nod.

“Thank you. F-For saving me,” you whisper, tears stinging your eyes and overflowing them. You hate how strange this feels.

The air in the room shifts and you hesitantly look up, your face falling when you see Daryl blankly starring at the I.V nestled in the crook of your left elbow with tears in his eyes, one eventually escaping him.

You hear him swallow and watch as he absently runs a hand over his mouth before clearing his throat with a frown.
“I never stopped lookin’ for ya, y/n,” the archer tells you and tears finally start to drip free from your eyes. Hearing him say your name grounds you, much like it did back on the road when he found you.

“I thought you were gone,” you whisper, your voice cracking and heavy. “I thought you and Merle were gone, and I was all alone. I… Where is he?” You ask, your nose running by now, but Daryl can tell that you already know his brother’s gone. He’d be right here if he wasn’t.

“Merle’s been gone a li’l while now, sunshine,” he confirms and watches as you bring your right hand up to your mouth just in time to muffle a sob that makes your belly jump under the covers.

He can tell that you’re hurting, and old instincts kick back into gears. You flinch when Daryl carefully comes to sit next to you on the bed, mindful of the I.V stuck to you, before pulling you in his side, his right arm holding you to him.

You cry against his chest, your left hand carefully sat on the other side of him. You feel him shift a little and then his head is resting on top of yours, the hunter breathing in the scent laying in your matted hair. He's always said that you have that one spot he loved on top of your head because it always smelled of you even if you were covered in muck and you'd always brush him off. This time, it amplifies your cries.

Being in his arms chases all the previous tension and uncertainty, like that’s the missing piece you needed for everything to click together and fall back into place. You’re clinging to him like he’s your lifeline as he lets you break a little.

“I missed you,” you tell him, your voice muffled into his black Henley. “I missed ya too. M’sorry I wasn’t there,” he whispers on top of your head.

He lets you cry yourself out and only lets go of you to get you some tissues and a bottle of water which you quietly thank him for, your voice strung-out.

Daryl readjusts his position as you drink almost the entire bottle down so that he’s sitting along your left leg, his back to the bedroom’s door, facing you.

“Where the hell have ya been?” He asks when you’ve finished drinking. “All over the place,” you whisper, your voice scratchy.

“You by yourself out there?” Daryl questions, sounding like a disapproving parent. “Usually, yea. I huh… I had a… a friend. When I got shot? I had a friend w-with me.”

“There was nothin’ but walkers ‘round when we find ya, y/n,” he informs you. “No, I- I know. I don’t know wh-what happened t-to him,” you tell him.

“D’you remember anythin’ at all?” the hunter asks, his voice a little softer. “I got shot,” you shrug.

“I can’t remember f-faces but there was- there was m-more than one guy. Randall, my friend, is missing and I-” You frown against the sting in your eyes. “I don’t know where he is,” you whisper, terrified of the mere thought of him being hurt.
A moment of silence passes as you try to process everything that’s happened up to this point but it’s terrifyingly overwhelming to just think about. You can’t wrap your head around it.

“Crap,” you hear Daryl mutter and turn your head just in time to see him lean towards you. You can’t help but flinch when he reaches up and pulls the covers off you. “Wha-,” you start but your mouth shuts when you look down and see what the hunter is starting at. You’re bleeding.

“S’okay, you pro’ly just moved around a li’l too much,” he carefully reassures you before getting up from the bed.

You’re so exhausted that your teeth rattle with the sudden drop of temperature that came with the blanket leaving you, your body too tired to regulate itself.

“I’m gonna need ya to…” Daryl trails off, jutting his chin out towards your shirt -the shirt you’re only now realizing is not yours- silently asking you to push it up so he can get access to your wound.

“Y-Yea. Yes,” you whisper with a nod before reaching for the hem of your top with shaky hands, mindful of the I.V in your left arm.

A little “thanks” and a hum are exchanged before the archer kneels by the left side of the bed and carefully brings a cotton ball down on your stitched-up bullet wound, the anti-septic it’s soaked in making your belly jump upon contact.

“Sorry,” he apologizes, his voice low. “S’okay. I’ve had worse,” you reassure him with a small smile and the hunter shakes his head and huffs a chuckle looking once again the picture of a displeased parent.

A moment passes where Daryl just silently keeps pressure on your wound before tossing the cotton in a little bin behind the nightstand to your left. You watch as he grabs a sterile packaging and rips it open to get the greased piece of gauze out of it.

He’s careful as he makes sure that no stitches broke before putting the slick little square of gauze down over your injury, securing it in place with soft sticky band on both sides.

“Daryl?” You quietly call him, his head immediately snapping up at the sound of your voice. “D’I hurt ya?” He asks with a worried frown and you shake your head with a little, tired smile. “No. No, you didn’t. Thank you f-for taking care of me.”

“F’course,” he says like it’s the most obvious thing in the world as he sits back down on his chair with a sigh. “Stop actin’ like a stranger, y/n. I don’t give a shit ‘bout some asshole I don’t know not bein’ comfortable with me, but I can’t take it from ya.”

You’re taken aback by his words, not expecting them one bit, and you let out a nervous chuckle before finding his eyes and quickly averting your gaze. “What if I… What if I’m n-nothing like
you remember though?” You voice your worries.

“Y/n, you were thirteen last I saw ya. f’course you’ve changed- Hell, I was twenty-nine back then and even I’ve changed. I mean, m’still an asshole but I’m a grown, responsible asshole now.” You know he’s trying to make you smile and the stretch you feel on your lips is proof of his success.

“You’re not an asshole, Daryl,” you softly tell him, your eyes finding his again without fleeing this time. “Y’used to say the same shit ‘bout Merle and he was a grade-A asshole, sunshine,” he reminds you with a smile.

Your shoulders slump a little at the mention of the eldest brother, the one you’ll never get to see again- You’ve been grieving losing the brothers for years now but actually knowing that one of them is dead is like a punch to the throat.

“Was he… Was he good?” You ask, your voice low. “He died tryin’,” Daryl answers, and you can tell by the tone of his voice that things haven’t been easy between them. The thought makes your heart ache.

Blinking the tears in your eyes away, you clear your throat before heaving a shaky sigh. “You know I’m gonna ha-have to g-get back on the road, right?” You quietly tell Daryl more so than you ask.

“Y’need sleep, y/n,” he bypasses your words, his expression closing off a little. “Daryl-”

“Remember that time I got into an accident with Merle's bike?” He quietly asks you and you silently nod, a confused frown creasing your brow. “Y-Yea. Yea, I remember.”

“I was fucking terrible to you, always snappin' at ya ‘cause I wanted to do things by myself even though I couldn't fuckin' move a muscle. I forced it on ya to take care o’ me and patch me up that night ‘cause I didn't wanna go to the fuckin' hospital like a normal person.”

Your frown deepens as you try to make sense of where he’s going with this and recall the events as he tells them. Those were a hard couple of days for sure.

“You never gave it up though, you’d tell me to shut up, suck it up and let things go for once. You didn't give up on my sorry ass ’cause you cared, m'not about to give up on your hardheaded ass either. You gon' have to learn to let things go, y/n.”

“Things changed, Daryl,” you try to explain. “And we’re in an alternative universe where I’m the wise one outta the two of us?” He asks with a quirked-up eyebrow, making you squint your eyes at him.

Your expression softens a little as you regard him, a little smile tugging at your lips.


“Ya mean I’m less of a dipshit?” He asks with a smirk and you wish you could reach over to punch his arm. “You’ve grown too,” Daryl points out. “And I don’t know how much’s changed up there,”
he points at his own head, “but you’ll always be my blood.”

Your face completely crumbles at that, a tear slipping down your cheek before you even get to feel it fill your eye. “You say that now, but what if you hate who I am tomorrow?” Your voice is quiet, terrified to even ask.

“Tomorrow, you’ll be the same hardheaded, stubborn smartass you’ve always been,” he states like it’s a fact and your chuckle trips over a sob as they both come out at the same time. “And, whatever your damages are, I’m pretty sure mine ain’t too far different, sunshine.”

*if he only knew…*

“You need rest, y/n,” the hunter points out and you give silent, absent nod. “I’ll be right here when you wake up in the mornin’,” he assures you.

“Okay,” you quietly whisper, your voice a little rough. “Daryl?”

“Yea?”

“Have you? L-Learn to let go, I-I mean?” You ask him as he helps you lay back down comfortably and carefully put the blanket back on you. “Th-Thank you.”

“You’re welcome,” he tells you as makes himself comfortable in his armchair again before clearing his throat. “And huh… Yea, I have. I mean, I’m still a stubborn asshole but- Rick helped with that, the others too.”

“How many of you is there?” You curiously ask, slapping your right hand over your mouth to cover a yawn. “A bunch,” he shrugs. “But huh, our group is close-knit, so I guess I don’t really pay attention to the others, y’know?” He admits with a little smile, chuckling at the confused look on your face.

“This place, Alexandria, wasn’t always under Rick’s supervision. We came in, shit happened- S’a long story.”

“You’ll tell me tomorrow?” You ask with hopeful eyes. “I’ll tell ya tomorrow,” Daryl nods.

“You’ll be there?” He can tell you’re tired but terrified. Even throughout the years, the face of your anxiety hasn’t changed. “I’ll be there,” he assures you. “And so will ya.”

Nodding, you let yourself sink a little further into the comfortable mattress, wincing a little at the sensitivity in your right shoulder. You decided to roll over onto your left side to elevate the pressure on it, mindful of the stitched-up exit point of the bullet wound in your belly.

“G’nite, D,” you sleepily mutter, the left side of your face squished into your pillow.

“Goodnight, y/n,” you hear him chuckle, but your eyes are too heavy for you to narrow them at him.
SANCTUARY / 18th March:

6:00 AM //

“You’ve got to be fuckin’ kiddin’ me!” Negan’s voice booms in the conference room. “She opened fire the second she saw us, we didn’t know wh-”

“Shut the fuck up!” The ruthless leader’s fists slam on the steel table, his chair scraping on the ground as he suddenly gets up. “Shootin’ her wasn’t a fuckin’ option! And you morons left her out there!”

“She killed Marcus, and you said you wanted Randall back in one piece too,” the man scrambles to find a way out of the hole he’s just dug for himself.

“Yeah, she- she wouldn’t let us close enough to get to her, there were walkers everywhere!” Another tries.

Faith is silently vibrating with anger in her seat, Dwight and Simon looking on from theirs. “You shouldn’t have sent them alone,” the woman mutters bitterly, a snarl crooking her full lips. The remark earns her a glare, but she doesn’t even flinch.

A map is slammed on the table, Negan’s finger pointing at the red circle on it. “This where you left her?” He asks with a tick in his jaw, the three men standing in front of him silently nodding.

“Dwight, Simon, Faith, you’re dismissed,” the man’s gruff voice echoes in the room and his three best people leave the room without so much as a sigh.

“You three assholes stay here,” he tells the three men left standing there and, without another word, leaves the room with the map in hand, slamming the door behind him.

It doesn’t take him long to reach the cells, his eyes finding Randall’s through the little slit in the door. The kid isn’t looking away, he’s got balls he’ll give him that.

“Why didn’t you tell me she got shot?” Negan asks him, crouched down to look at the man he’s speaking to. “The guys were busy kickin’ the shit outta me, couldn’t really speak,” Randall casually explains, the man behind the heavy door sighing.

“What happened?” The seasoned survivor questions, his demeanor much softer than the younger man and himself were expecting.

“They jumped us; fight broke out. One of your attack dogs got handsy with y/n so she stabbed him,
and shots started going off then. They were two on me, Scott took the shots at her. I don’t know how many he actually got in, but I know that they left her in a fucking pool of blood, man.”

Even in the dark of the small cell, Negan can see Randall’s agitation and he can barely contain his. It feels like he’s about to fucking vibrate out of his skin.

“We were a thing,” Randall says out of the blue, making the older man’s jaw clench. “I don’t know what but… it was good. She was happy out there, put me back on my feet.”

“Oh boy, you betta be fuckin’ joking,” Negan coldly chuckles, not okay with the idea of his baby being anyone else’s but him and him alone.

“It wasn’t sexual,” the tattooed Savior recalls, “we were just there for each other.” His grey and blue eyes find Negan’s hazels. “’S’been hard for her.”

The man on the other side of the door lets out a small, humorless chuckle at that. “’M’sure you made it all better, huh?”

“Actually, she’s been the one carrying me those past two months,” Randall admits, and Negan feels his anger towards the kid drain from him.

“Believe it or not, I actually like you, kid,” the oldest of the two confesses. “Even though I fuckin’ hate how close you are to my girl. S’good to have you back.”

“Home shit home, right?” The blond captive jokes with a dry chuckle, getting a more genuine one from the Saviors’ leader. “Yea, sounds ‘bout right.”

Negan gets through the compound, his workers kneeling down as he passes by, making his way through until he reaches the floor Dwight, Simon, and now Faith, all live on. He pushes the door open and goes straight to the break room where he knows the trio spend most of their free time in.

With no surprise, he finds them all there, playing pool and trying to unwind a little from the tension the previous news have bought.

“How’re dickheads feelin’?” He asks with a smirk, his voice and demeanor much lighter than it was a few minutes ago in the conference room.

“What’s the plan?” Faith asks, dropping her cue on the green felt and turning to face Negan.

“You’re all coming with me downstairs. Dwight you get the iron balls-hot, Simon you go and get the three fucking idiots, and Faith; you’re coming with me, we gotta talk real quick first though,” he says, looking at the two men in the room to silently tell them to piss off.
With a nod, Dwight and Simon both exit the room, leaving Faith and their leader alone together.

“**What’s up?**” she asks, curious to know what’s on the man's mind. “**M’sorry,**” he says, looking at her with a slight smirk on his lips when he catches the confusion on her face. “**Wha-**”

“S’been two months now. Shouldn’t have said what I fucking said t’you, that was fucked up even for me, and I shouldn’t have put you back in that cell so, yeah; I’m sorry.”

“I- I uh... Thanks, Negan. I appreciate it,” Faith softly accepts the apology with a small nod of her head which Negan gives back.

“**Y’got it,**” he winks before tapping her shoulder, silently telling her to follow him downstairs. “**I’m gonna kill one of them, just so you know- Or two, depends on my mood once we get down there.**”

“You got a name?” The woman asks, quickly tightening one of her boxer-braids as she walks.

“According to Randall, Scott opened fire on her, and Marcus got a li’l too touchy-feely, but y/n already took care of that for us.”

“**Is he okay? How long are you gonna keep him down there?**” Faith asks as Negan opens the heavy door leading down a set of stairs.

“**He’s fine, nothin’ he can’t handle. And I’ll let him come back up in a day or two, give him some time to reflect and calm the fuck down.**”

Negan can feel his female counterpart squint at him from behind and turns to look at her with a quirked-up eyebrow and a silent question on his face.

“And you’re not gonna hurt him? No taking his hands off?” She skeptically asks, thrown off by the man’s all too calm behavior.

“**Look, he may be a dumbass, Randall’s still a good kid and, believe it or not, I don’t wanna have to kill or maim him.**”

“And y/n needs a friend,” Faith carefully follows through, a little question in her voice. “**And y/n needs a fucking friend,**” Negan repeats with a short nod.

“I fuckin’ hate how close they are, but I scared her so fucking bad she ran off with him- I may be a complete and utter asshole, but I still wanna do right by her, which, in case you haven’t noticed, I haven’t so far.”

“No? Really?” The brown-eyed woman teases, making her ‘boss’ chuckle. “**Shut the fuck up, ya dipshit.**”

They both make their way down the stairs, Faith feeling her stomach ball-up into a tight little knot as she goes. The thought of you out there, shot to shit and left alone, makes the mama bear in her roar.
“What if it’s too late? I mean, I don't want to think about it that way but- She got shot, Negan, and we don't know how bad it was.”

“She's a tough li’l cookie, no matter how soft she gets when you take a bite. She'll pull through.”

“Alright- Alright but,” Faith pauses on the last step. “What if someone took her in? What happens, then?” She asks, because that’s the only thing she can think of that could have possibly saved you.

“A whole bunch of people are gonna die, Faith, that's what'll happen,” Negan explains as he walks down the last step and turns to her once more. “Now, can we get a fucking move on and finish this shit already?”

“What if she doesn't want to come back?” She asks, making Negan jaw clench. “Randall's here. She'll fucking come back,” he spits out before walking off without waiting for her.

In the two months you’ve been gone, you’ve been the only thing on his mind. He’d known you two fucking weeks before you ran off, yet it feels like he can’t function without you around like he’s known you for years.

He can’t lie, he was relieved the night he’s heard his radio freak out on his nightstand until your voice came through, all timid and embarrassed as you called out for him.

He tried to get you to tell him where you were, but you wouldn’t budge. “I just… I needed to hear your voice,” you told him that night and he could tell you were ashamed of yourself. He doubts Randall ever knew you two were in contact.

Every night, he’d wait for you to reach him. You’d tell him about your day and ask about his, never letting up when he’d try to get a location out of you.

He remembers one night in particular where you begged him not to hurt Randall if he ever caught up to you two. “Just... Please, Negan, d-don’t hu-hurt him. I’ve lost s-so many people a-already, I don’t w-wanna lose my best friend. Please, don’t do this to me.”

And it stung a little to realize just how close the two of you had really gotten but part of him understood that he pushed you into Randall’s arms by being a gigantic ass. So he promised.

Negan’s learned a lot about you through those calls, it’s like you were less afraid to talk through that radio. You even shared a few laughs. It’s crazy to him how good it felt to just be able to talk to you at the end of the day. He could tell you cared and that’s not something he’s used to.

People around him usually are suck-ups, yes-men trying to stay on his good side and climb the ladder. Even the women around him are only there for what he can provide, there’s no conversation happening here.

With you though, it’s “how’s your day,” “why’s” and “how’s.” While he’ll be worryingly waiting for your call to know that you’re still here and kickin’, anxious when you’d excitedly tell him about the walkers you took down that day all by yourself.
You’ve grown closer together those two months you’ve been gone than you have when you were right here with him and, though Negan is fucking terrified; he wants that. He wants those conversations, you eagerly waiting for him to tell you about his day. He wants it for real, with you here by his side.

Fuck, he needs to see you. He needs to touch you and hold you again. God, you’ve turned him into a fucking cheeseball.
Alexandria //

6:48 AM //

“Y/n, baby girl, if you can hear me please answer me- Click on the fuckin' button at least, just let me know you're alive for fuck's sake.” Negan's voice is coming through the radio in your shaky hand.

“I did not give orders to shoot, I fucking swear it to you. I know I've fucked up, I fucking hurt ya, baby I know, but you have to believe me. Randall's safe, I ain't gonna hurt him but you gotta come home, so please let me know where you are.” The mention of your friend makes your brow crease in a sad frown though you're relieved to know he's okay. Negan wouldn't have sugar-coated it otherwise; he would have bragged about hurting him if anything.

“Y/n, fuckin' answer me for fuck's sake-” His sentence is cut off when you take the back of the radio off and pull the batteries out, dropping them on the bathroom floor with a shaky sigh and tears pooling in your eyes.

Your bladder woke you up a little over fifteen minutes ago and you carefully got out of bed, gritting your teeth to bear the pain of your aching body protesting your movements. You refused to wake Daryl up and he was sleeping right there in the armchair he was in yesterday so you had to tread lightly, relaying on the I.V pole to keep you balanced as you walked across the room.

You froze in your steps when the radio in your backpack started buzzing with statics and carefully snatched it out of there. With one last look at the sleeping archer, you took off to the bathroom as quickly as you could.

Now, here you are, sitting on the damn toilet, sweatpants and panties bunched-up around your ankles, with tears in your eyes and a runny nose, your radio gone completely silent. You want to answer him, tell him you're okay, but you can't screw things up with Daryl. You need this to work out and you know it won’t with Negan in the picture.

“Y/n? You in there?” The hunter calls from behind the door and you jump, his voice startling you. “Y-Yea. Yes, I- I am. I'll be right out,” you hastily answer him, hearing him shift outside.

“You alright? S'okay if you need help. You should'a woke me up, you ain't supposed to be walking by yourself. Y'lost a lotta blood.”
“Yeah, I felt that,” you tell him with a soft chuckle, smiling a little with you hear him mirror it from behind the wood separating you. “But uh, I'm okay, D’. I'll be right here,” you assure him as you slowly start to pull your undies and pants back up.

"Alright," Daryl relents. “I'm leavin' ya to it, holler if you need anythin',” he tells you, his voice heavy with sleep, and you can't help but selfishly smile at his concern. This man has your heart, that hasn't changed. It probably never will.

You make sure to flush the toilet and wash your hands, clicking the light off before carefully walking back to the bedroom, your I.V pole a helpful clutch.

Daryl is there the second you step through the doorway, placing a hand on your back just in case. “Thank you,” you whisper as he helps you settle back in bed.

“No problem,” he tells you as he brings the blanket back over you, stopping in his movements when he sees the discomfort on your face. “Hey, you alright?”

You feel your cheeks burn and look down at your covered lap. “Yes, just...” How do you tell him that you're embarrassed because the panties you're currently wearing are not the one you had on yesterday morning and someone has put a protection pad in those while you were out cold? You realized it in the bathroom but were too intent on listening for Negan's voice to freak about it then. Now though... Now you're really fucking embarrassed. That your jeans went? Fair enough. But your underwear? That’s a big no-no.

“Hey, somethin' hurt?” Daryl worryingly asks when you don't answer him.

“Do you... Do you know who ch-changed me?” You timidly ask him, your cheeks about ready to melt off your face and the archer can see the burning shame in your eyes when you finally look at him.

It hits him then and he relaxes a little. “Michonne did. You ain't got nothin' to be embarrassed about,” he lets you know but you feel uneasy none the less. You're relieved a woman took care of that but it's still embarrassing.

Your periods themselves aren't what you're ashamed of, that's perfectly natural. What you're embarrassed about is the fact that a stranger had to change your underwear and slip new, protected ones, on you while you were unconscious, that's all.

With a tired sigh, you carefully shift on the mattress and roll back onto your left side to sleep, watching as Daryl gets back in his chair.

“You should go get some rest,” you quietly tell him. “I am,” he points out with a little confused look that almost makes you smile.

“No, I mean- Don't you have a couch you could sleep on? I already feel bad f-for taking your bed-”

“You ain't doin' nothin' wrong, I don't sleep in it anyway.” That’s a question for another day.
“You'll be okay by yourself?” He asks, sounding a little unsure.

You smile softly at him and nod. “I'll be fine, D’. You go rest,” you encourage, watching as he silently debates with himself before getting up from the armchair with a loaded sigh.

“Holler if you need anythin', okay? I'm right downstairs, y/n. And no gettin' up and walkin' 'round alone. Seriously,” he insists, and you let out a quiet laugh.

“Sir, yes, sir,” you give a little salute with your right pointer finger. “Smartass,” Daryl scoffs though there's a smile on his lips.

9:34 AM //

You're a little lost, in pain, sore, and confused but you can't deny that seeing people walking around, smiling and waving at each other, helping each other out and hugging each other good morning is a heartwarming thing to see just as much as it is unsettling to you.

You woke up alone in Daryl's bedroom, your right shoulder clearly still holding a grudge and your belly throbbing in discomfort but you've managed to get out of bed and walk yourself up to one of the big windows in the bedroom to sit on the comfortable built-in bench right below it and silently started watching people go about their day.

It's weird to you seeing so many people living in peace with one another, treating each other with respect and loving and caring for each other. A sense of security is all you've been craving ever since your father passed but it's also something that scares the crap out of you. None of it feels real.

When you live in pure chaos and constant fear, what can people possibly take from you? Nothing. Nothing at all. You don't have to fear that you’ll lose something good because you don't have anything good to lose. That's how you work, how your mind had to function to protect you when you were younger, and it just stayed with you ever since.

It’s really hard to let go of that kind of mechanism, especially when its original purpose was to protect you, but also because you're afraid to let go of it. You were so young; it feels like that's all you’ve ever known, and it hurts when people tell you it’s bad.

You heave a shaky sigh and let your head drop to look down at your hands, nervously pulling and twisting your fingers.

Yesterday might have shaken you up more than you originally thought. You almost died out there. You got shot twice and had walkers on you- Whoever’s watching over you is a massive dickhead but you’re glad they showed up when they did.

Your hands shake as you recall the events, the feelings of hungry hands digging into your flesh, the deafening growls all around you… You shouldn’t be here.

You're in pain, not just a physical one- No, it’s a psychological one that cuts so deep and hurts so bad that you end up retreating back into your built-in fortress, a plastic smile plastered on the face
of the girl on auto-pilot left behind that keeps on repeating that everything is okay while you hide away from it all because you're terrified of this pain.

You hate it. You hate it because you have absolutely no control over it, it's there and it won't go away until it's been heard and felt. Thing is, nothing can reach you through the walls you've build all around you. Everything is empty and numb, and you like it here.

So, in the meantime, your outer shell smiles pointlessly and tries not to break down, your pain silently increasing with each passing day.

“Knock, knock?” The voice that reaches you is gentle, but it still makes your ears rings as it pulls you out of your bubble and grounds you back down to the reality your brain was well on its way to dissociate from.

You try to blink the fuzz in your eyes away as you turn to greet whoever’s walked in. “Hi?” You greet slash ask, not knowing who the person in front of you is.

“Hi, I uh- I'm Denise and uh, this is Tara,” the blonde woman introduces herself before pointing at a dark haired woman standing right behind her.

The two women watch as you try your best to shake off the cobwebs and put things back into focus.

“Are you alright?” Tara asks with a frown. “Y-Yea,” you whisper with a frown, feeling your voice run off to hide. Your brain screaming ‘STRANGERS BAD MUST NOT TALK’ and you’re used to it but how the hell are you supposed to explain that to them?

You clear your throat and look up at the two strangers, panic bubbling in your stomach when you open your mouth but nothing comes out even when you strain your throat, like it’ll push the words out somehow.

Denise is about to talk and there’re tears stinging your eyes when Daryl appears, closely followed by the man you recognize from yesterday. The one with the curly hair and the machete.

One look at you and you know he knows. Somehow, after all these years, he remembers. You could pee you’re so relieved.

The archer is careful as he walks up to you. “Hey, sunshine,” he greets you and the nickname makes you smile a little, a sharp contrast to the tear that slips out just then.

“Hi,” you manage, your throat releasing its death grip to allow you to speak to the one person you still blindly trust, your voice barely loud enough for him to catch.

“You okay?” he asks, worry in his voice and you give him a little nod, your eyes drifting to the three people watching your interaction from the door.

“They’re my friends- My family,” Daryl explains when he sees where your eyes are. “Denise’s the one who took care of you last night, y’remember that?” You shake your head and the sound of your
throat clicking as you swallow around the lump in your throat is deafening in the empty room.

“It’s alright,” the woman herself assures you with a soft, disarming smile. “Yesterday was a lot, no one could expect you to remember much of anything,” she gently explains and she’s so sweet it makes you wanna cry. You wish you could just say thank you to her.

Hesitantly, the curly blonde properly steps inside the room and you can see Daryl tense a little, ever the tightly wound coil, before checking himself and relaxing. Still, Denise stays a good little distance from you not to overwhelm you.

“Any way you could let me know if anything hurts?” She asks and your eyes immediately find the reassuring, familiar blue ones in front of you. They’ve changed, grew a little heavy with the things they must’ve seen over the years, but they also seem a little lighter somehow.

With an encouraging nod from the hunter, you point at your right shoulder with a shaky left index finger. You also indicate your head and then carefully flatten your hand on your belly, pointing out both the bullet wound and your period cramps. Those are making this whole thing that much worse.

“Would you mind letting me have a look?” Denise asks and you, once again, find Daryl in your panic.

“I’ll stay with ya,” he assures you. “Ain’t kickin’ me out this time, li’l lady,” he amicably warns the brunette, Tara, standing at the door alongside who you know to be Rick.

You watch as she flips Daryl off, Rick chuckling at the two, and find yourself relaxing a little within their dynamics. They all seem so close, you’re glad Daryl found himself the stable home he didn’t get to have when he was younger. You wish Merle could be part of that too, you wonder if he was for a bit.

The bubbly brunette walks out after telling you that she’ll catch up with you later and will most definitely harass you for dirt on the youngest Dixon before giving you the finger-guns and exiting with a wink and a blown kiss to Denise who’s face turned beet-red in an instant.

You decide you like Tara.

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You’ve fallen back asleep as Denise silently disposes of the medical supplies she’s used to clean up your wounds before slipping out of the room, Daryl joining her after making sure that you’re properly covered and have a bottle of water and painkillers waiting for you on the nightstand to your left. He even shut the shutters to let you sleep in peace without the sunlight bothering you.
The pair quietly get down the stairs and settle in the kitchen where they find Rick leaned against a counter, waiting for them.

“Everythin’ alright?” The leader of the group asks, taking a seat with his friends at the dining table Daryl barely ever uses for anything else but to clean his weapons.

“She’s bruised but that’s not surprising, and I’m gonna have to keep an eye on the swell on her belly, other than that, there isn’t a whole lot I can tell you yet. Her shoulder is bad enough that the pain gives her motion sickness, but we won’t know how bad it is until I can get a good look at it and that’s not happening until the pain has subside a little. I’m not here to torture the poor girl.”

“She’d grit her teeth through it if ya asked,” Daryl says, not encouraging it, just pointing it out. “I bet she would, but that’s not how we do things around here,” Denise counters, getting a chuckle out of Rick and a smirk from the archer.

The trio share a coffee in silence at the table, Daryl lost in his own head. He’s left the door of his bedroom cracked open just in case you wake up in pain or need anything, but he can’t help but worry.

This is all so fucking weird. He was just thinking of you three days ago and, boom; there you are. Fucker thought of you so hard you popped back into his life. That always makes him chuckle.

The trio share a coffee in silence at the table, Daryl lost in his own head. He’s left the door of his bedroom cracked open just in case you wake up in pain or need anything, but he can’t help but worry.

This is all so fucking weird. He was just thinking of you three days ago and, boom; there you are. Fucker thought of you so hard you popped back into his life. That almost makes him chuckle.

“Didn’t you say somethin’ ‘bout an ultrasound or whatever yesterday?” Daryl pops out of his head to ask Denise.

“Yes, and I definitely would like to give her one because that swell in her belly needs to be kept under surveillance- Could just be from the impact and the bruising but I don’t really want to gamble on it,” she explains and the hunter nods, Rick closely following the discussion.

“Then why didn’t you do it? I mean, if there’s somethin’ there-”

“You’ve seen how distressed she was, Daryl, the poor girl couldn’t even speak to me. I didn’t want to add to it. And I think it’d be best if you’re the one bringing it up to her, she trusts you.”

“Yeah,” Daryl nods. “Alright. We’ll take care of that when she’ll have had something to eat and drink. As of right now, she needs some rest,” Denise explains with a little smile before finishing her coffee.

“How long has she been that way?” The green-eyed blonde quietly asks, curious but not wanting to
be invasive. “You seem to know your way around it so, I’m assuming that’s not new to her.”

Daryl sighs and shifts in his chair before clearing his throat. “She's always been a real quiet kid,” he explains, “but after her old man died, she went radio silent for a year,” he recalls, his face falling a little.

“She'd have those moments where... her anxiety would run through the fuckin' roof and she'd just go completely silent, sometimes for the day, sometimes a few- A month if it got really bad.”

“She's always been a real quiet kid,” he explains, “but after her old man died, she went radio silent for a year,” he recalls, his face falling a little.

“So that what happened there? She saw a bunch of new faces at once and froze,” Rick asks, getting a quiet “yeah” from Daryl.

“Selective mutism,” the former psychiatrist quietly points out, her eyes full of empathy. “Yea,” the archer gives a dry chuckle. “That still fuckin' stings seein' her like that. I know she ain't a kid anymore but- Tell that to my brain, y'know?” His friends chuckle at that, Daryl smiling a little.

“You two were close before all this, huh?” Denise asks, intrigued by the nature of the relationship the rugged hunter shared with you.

“Close ain’t even it. I've been in her life since day one- She fuckin' had me since day one, with dem chubby li'l fingers grabbin' at me and whatnot,” he explains with a reminiscing smile.

“That’s how they get you,” Rick says with an amused grin. Denise’s smile bright. “How was she?”

“The bubbliest, cutest li'l thing. Everythin’ made her laugh and I was always tryin' to find stuff to get her to clap her hands. She did that a lot, just bounce on them li'l legs and clap.”

The hunter huffs and polishes his cup, Rick following behind while the curly blonde absently stirs her spoon around in the black liquid. She’s about to get up and announce her departure when she sees Daryl’s mouth open, a frown creasing his brow.

“That's one thing I'll never forgive the world for, lettin' people take that away from her,” he confesses, his smile gone.

The blonde nurse’s green eyes find Rick’s blue irises and they silently agree to let their friend go on.

“I should be thankful she at least got seven years of normal but even then, shit was complicated. Kids were fuckin' awful to her at school- I'll never forget the day Merle called me, shoutin’ ‘bout bruises and scratches on her back and arms. She had fuckin’ bite marks on her skin, nail scratches all over her back and her goddamn scalp was bruised from kids pulling on her hair- I didn't even know you could bruise your fuckin' scalp.”

The Grimes patriarch frowns at that, his head immediately going to his son and baby girl. He's always been a papa bear at heart but, nowadays? A fucker would die for putting so much as a single scratch on his kids.

“That's awful,” Denise cuts into the silence with a frown. “It ain’t worse than the shit her mom—” Daryl looks up then, his eyes finding Rick’s.

“Need to take a piss,” the rugged hunter dismisses the conversation, his chair scrapping against the
floor as he gets up without another word and walks up the stairs before anyone can say anything.

1:35 PM //

You emerge groggily, your head pounding but the rest of your body not aching as bad as it was this morning. You’ll take the little win.

“Painkillers to the left.” You jump when you hear Daryl speak and squint against the sunlight bathing the room, trying to meet his eyes.

As you carefully sit up, not without little winces and hisses here and there, you can tell that something’s wrong. The air in the bedroom is heavy and the hunter’s body language screams tightly wound and angry.

You hardly swallow around the sudden lump in your throat and reach over to the nightstand to your left for the pills and water bottle, confusion and worry marking your features.

“You feelin’ any better?” He asks but you can tell that he’s on edge, his tone hard and cold like it was back on the road yesterday.

“D’,” your frown deepens, a flash of hurt stinging you when you see him tense a little at the nickname. “I…”

“Please, explain,” he cuts you off, and your face falls when Daryl carelessly drops your radio and its batteries right next to your left leg on the bed.

You feel like you’re about to suffocate, your stomach turning on itself. You know you haven’t done anything wrong, but you also know damn well what this must look like to him.

great, just what we needed.

“Y/n, I need ya to fuckin’ explain this,” Daryl insists when you don't answer his question, his voice a little colder now.

You can feel your throat flutter, your eyes stinging with fresh tears ready to spill and you know he sees them when you finally find it in you to look up at him, but his expression stays closed and firm. You hate it. He's seeing you as a potential threat right now, you know he is, and you can't fucking stand it.

To be perfectly honest, you'd probably behave the same if you were in his shoes right now. To him, it probably seems like you've snuck out to the bathroom in the middle of the night to contact someone and took the batteries out of the radio to keep it quiet before hiding it there. It’s far from the truth but how the fuck is he to know?

You cringe when you hear him sigh, hurt that he's getting impatient and irritated with you. The flinch you give when he leans on his elbows to get little closer to you makes him freeze, and only then does he process the tears racing down your cheeks.
“Y/n,” his voice is a little softer as he speaks, “if you're in trouble, you gotta let me know 'cause I need to cross out the other option.”

“I'm not... M'not g-gonna hurt y-your family,” you quietly let him know. “Alright. Then please, explain to me why you've taken the batteries out of a walkie-talkie and hid it in the bathroom.”

Heaving a shaky breath, you nod and quietly start telling him about last night. You make sure to let him know that you really did wake up to pee, you weren't planning on contacting anyone - you didn't - and you stop after that, unsure of how to bring Negan and your whole history with the man up.

“I'll be gone b-by the end o-of the day, I promise,” you whisper, not able to come up with anything to explain yourself further and knowing damn well that the little you gave isn’t going to be enough.

“Like I’ll let that happen,” Daryl scoffs. “I’ll have you in a damn cell ‘fore you can even reach the gate.” He sees you tense at that and catches the way your throat jumps when your breath gets caught in it.

The archer immediately feels guilty. He knows how you feel about confinement, he knows about your claustrophobia.

Still, you don’t crumble. As a matter of fact, he sees you harden and close yourself off to him right there and then. “Great,” you spit out, the ambers in your eyes alight despise the slight shake in your hands.

“If you ain’t got nothin’ to hide, then fuckin’ tell me who you’ve been talkin’ to,” Daryl insists, his eyes never once leaving your face though you’re not looking at him.

Your jaw is set as you look straight ahead. “S’none of your business.”

“Like Hell it ain’t. You’re in my fuckin’ home, sunshine,” the nickname sounds so bitter it makes your eyes stings despite yourself. “My fuckin’ family lives here!”

The words are like a slap to the face but you’re quick to wipe a tear away when it slips out, your face defeated but refusing to fall when you look back at a wide-eyed Daryl, his own words burning his tongue.

It isn’t false that he considers his group family, but the way he’s phrased that was wrong. You’re family too, and he’s just outcasted you.

Before he can even think of a way to say sorry, a half-empty bottle of water is flying at his face and he barely manages to dodge it.

“Screw you, Dixon!” You spit out, the snarl curling your top lip a sharp contrast to the tears freely running down your darkened cheeks.

“Y/n-” This time it’s the bottle of painkiller that flies to his face and actually hits him right on the forehead. “Hey, stop-”
“Seven years!” You cut him off. “I’ve been mourning you and Merle for seven years! I don’t blame you for having started over, but you don’t get to treat me like you weren’t the one to hold me when I was bruised to hell, and everything hurt! You don’t get to treat me like you’ve not seen me at my lowest and vice versa- It’s not fair to me!”

“I didn’t mean-” He tries to reason with you, but you’ve retreated back inside your own head and he can’t reach you. “Yes, you did!” You cry out, your silent tears finally turning into ugly sobbing.

Daryl lowers his head then, feeling his throat tightening at the sound of your cries. It’s been so fucking long, and you’re so goddamn familiar to him but he knows the years have changed you and he’s unsure of how to handle that. It's like your both walking on eggshells and he fucking hates it.

“I know I don’t belong here,” you whisper as you slowly start to calm down and Daryl swears he can feel his heart ache when you look at him with a sad smile and shrug. “We’re strangers,” you tell him like it’s a thing.

“No. No, we ain’t,” he rejects with a frown. “Look, I know this shit feels weird but s’only ‘cause you were tiny last I saw ya and now you’re all grown and I fuckin’ hate that I wasn’t there. Jus’ ‘cause I don’t know how to fuckin’ act doesn’t mean we're strangers.”

“You’ve looked at me like I’m a threat just then, Daryl,” you let him know and his face falls a little. “Things aren’t like they used to be- They never will be again, and it hurts so bad.”

“I know, but just ‘cause they ain’t the exact same doesn’t mean they’ll be bad.” He’s trying to get through to you but the walls around you are solid and, for the first time since he’s known you, he’s face to face with them.

You jump when Daryl takes your left hand in his, hissing as the movement pulls on your I.V, but allow him the contact, silently finding comfort in it yourself.

“I need ya to trust me, y/n,” he asks of you, his tone softer and a little pleading. You nod; “I do. That hasn’t changed, Daryl.”

“Then talk to me,” he pushes, giving your hand a little squeeze. “You’re safe with me, that hasn’t changed either. I’m sorry for hurtin’ ya, I didn’t mean to, but I did and I’m sorry. You’re my girl, remember?”

You can’t help but smile a little a that. “And you’re my man,” you quietly complete him.

“S’right,” the hunter chuckles. “You’re my blood, that ain’t never goin’ away. I’ve made a family for myself over the years, s’true, but you’ll always have your place at the table too.”

Your face contorts as you try to keep the tears at bay, your throat tight with the strain of the effort.

With a strained breath, your watery eyes find his and you’re surprised to find them as glassy as yours. One quick look at the empty radio laying next to your left leg, you screw your eyes shut and swallow around the lump in your throat.
“Alright… Okay…” And so, you start telling him about the day the Saviors ‘found’ you on January ninth, three days after your twentieth birthday, and what’s been happening for almost three months now.

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“So, uh, how’s Carl?” Denise asks with a small smile, trying to bounce back from the previous conversation but also concerned for Rick's son. “He's good, s'good it's just- He's trying to, y'know… adjust. He just gets frustrated really quickly so... Yeah. It's gonna take some time.”

“Hey, he's been through the hardest part, he'll get there, I know he will,” the novice nurse reassures him, getting a smile from Rick.

“Thank you, really. I could never repay you for saving his life, just- Thank you.”

“Don't mention it, I'm just glad he's safe now.”

They’re both standing outside on Daryl’s front porch, waiting for the man to show up again but it’s been a little bit now and there’s still no signs of him.

“Anything new with the girl?” Michonne interrupts as she walks towards the pair and climbs up the small steps leading up to the porch.

“Nah, not really,” Alexandria's leader informs her, smiling when she comes to his side and leans against him.

“Okay, well, I'm gonna go,” Denise shyly announces before leaving the two together and going back to studying in the infirmary.

“D'I say something wrong?” Michonne asks, confused at the curly blonde’s sudden departure.

“Yeah, you totally offended her,” Rick teases with a smirk. “Shut up,” she scolds with a small laugh before giving him a quick but tender kiss on the lips. “How are you?”

“M'good just, y'know…” He tilts his head like that’s some kind of language. “You don't know what to think of her,” Michonne carefully observes. “And you feel bad because Daryl clearly cares about her while you're here, unsure if you can trust her to be around your family?”

As usually, she hits the nail right on the head. “Yeah, somethin’ like that, yeah... How are you, though?”

“I'm alright, Rick,” she smiles, framing her boyfriend’s head with her hands. ‘Listen, we do what
we always do, talk to her and then we decide. I know Daryl is attached to her, but she might have changed, a lot, and you have the right to have your guards up around her, for now at least. If we decide to keep her around, you're gonna have to relax and give her a chance, alright?"

“I love you,” he whispers, dropping his forehead against hers. “I love every single person inside these walls and- You and Carl- I can't... I can't risk putting you in danger and I- I love you and-”

“I love you too, Rick. Relax, it's okay, we're okay,” Michonne softly assures him before taking him into her arms. “I don't think she's a threat, but I won't let her be one. I won't allow her to hurt us, Rick, and I know that you won't either. I know that, we both do.”

2:11 PM //

“Hey, Carl,” Daryl greets the young man as he walks up the steps leading up to the Grimes’ front porch.

“Hey, Daryl. Everything alright?” Carl asks with a worried frown, his baby sister on his lap, waiting for him to resuming reading to her.

“Yea, no, everythin’s fine. Y’know where your old man’s at?”

“Hmm, yeah, he’s inside, talking with Carol, Ezekiel’s here too m’pretty sure.” The eldest Grimes kid barely finished his sentence when Daryl thanks him and steps inside the house, his ears perking up at the familiar voices coming from the kitchen.

“… Yeah, that could actually work-”

“Hey,” Daryl interrupts the trio, two sets of blue eyes and one of hazels finding his. There’s a map spread-out on the kitchen island, a bunch of red markings all over it. “You’re still on that, huh?”

“Daryl,” Carol starts only for the hunter to wave her off with a little smile. “S’alright, I get it,” he tells her, not really happy to see those three still plotting but Carol just came back home and he’s not willing to watch her walk away again.

“Hello, Daryl,” Ezekiel greets with a smile, the archer giving him a nod. “Everythin’ alright?” Rick asks with a frown, his eyes scanning the hunter.

“Think you can arrange a quick gatherin’?” The youngest Dixon asks, the question getting both Ezekiel and Carol’s interests. “Everythin’s fine, y/n just... got some stuff to share with the class.”

There’s a silent conversation going between Daryl and Rick, the latter eventually giving a slow nod. “Church. Let’s say,” he looks at his watch, “ten minutes.”

2:55 PM //

“And how exactly do we know that she's not with him, huh? Seriously, are you guys fucking
stupid?"

“Hey, calm the fuck down-”

“Oh shove it, Dixon!” Rosita explodes. “We’re neck-deep in shit because of that psycho and you saw what he did to Spencer, we all did! Why would you trust her?!”

“Rosita,” Michonne cuts in, “that’s enough. She took it upon herself to tell us about her situation and it’s not that different from ours. That puts her in the exact same boat as us.”

“You don't know her like I do-” Daryl starts but gets cut off by the agitated brunette. “Damnit, Daryl, she was just a-” “Just a kid, I fucking know!” The archer interrupts her, his voice echoing in the small church.

Daryl can feel his friends’ concerned eyes on him as he takes a breather, trying to stop his simmering blood from going to full boil.

“I know that look, alright?” He calmly resumes. “She was fuckin’ terrified to tell me about him, almost had a fuckin’ break down when I blew a fuse after hearing his name. She didn’t even know we’re connected to the sonuvabitch.” His eyes find Rosita’s then and she seems a little calmer.

“I trust her,” Rick butts in. “Worse comes to worst, we know how to handle a threat… But I think she has her place here. With us,” he calmly gives his two cents.

“Either way, she’s beat to Hell and I wouldn’t feel right throwing her out. Plus, if she had something to hide, she wouldn't even have taken the chance of us knowing- I mean... Right?” Glenn suggests with a shrug, a little unsure about the whole situation.

“Glenn's right, she told us and that has to count for something. You guys take your decision, but I've already taken mine, I know where I stand,” his wife declares before walking out of the church, taking a second to look at you when she steps outside.

You're sitting outside on the steps of Daryl's porch, Ezekiel sat next to you as you nervously pull on your fingers, your eyes puffy.

“That could be me, y'know?” Enid softly states, taking Maggie out of her thoughts. “How so?”

“She's just like me. I mean, she was out there all by herself, bad things happened to her and now she’s in a bad spot- I could definitely be in her place right now. Could be me,” the young girl concludes with a shrug.

“But you're not and you won't ever be. You're with us,” Maggie assures her with a smile.

“I know, and that's not my point- I mean, I appreciate you saying that but... You gave me shelter, a home. Glenn- Glenn saved me even though I had a gun on him, it's... I think she just needs a little company, a family; like us.”

“Yeah?” The brunette asks with a grin. “Totally,” Enid affirms with a smile of her own, gently bumping her hip into Maggie's.
“They’re all t-talking a-about me,” you whisper, your reddened eyes stuck to your boots.

“Yeah, that is a fair assumption to make,” Ezekiel tells you, his head turned to his left as he looks down at you. “But I don’t think it’s half as bad as you’re making it out to be in your head.”

“Daryl’s mad a-at me.” You frown, a tear slipping out, when you hear the man next to you chuckle. “Oh, darlin’, we may not know the same version of Daryl Dixon, but I’m pretty sure we both know that he would not have stood there and held your hand in that church if he was angry.”

You smile a little at that, wondering just how angry those people have seen the hot-blooded hunter over the years. Clearly enough to know about his pattern.

“For what it’s worth, you’ve handled things very maturely,” he praises, your cheeks burning as you silently shrug him off. “No, really. Daryl only freaked because I don’t think he was prepared for you to spring the N word out on him is all.”

Your head snaps up at that only for your eyes to meet Ezekiel's shit-eating grin, the man clearly proud of his joke. “C’mon, s’pretty funny,” he encourages a smile with a tilt of his head.

“It’s that bad, huh?” You ask, your voice serious though you’re smiling a little at the man childishness.

“Oh yeah. The man’s like Voldemort; ya don’t say his name.” You can’t help but laugh a little at that.

Your eyes find the church again and you’re taken a little aback when Rick’s oldest son, Carl you’re pretty sure, waves at you with a smile, the young girl by Maggie’s side doing the same before the two take off.

Even from afar, you see Rick nod at you as he rocks his little girl in his arms. It’s odd, but you feel a little overwhelmed by those simple little gestures.

“If those people thought of you as a threat, trust me, you wouldn’t be sittin’ here, darling,” Ezekiel tells you and you turn your head to the right to look at him. “Rick Grimes isn’t one to take chances, not when it comes to letting strangers in close quarters to his family.”

“That’s understandable. It’d give anything to protect the people I love,” you whisper, the thought of Randall making a comeback. You feel like you’ve failed him. Hopefully he’s better off without you around.
“We all do,” the gentle man affirms, his eyes soft and understanding when yours briefly meet them.

**Sunday 9th April**

11:30 AM //

Rick and Aaron went off to God knows where, Carl and Daryl are nowhere to be found and you’ve somehow ended up in charge of Judith since Olivia is cooking dinner.

Life is good here though. You've adapted surprisingly fast and people seem to actually trust and like you now. There was a little tension between you and Rosita, but it quickly dissipated when you’ve learned where she was coming from and you two decided to have a chat on your second day in Alexandria. You’ve been thick as thieves ever since.

Rick trusts you and it means the world because not only does he trusts you enough to take you out on supply runs with him, he also trusts you with his kids and so does Michonne. You came to really look up to the couple and the relation you have with them means a lot to you.

Carl really likes you too even though he's having a hard time because of his eye and is frustrated with the whole Negan situation his family- your family is in. You've helped them a lot with supplies, and that really stuck with them. You've pulled your weight around no matter how poor your health was in the beginning and you'll forever be proud of that.

You still can't properly move your right shoulder, let alone aim a gun or your bow without your entire arm shaking in pain but Daryl is helping you a great deal with that.

Things between the two of you organically clicked back into place and it almost feels as though you've never even been separated. You've both changed but you're still very familiar to one another, your dynamic still intact after seven shattering years apart.

You've actually been living with him. At first, he told you to stay put long enough for you to heal a little more and then, with that excuse gone, he simply told you to “stop bein’ a hard-ass and make yourself at home, ya dipshit.”

He's also helped you get over Merle's death. Mostly, he's answered your questions, told you about what happened and ended with the two of you discovering that you've had an enemy in common at some point which made you both rant about how the hell you’d never crossed path until now, a very entertaining scene for Tara who’d walked right in the middle of it.

Daryl helped you find a way to say goodbye since you didn't originally get to. It's still a work in progress, you're still processing it, but it doesn't weight as heavily anymore.

Really, there's only been one bump on the road so far, but you don't want to talk about it. As a matter of fact, you've been working overtime to keep yourself from even thinking about it.
Right now, you're sitting on the big fluffy carpet covering the floor of Judith's room and she's staring at you with the cutest smile on her face, one that makes her chubby little cheeks ball-up. Whenever you smile back, she giggles and your smile grows ten times bigger, your heart melting in your chest.

Every now and then, she throws herself backwards, waiting for you to catch her right before she can make contact with the carpet and bursts out laughing when you get there just in time before doing it all over again.

You love this kind of moment, love feeling the way you do now. You love finally feeling a little more at ease with yourself and you just love the people here, the place itself would be just another version of the hell outside if it wasn't for the people living within its walls.

Man, you even love Abraham's stupid jokes. This place just wouldn't have the amount of class it has without Abraham Ford, or so he likes to say. The thought makes you chuckle.

“Yay, you like that, princess?” You ask Judith only for her to let herself fall back again, making you laugh. “Got'cha!” You exclaim with a laugh as you catch her and lift her up to hold her to you, your heart melting when her small hands snake around your neck as far as her little arms allow them to go.

“Hey, there,” you whisper before kissing the side of her head, appreciating her presence and the gentleness of the moment.

You stay like that for a few, just holding her close to you, enjoying the moment as you softly rock her back and forth, her body slowly going limp in your arms.

When you hear her softly snoring against your chest, you slowly stand, careful not to wake her or drop her, and make your way to her crib. You gently tuck her in and make sure to turn her little monitor on so that Olivia can hear what's happening in the room while she's busy in the kitchen downstairs.

“Alright, sleep tight, Judy bear. Your daddy will be right here when you wake up, I promise,” you whisper before kissing one of her tiny hands.

Slowly, you take a step back to get away from her crib and let her sleep in peace but don't even get an inch away from it when your back hits something solid.

It takes everything for you to keep quiet when your bare arms make contact with what you know to be leather and an all too familiar scent invades your senses.

*this is a fucking nightmare. it can't be fucking real, it can't, he can't...*

“Look’atcha, pretty girl, playin' sitter for Rick. I fucking missed ya, baby girl. S'been a while, huh? And here you are,” Negan speaks lowly in your right ear, making you want to cry in panic but also
sending a shiver through you, his voice covering your skin with goosebumps.

“You look damn good, wearin' nothin' but knee-highs and a tank top. Fucking hell, princess.”

His words make your cheeks burn but you still find the strength to push him off you with your shoulder and out of Judith's room, not once looking at him.

Only when the door of the little girl's bedroom clicks shut do you look at him, your mind unable and unwilling to process that he's actually right in front of you yet he's all over the place. He's all you can see and smell, you love it- No. No, you hate it.

You've missed him but you have to admit that, now that he's here; you're scared.

Your worst nightmare is staring down at you with a panty-melting smirk that makes your knees shake and you can't fucking think straight.

“You should've answered my fuckin’ call, sweetheart. I was fuckin' worried 'bout ya.”

Oh God... Oh, you are so **royally fucked.**
Forest Gump

Chapter Notes

[UPDATED AUGUST 26. 2019]

TRIGGER WARNING; THERE'RE MENTIONS OF INFERTILITY CONCERNING TO M/C IN THIS CHAPTER, I KNOW THIS MAY SEEM LIKE A SPOILER AND WHATNOT BUT I'D MUCH RATHER SPOIL A LITTLE SO YOU CAN MAKE THE CHOICE OF WHETHER YOU WANT TO PROCEED OR NOT, THAN LET YOU GO ON AHEAD AND GET DISTRESSED BECAUSE OF SOMETHING YOU HADN'T EXPECTED TO READ. SO, PLEASE, IF THIS IS TRIGGERING FOR YOU BUT YOU STILL WANT TO READ, BE CAREFUL AND DON'T PUSH YOURSELF; IT'S ABSOLUTELY NOT WORTH IT. THIS IS A FICTIONAL STORY, YOUR WELL-BEING HOLDS MUCH MORE IMPORTANCE.

A/N; Hey babycakes! Just wanted to apologized for the delay between this chapter and the previous one. My big brother got into a car accident and, even though he thankfully got out without a scratch, I've been completely unable to function for days after.

With that said; I hope you enjoy this chapter, don't forget to eat something and drink. Stay safe, I'm here if you need to talk, always. And wear your seatbelt!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“So what? Daddy doesn't get a hug, baby doll?” Negan asks with a smirk as you stand there, looking at him like a deer caught in headlights, pure confusion and panic written all over your face.

You don't answer him, just blink and look down at the white socks covering your feet, trying your damnedest to stay calm, knowing that Judith is only a door away and you don't want to wake her up, especially not because of yet another useless argument with Negan.

You hear him sigh when he doesn't get an answer out of you and the breathy sound is enough to intimidate you, but you keep one thing in mind; you are safe within the walls of Alexandria.

or so you thought...

“Been gone for two fucking months, baby, and you're not even gonna fuckin' talk to me?” He asks and you don't need to look at him to know that he's frowning. “I feel like I’ve been a good fuckin’ sport about it but don't ya feel like you've got some fucking explainin' to do?” He pushes, keeping his voice low not to wake Judith, before stepping right in front of you, completely robbing you of your personal space.

You can't help the tear that rolls down your cheek only to get soaked into the white cotton on your foot, Negan quick to notice it.

This is nerve raking to you because you're literally stuck between him and a wall, so scared to speak up because you don't want him to start yelling. The air around you is so thick that it feels like
you could gag on it whenever you try to draw breath.

You feel like shit. You feel terrible and you know that the tear you've just shed wasn't just a nervous one.

You can't help it; you've missed him, and you know that you shouldn't feel the way you do. You know that but, being away from him was way too fucking hard and your little talks on the radio only made you crave him that much more.

You hate that, right now, you can feel all the damn anxiety being away from him brought drain from your system.

“Why're you crying, baby girl?” Negan asks before lifting your head up with his left hand, forcing you to look at him. “I'm not gonna hurt ya, y'know that. I know you do.”

“Do I?” You quietly ask, the sigh he lets out stinging a little. “Y/n, sweetheart.” “You left a bruise on me,” you let him know, the words completely slipping from you.

You jump when Negan brings his hands up and let them frame your face, your watery eyes hardly meeting his. “I know. Baby, I know, and I regret it every single fucking day but that doesn’t change that it happened, ain’t nothin’ I can do to take that back.”

“I need time, and I know you’re not willing to give that to me,” you quietly tell him. “You’ve had over two months, baby girl,” he points out and your shoulders slump a little. Part of you had hoped he’d understand.

“S’not the same,” you mumble under your breath with a stubborn frown creasing your brow.

You hear him chuckle and then he’s standing much closer to you, his chest pushing against yours, making you feel ridiculously small and vulnerable, but you push that feeling aside for now.

His eyes narrow as he searches yours which are actively avoiding him. “You do realize that we were able to have actual conversations over a goddamn radio for two months but the second I appear, you’re like a li’l lamb in front of the big bad wolf.”

He’s right, you know he is but, then again, it’s easy for him to talk when he doesn’t have to walk in your shoes.

“I heard you got shot, was worried fuckin’ sick ‘bout you. Why the fuck didn’t you answer me?” Negan asks and you can feel him tensing again.

“I did. G-Get shot. T-Twice,” you quietly inform him and watch his jaw ripple beneath his skin as he rolls it. His eyes find the dressing on your right shoulder. “Where else?” He asks, his gravelly voice making you itchy.

Silently, you point at the bullet wound in your belly through your tank and flinch with a little gasp when Negan’s right hand leaves your cheek to push your top up, his eyes taking the stitched-up wound in.
“It’s swollen,” he observes, carefully patting the swollen flesh all around the bullet hole. “I... Everything’s o-okay. D-Denise ch-checked with a-an ultrasound,” you swallow at the memory of that day, not ready to share all the information yet.

Your eyes flutter shut when Negan’s forehead land on yours, shakily exhaling through your nose.

“I killed him,” he tells you, your eyes staying shut. “Randall gave me his name and I fuckin’ bashed him to shit and I’ll fuckin’ do it again.”

“Is he alright?” You timidly venture to ask, not wanting to set the man off. “Yea,” he surprisingly softly answers. “Yeah, the kid’s alright. He’s back on his feet, tyin’ his own shoes ‘n’ all.”

You can’t help the tiny little smile that appears and the quiet, breathy laugh you let slip. “Good,” you nod, “that’s good.”

He's so close to you, the feeling of his breath hitting your lips so overwhelming it makes your legs shake, and you eyes almost flutter shut when you spot Carl walking up the stairs, his injured eye, or more like his injured socket, completely uncovered which is not usual.

“Uh-uh, Carl, go the fuck back downstairs,” Negan immediately barks at him before the kid even gets a chance to speak, his eyes never leaving your face.

“She might be the only fucking person on this goddamned Earth able to keep me fuckin' calm but I can't assure you that I won't fucking bash you if you come up here, boy,” he adds, trying to find your eyes but they stay glued to Rick’s son.

“She alright,” you speak just loudly enough for Carl to hear and see him hesitantly nod at you before heading back down the stairs.

“Don't talk to him like that, who do you think you are?” You admonish the man standing in front of you, the mother hen inside showing through even when you feel as though you're about to burst into tears.

“Y’know why I’m here, doll?” Negan asks and you shake your head even though you know he wasn’t expecting an answer. “I brought the kid back. He was at the Sanctuary just hours ago, came shooting up a fucking storm, killed some of my men, too, baby.”

You try to speak but only end up choking on your own breath, panic making your heart swell, and the little choked sound doesn't get passed Negan.

“Hey, he's safe and sound. I didn't hurt him or anythin', just gave him a li’l tour real quick and brought him back,” he lets you know, his gloved thumb rubbing up and down on your left cheekbone.

“Wha-? What?” You whisper, not sure if you're actually talking to Negan or just thinking out loud at this point. How did you not realize he’d snuck out?
“The kid looks badass like that,” Negan says, pulling you out of your contemplation and making your head snap up. “You shouldn't make him cover that shit up, s'fucking gross but it looks fucking cool.”

“Is that why he took it off? Because you told him to?” You surprise yourself when you actually manage to push him off of you with a shove.

“Did you tell him it looks gross?” The amount of disgust in your voice is unprecedented. “Do you have any idea how hard it is for his father to even get him to take care of it? And what about Carl, huh? Don't you think it's hard enough for him to adapt to this without having a grown-ass man telling him that he looks gross? What is wrong with you? The poor kid got shot in the head—”

Your mouth snaps shut, and ears perk up when you both hear Judith cry on the other side of the door and your eyes fall shut, disappointed in yourself for disturbing the little girl’s sleep.

“I got it, it's okay,” you whisper softly to Olivia when you see her standing at the bottom landing of the staircase, ready to come up but clearly uncomfortable with the idea of being anywhere near Negan. If you're being honest, you can't really blame her.

Turning your back on them both, you slowly open the door to Judith's bedroom and rush to her crib, carefully lifting her up and wrapping her in your arms the second you get to her. Softly, you start rocking her in your arms and hum against the top of her head. She’s quick to calm down, her sleep-heavy head limply resting against your chest. You’re relieved to see that she wasn’t completely out of her slumber when you got to her.

“Shh, it's okay, Judy bear. It's okay. I'm sorry,” you coo, leaving a kiss on the crown of her head. “Shh, it's okay. You're okay, princess,” you speak into her hair, your heart reeling when she grabs at you with a limp hand and incoherently babbles.

“Where's Rick?” You hear Negan ask, his strong stubble touching your bare neck, making you jump slightly. You didn't even realize that he was in the room with you, let alone that he was so freaking close to you.

“Outside. Risking his life to get supplies he won't even get to enjoy.” You can’t help the bitterness slipping through when you’re holding the man’s little girl in your arms.

With a sigh, you leave a gentle kiss against Judith's temple and close your eyes to try and take a moment to just be with her and her only, to calm yourself down and to get your mind in the proper place to try and keep the dialogue between you and Negan as calm and civilized as possible.

It's dumb to you but, as you're holding this little baby in your arms, you can't help but feel a deep pain that you just can't shake off.

It’s been a hard couple of days but the hardest one was by far when Denise performed an ultrasound on you, wanting to make sure the swelling in your belly wasn’t anything other than post-trauma and bruising. You can’t even remember that day all that clearly, but you do
remember the gentle nurse struggling to break the news to you as softly as possible without sugar-coating it either.

Turns out, that time you got stabbed for a fucking piece of soap when you were only thirteen was much more traumatic than you thought it could be.

You’ve never wondered why your periods were so fucking painful, the lady who’d explained them to you back then told you that it varied drastically from one woman to the other so you never were too worried about it. You should have been.

Something about something in your reproductive system being fucked to shit, you weren’t paying that much attention, your brain dancing on the line of dissociation as Denise spoke gently to you. You don’t need to know the science behind it, all you’ve retained is that some damages just can’t be fixed anymore and have everlasting consequences.

You softly clear your throat and gently put Judith back into her crib after she fell back into a deep sleep in your arms before quickly wiping away the tear that escaped from your eye, trying your very best to swallow the rest of them back, not wanting to wake the poor little girl again nor for Negan see or hear you cry.

No one but Denise knows and you intent to keep it that way, you don’t want people to have another excuse to baby you.

You keep your back turned to him as you lovingly watch the little girl sleep, her little feet kicking around from time to time and, as you watch them move around, you recall the time Daryl told you that she got it from him. You also remember the way Rick barked out a laugh right after and a “yeah, y’wish,” that made the archer chuckle. The memory makes you smile.

Daryl really loves this kid and it always does something to you whenever you see him play with her. You can tell that he's afraid that he might be doing something wrong, but she’s always so happy around him that it’s hard to think he’ll ever do any wrong in her eyes. Hell, that little girl could turned the most vicious man into a Saint.

Your happy thoughts are cut short when you feel Negan's arms snake around your waist, slightly pulling your shirt up, enough to fully expose your bare thighs and a slight bit of your hips.

You feel your entire body tense up at the initial touch to then relax against his chest. Much to your dismay, your body is betraying your mind and it's kind of fucking things up for you right now. You want to be strong but he’s making it difficult when he’s holding you like he knows what’s going through your head.

“You're good with her, baby,” he whispers against the shell of your ear, his beard grazing the bare skin of your neck.

“She’s just really calm. She's really easy to care for,” you whisper back as calmly as possible, trying not to freak out when you feel his bare hand leave your waist to come up and run through your shortened hair, his thumb going up and down through the buzzed hair covering the back of
your head, especially your neck.

“You look real fuckin’ good with short hair by the way, princess. Plus, it gives me a good excuse to put my hands around your throat, now.” You can’t help the brief flash of panic his words bring.

Though you can’t deny that his voice and words do it for you, the mention of him wrapping his hands around your throat is making a small part of your brain freak out at the lingering memory of him choking you out in his blind rage to the point of almost making you black out from the lack of oxygen.

You swear his words made you feel the ghost of his hand on the column of your throat.

“R-Randall… Randall helped me c-cut ‘em. I- I just… It's s-safer th-that way,” you whisper, not wanting to disturb little Judith again.

“Would ya just take a fucking compliment already, baby girl?” He asks with his stupid cocky smirk still plastered on his lips.

“Princess, you're shaking like a leaf in fucking high wind,” Negan observes with a small chuckle, his voice sounding even rougher than it normally does because he's whispering right against the shell of your ear which makes you shiver against him.

You hate the way your body always reacts to him, but he loves it. He enjoys your hypersensitivity, but he knows damn well that your body being hypersensitive isn't the only reason why you're so responsive to his touch, to him.

He does things to do, he knows it, and it's the most goddamn enjoyable thing to him. Not to you though because you know that he knows. Of course, he fucking knows and of course it feeds his gigantic ego.

“How about we go for a walk? I’ll bring you back to this shithole as soon as you ask me to, princess.” For some reason, you doubt that it’ll be that easy.

“If you wanna talk, we can talk here, Negan,” you try, knowing you won't get very far.

“No, we fucking can't and, yes, I want to fucking talk,” he insists though he has the decency to keep his voice down for Judith’s sake.

“Let me go get dressed,” you sigh. “C’mon,” you whisper, putting a shaky hand on Negan’s chest and moving past him. You wait until he’s out to carefully close the door of the little girl’s bedroom before heading downstairs.

The second you get off the last step, your eyes land on Carl who’s standing by the dinning table, looking the picture of guilt. He’s holding himself abnormally straight and can’t hold your stare which is usually your thing.

*that kid is coming for our brand.*

Olivia’s here too, standing in the kitchen, all-too-interested in the sauce she’s cooking. It doesn’t
matter, it’s not her skin you’re after.

“Y/n, I’m sorry. I-” Carl tries but shuts his mouth when you put a quiet hand up. You can feel Negan standing at your back but ignore him.

“Are you hurt?” You ask him, your voice much calmer and softer than Rick’s eldest expected. “No. Just feel really stupid,” he admits, and you give a nervous little laugh.

“It was. Stupid. What you did? Stupidest thing you could have done with your day.” The kid is about to speak but you beat him to the punch. “What was the plan exactly, Carl?”

“Kill him.” He doesn’t hesitate in his answer and you find your eyes closing tight like you’re physically trying to block out the words. You get where he’s coming from, but there’s just something unsettling about hearing a kid talk that way. Now you understand how all the adults around you felt back in the day.

“He killed one of us, y/n. He steals from us, I- Maggie needs food, we can’t afford to lose supplies anymore. I want him dead,” he resonates like he needs to plead his case. He doesn’t. His actions were reckless and stupid, but his motives are perfectly understandable and honorable.

“I was worried sick about you, Carl,” you let him know, your eyes finding his again and you can tell that he’s feeling guilty.

“Listen here, kiddo,” Negan cuts in, “I already got a shitload of respect for ya so how ‘bout you stop with the threats and just lay the fuck back, huh? Think I got the point.”

“Negan, stop-” Your plea is cut off by an angry Carl. “You think I give a fuck about-”

“Enough! That’s enough! Both of you!” You finally snap, making poor Olivia jump as she's cooking dinner. “Negan, get the hell out of this damn house! Right now!” You demand, shooting him down with your eyes and he actually listens to you.

With a smirk on his lips, he leaves the house, winking at Olivia just to make her let out something between a whimper and a wince and, goddamn- Did you just get jealous?

no, nuh-uh. hell no. get the fuck out of here with that crap.

As much as you hate it, you're pretty sure that what you’ve just felt is jealousy. Your jaw clenching down, your shoulders tensing up and the unreasonable urge to punch to poor woman in the face... Yikes.

Olivia has always been sweet and good to you, yet you felt the need for violence just because of a fucking stupid man. If anything, you should be mad at Negan, not her. This isn't like you and it feels fucking gross.

what the hell is wrong with you? get your shit together, woman. for fuck's sake.

You only relax when the door of the Grimes’ house clicks shut, the air shifting the second Negan is
out of the picture. God, you’d almost forgotten how much this man’s mere presence was.

“I don’t want you to put yourself in danger like that, you hear me?” You turn your attention back to Carl. “He’s not worth it,” you tell him, your voice much softer now that a certain someone’s shadow isn’t looming over you.

“I know. But my family is. You are,” he tells you and, God, it feels like your heart just tripped over itself.

It happens in a flash and you’re suddenly walking across the room to take Carl in your arms, your embrace quickly returned. “Your dad needs you alive and safe, Carl,” you whisper to him. “We win this by sticking together, not going on suicide missions.”

“I’m so sick of it though,” he confesses and a pang of guilt shoots through you. You know you’re not the one who’s brought Negan into those people’s lives but, in your head, it feels like you did.

“I know, but it’ll get better. I swear,” you promise him, your throat a little tight as you speak. “It won’t as long as he’s still breathing,” the kid insists and you pull away, keeping him at arm’s length.

“No one needs to die, Carl. And, if they do, then it’s not your place to make it happen.” He’s about to protest but you beat him to it with a little smile. “I know you’re capable. I know. But you’re still a kid- A teenager. It shouldn’t be your place to do those things.”

Carl’s throat clicks as he swallows with a wavering smile. “You sound like my mom,” he tells you.

You don’t know much about Lori Grimes, but you know how she died, what Carl had to go through, and you know she was a good woman. Carol told you she was one of the best. You would have loved to meet her.

Hearing those words make your heart swell and hurt at the same time and it feels like you’re about to burst.

“I-I’m gonna-gonna go t-talk with him f-for a little bit. I’ll uh- I’ll b-be back... let's say b-before sundown,” you stammer, looking down at the watch around your right wrist. You can’t remember ever taking the damn thing off ever since Jesus gave it to you.

Carl simply nods and you feel a little guilty because it looks like he’s afraid that he may have crossed a line saying what he did when you’re just overwhelmed is all.

“I care about you, Carl,” you let him know, his shoulders relaxing a little. “But no more sneaking out or I’ll hand you over to your dad myself.” He chuckles at that though you both know you’re dead serious.

“Yes ma’am,” he gives you a little salute and you playfully slap his shoulder. “Get something to eat, smartass.”
It took you much longer than you’d anticipated to slip into a bra, pants, socks and jacket, not to mention lacing up your boot was something out of a nightmare, but you eventually got there even with your shoulder complaining the whole way through.

Still, you don’t let your uncomfortableness show as you make your way back down the stairs, smiling a little when you find Carl, Olivia and Judith all seated at the dining table, the little girl sitting on her big brother’s lap.

What alerts you of his presence before you even see him is the way Olivia is carrying herself – the poor woman is as stiff as a cutting board.

Sure enough, you see him sitting at the end of the table when you walk further into the living slash dining area of the house.

“Ah, there she is,” Negan grins when he sees you, a glass of red wine in his hand.

You don’t say anything but keep your eyes glued on Carl’s as you blindly grab for your walkie, tugging the device on the waistband of your jeans.

“Remember the channel?” You ask the eldest Grimes kid and he gives a sharp nod. “Alright, I’ll see you guys tonight.” You finally direct your attention to Negan; “C’mon, let’s let them eat in peace.”

“You sayin’ I’m not good company, doll?” He asks with a quirked-up eyebrow and a smirk- God, you could punch him, but you also find yourself having to keep a little smile at bay.

“No, you’re a joy to be around,” you sarcastically coo at him, though your smile isn’t all that plastic.

Olivia’s eyes widen but Carl smiles at your sarcasm, clearly enjoying seeing you run your mouth to the man he loathes. The man himself chuckling at your wit.

“Allright, damn. Let’s get a move on then, sweetheart,” Negan surrenders as he gets up, downing his glass of wine in one go.

“I’ll be right out,” you tell him, and surprise yourself when you hold his gaze.

“Fine,” he relents, your throat clicking when you see him picking Lucille up. You hadn’t even seen the damned thing. “But move your sweet li’l ass, kitten. I ain’t got all day,” the rugged leader tells you before walking out the house again, this time leaving the front door open.
“Why would you go anywhere with him, y/n?” You hear Olivia ask though she’s keeping her voice quiet, all too aware of Negan standing right outside on the porch.

“Because he makes avoiding him more much exhausting,” you tell her, giving Judith a little smile when she squeals your name.

Walking over to her, Carl lets you take Judith from his lap to give her a quick hug and leave a kiss on the crown of her head. “You all stay safe, alright? If Daryl pops up before I do... Just let him know I'm okay and that I'll be back before dusk, alright?”

“I think he's at Hilltop so, you've got some time before he gets back. But if he does get back before you, we'll let him know, no worries,” the kind sitter assures with a warm smile. “Thank you, Olivia,” you give her a smile and a nod before carefully handing Judith back over to Carl.

“Hey, with or without your bandage, with or without both eyes, you're still the bravest, smartest, coolest person I've ever met, Carl,” you whisper softly only for him to hear. “And the fact that you've survived a shot to the head isn't something you should ever feel ashamed of.”

“Promise you'll come back,” he whispers back to you. “I promise,” you affirm, carefully lifting your right hand up to give him your pinkie, mindful not to pull on your injured shoulder.

1:15 PM //

“I don’t understand you, Negan! You’ve known me, what? Two weeks? Why do you care so much about having me around! We’re strangers!”

It was bound to happen, you knew it was when you accepted going on that damn walk but, now that you’ve reached that point; you can’t remember for the life of you how you even got there.

“Oh, so we’re forgettin’ about the two months we’ve been talking every single goddamn night, sweetheart?” He spits back, clearly getting as aggravated as you. You can’t lie, it feels kind of good to be the one dragging him down to your level for once instead of the other way around.

“C’mon that doesn’t count!” “Why the fuck not?!” “Because you’re not the man who’d made me laugh with stupid puns and read me Forest Gump when we’re face to face and he’s the one I need!” You explode, your heart racing and your cheeks burning.

Your head drops as you try to focus back on your breathing which is ragged and shaky, biting at the right corner of your mouth with a frown creasing your brow when you feel the familiar sting of fresh tears in your eyes.

“This is stupid,” you whisper. “We’ve been here b-before, w-we both know how- how it goes.”

“I’ll leave those dipshits you love alone,” Negan declares out of the blue, almost making you choke on your own saliva. “Wh-What?”

“I’ll leave them to their own goddamn selves if you come back with me, baby,” he clarifies but even then, your brain isn’t sure how to process his words. “N-Negan, that’s- that’s not f-funny, okay? It’s not-”
“I ain’t laughin’, sweetheart. C’mon, you know I have a better sense of humor than that,” he teases with a smirk.

Without you even realizing it, your back straightens, and your eyes narrow a little; your skepticism shining bright. “Wh-What's the catch, Negan?”

“There's no fucking catch, baby girl,” he sighs. “Look, dolly, I don't usually do that type of shit - ever - so... Look, I know that it ain’t the type of generic romantic bullshit people do and what-the-fuck-not but, hey, m'trying here.”

Regardless of his words, you can still feel your gut churning with anxiety. “I don't want this hanging o-over my head,” you tell him, all too aware of the way he works. He's done it before with your right to go outside of the Sanctuary.

“If you ever feel like I'm fuckin' with you about it, then you'll get to break your part of the deal.”

“I... I don't... I- You-You promise?” You ask, your voice barely above a whisper because you're terrified that he might take it all back if you speak too loudly.

“Yes, baby, I fucking promise.”

Shifting on your spot in the middle of the empty country road, you subconsciously bring your arms up to wrap around yourself, feeling the need to cover-up.

This isn’t about you anymore, it's about your friends, the people you care about and, let's be honest, the only people who actually managed to make you feel truly cared for and loved, and that in only three weeks. To have this opportunity- To be holding the possibility of their freedom in your hands? You don't even want to think twice about it, no matter how bad your end of the deal makes your stomach hurt.

“I'll get to see them again, right?” You quietly ask. “I ain’t cuttin’ you off, darlin’, just wanna bring you home,” Negan tells you, but you know it’s never going to be that easy. It never is with him.

He doesn’t want you to just have a room at the Sanctuary; he wants you to stay there. So far, he’s been completely incapable of making a difference between the two. You don’t mind having a room there and you wouldn’t mind going back at the end of each day if you were even allowed to go spend the day outside.

As it were before you left, there was nothing to go back to since you never were allowed to fucking leave in the first place. It’s like telling someone they can’t leave the house to go to work or spend the day out. It’s suffocating and stripping you off a freedom you hold dear.

“You've gotta trust me, sweetheart. When I say 'jump', you say...?” “How high,” you complete him in a whisper, your brain pushing the words out before you even have them properly processed. You can’t believe the way the simple question has triggered the response from your brain.

This is poison and you’re drinking it down like it’s water in the Sahara.

“No more running away?” Negan asks with a small smirk and a tilt of his head. “N-No more
running away but- You have to keep your promise too, Negan.”

You see him extend his hand out towards you and expect him to have you shake on it but watch as he extends his pinkie out like you always do. Mindful of your injured shoulder, you bring your shaky right hand up and hug his smallest finger with your own, the digits tightly squeezing in a silent promise.

You’re a little startled when you look up and find the seasoned Savior looking down at you, his breath hitting your lips which suddenly feel as dry as sandpaper.

Fuck- There’s something intoxicating about this man and having him so damn close to you makes you realize just how bad you’ve been craving him those past months, wishing you could fall asleep in his arms as he told you about his day through a little black box.

In another life, you know Randall would have been it for you. You love him, you really do, and it didn’t take long for you to feel and figure out. You’ve both been dealt shitty hands, but he bounced back where it feels as though you kept getting hurt. You’ve never found your saving grace like Randall has. As much as it stings sometimes, you know it’ll never work. Still, you’ll always love him; that much you know.

It’s so much different with Negan- Negan makes everything hurt and ache but he understands you even though he’s never been through half the shit you have. He knows how to play that tight little ball of anger tucked far away in a corner of your being like a damn instrument, like he knows how to regulate the amount of anger you’ll let slip out without that coil snapping and breaking you in two.

He makes it hurt sometimes but he also makes it good. The last night you’ve spent together was downright blissful, eating and watching an old western in bed before falling asleep in his arms without being afraid or worried of what would come next.

Fuck, he hurt you so bad the next day and there’s no forgiving it, there’s no forgetting it. There’s no explaining nor excusing it either. And you know that’s the peak of abusive relationships but, fuck, he sounded so sincere when he apologized and it wasn’t the guilt your mother would feel for a brief moment of rare sobriety, you know what that sounds like without even having to see it’s face.

He didn’t try to gaslight you, he didn’t even make you a promise that it wouldn’t happen again because he said actions speak louder than words and he could ramble on and on about how it was never going to happen again, it wouldn’t mean shit to you and he knew that.

“Y/n, where’d you go, baby girl?” Negan’s voice pops your bubble and you come back down with a slightly spinning head, your brain on override.

“Take me back to Alexandria, please,” you quietly demand, your request taking him aback. “I want to spend the rest of the day with my friends before I have to leave.”
You can’t help the shaky breath that slips out when he pushes his nose against yours, chestnut orbs trying to find yours. “I’ll bring ya back if you want, but you don’t need to say goodbye, sweetheart.”

“J-Just… please,” you whisper and it’s enough for Negan to make your lips collide in a slow, toe-curling kiss, making you let out the neediest sound your vocal cords could produce.

You want to believe all those pretty words, but he’s made it hard to just trust what he says when he’s turned and taken back so much in the past.

This feeling of uncertainty is a gut-wrenching one and you hate that this is up to him, but you hope that he’ll take that weight off sooner rather than later because he’s the only one capable of doing so.

2:45 PM //

Negan dropped you off a few miles away from Alexandria after you both decided that it might be best not to let anyone see him show up again, he also told you that he’ll be waiting for you tomorrow first thing in the morning, giving you the rest of today to say goodbye.

You know he said that you’ll get to see them again, but you’d rather not give yourself too much hope. Better safe than sorry and all that jazz.

On the way back, as you're looking around, getting lost in the sight of the strong wind making the clouds move above your head, you try to think of a way to break the news to your newfound family.

The mere thought of tomorrow hurts and fills you with anxious energy. It’s going to be hard not waking up to Daryl every morning, but the hardest thing is going to be being surrounded by strangers you know to be mean-spirited after you’ve been showed what it’s like to be part of a real family dynamic.

You have to be brave though; this is for the greater good. Sacrificing your newfound comfort is well worth it when it means that Maggie will get to have enough food to keep the baby she’s carrying and herself healthy now that Negan will stop taking half of Alexandria supplies. It’s worth it because Rick won’t have to constantly worry so much about strangers coming in and hurting the people he loves. God knows the man needs rest.

You don’t think you’ve ever met anyone quite like Rick Grimes and you’d be lying if you said you didn’t look up to the man as a father figure. He’s taught you so much more than you could have ever imagined learning after seven years of surviving all on your own and making each day a lesson to sleep on.

As for Michonne, it’s safe to say that she took on a motherly role for you during the three weeks you’ve spend at Alexandria. The woman is tough, a real survivor, but she has a nurturing nature to her that made the mama bear in her rise after a few conversations with you.
She’s also taught you a whole lot, but differently from Rick. She was more focused on teaching you how to not be so afraid of that anger you keep locked-down tight deep inside, but never let it overtake and control you either.

Michonne is definitely one of the wisest people you’ve ever met and she’s not pulling this crap from books. No, those are things she’s had to learn through the pain of loss and living fueled by anger. If you ever had to have a role model; then she’s it.

Carol, Tara, Sasha, Glenn, Maggie, Carl, Abraham- Fuck, every single person in this community had something to offer you. They all gave you a little something to help you grow and that you’ll always be thankful for and never take for granted.

You’ve gravitated more around Rick’s people because they all know what it’s like living outside of safe walls and houses, but the people of the original Alexandria have also been nothing but kind to you.

Your eyes sting when you look up and you have to clear your throat and blink the tears away before walking the rest of the way to the gates of Alexandria. Just the sight of them in the distance makes you want to run the opposite way.

Daryl is going to kill you. That, or he’ll let you go with a word. You don’t know which scenario hurts the most.

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10:00 PM //

You've been dreading this moment all afternoon. You've been stalling, took your time with it, but, at the end of tonight's dinner, you finally forced yourself to jump the shark and now; here you are.

No one is saying a damn word and it feel as though you could throw up right there and then on Eric’s carpet.

Daryl's eyes are shooting daggers at you. You know he's about to blow a fuse and you're waiting for it to happen, trying to brace yourself for impact though you know from experience that it won't do you much good.

“Fuck that, I'm ain't havin' it,” he finally speaks, his voice sharp. “Daryl-” You try but it’s fruitless. “No!” He snaps, standing up from the couch to pace back and forth in front of the others.
“Please, you don't.” You try one more time. “Nah, I fuckin' understand and I ain't here for it, y/n! You ain't leavin' with this dick! We don't need your help!”

“He said he'd let me visit-” Again, the angry Dixon cuts you off. “I don't give a fuck what he said!” The archer snarls, stopping his pacing to look straight into your teary eyes.

“Y'know what? You wanna leave? Fine, go 'head, but don't you fuckin' come back. You walk out them gates? You're one of 'em and don't want nothin' to do with you,” he spits out, his words stinging like only Daryl can make them.

“Daryl,” Carol scolds when you don't, too focused on trying to process the words that have just been thrown so viciously at you.

“Piss off,” the hunter snarls, completely ignoring his friend as he angrily walks out of Rick's house, slamming the door behind him with so much force that it wakes Judith up even though she's sleeping upstairs, the sound of her cries making you cringe.

“I'm gonna choke him out, I swear,” Rick quietly pests, Michonne squeezing his hand in hers before going to get up.

“I've got it,” Gabriel quietly assures the couple before walking upstairs to put the little girl back to sleep.

You want to burst into tears, want to break everything around you. You want to run away as far as you possibly can and forget all about tonight.

You get Daryl's reaction, you know him, and you know damn well that he didn't actually mean any of what he's just said, that he'll regret it in the morning if not the middle of the night, but he won't take the first step because he's too prideful and you fucking hate him and his fucking stupid attitude.

You have abandonment issues too, but you don't break people in half like that when they're trying to help you even if it means they have won't be around as much anymore.

Before you even realize you've given the command, your legs carry you up and out the door of The Grimes' house and to the middle of the street where your right hand reaches out to grab onto Daryl's.

The hunter turns and you can tell his blood is boiling but you've never been one to let that intimidate you. Not then, and certainly not now.

“M'done talkin' to you,” he bitterly informs you and you ignore the weight in your stomach to focus on the simmering blood beneath your skin.

“Tough shit.” You ignore the looks of the Rick and the others as they stand outside on Daryl's porch, looking on. “If you wanna finish blowing your fuse, by all mean; do it, but if you're done
with the tantrum, then you're gonna hear me out, Dixon. You don't get to just walk away,” you tell him.

He scoffs; “Ain't that what you're doin’?”

“You think I want this!?” You finally break, your eyes caught in a battle with the archer's stormy, blue ones. “I don't know, you fuckin' tell me!” He barks back.

You have to take a second, running a shaky hand across your face and through your hair.

Daryl is the one person who ever could yell at you full volume when you're arguing and not make you flinch at the loudness of his voice. On the contrary, it only fuels your anger and frustration. Like throwing gasoline on a burning house.

“I'm doing what's best for you, you absolute shithead!” It feels like you could pull your hair out of your scalp you're so agitated.

“Don't you bring me into this, I ain't ask for nothin'! You've made that fuckin' decision all by yourself, that's on you, girl!” You can feel something bubbling in your throat but don't get to let it out. “If you wanna go back to that dickhead so fuckin' bad, be my fucking guest! Spent years lookin' for ya, I ain't doin' it again, sunshine.”

A part of your mind registers Glenn's soft "hey, Daryl, come on man," through the buzzing in your ears and you feel a tear slip out as you try to keep as calm as you can not to smack the hunter's face off to the fucking moon.

You barely register the rugged archer turning his back on you again, but your legs follow on their own, your mind struggling to keep up.

Before you know it, you find yourself standing in front of the house you’ve been sharing with Daryl for three weeks now but, this time around, it feels like hostile territory.

When you blink the fuzz away, you meet the youngest Dixon’s stare as he stands in front of his door, looking at you with a concern even his anger can’t hide on the worst days.

“Rick is exhausted,” you quietly point out. “You're all exhausted. Maggie is awaiting a child- People don't feel at home here anymore because of the peanut gallery randomly coming through to take what isn't theirs to have...” You take a deep, shaky breath, your eyes finding Daryl's again and he seems more attentive now, his stance a little more relaxed.

“There's no winning this without bloodshed and I'm so, so sick and tired of those dumb turf wars- I'm not gonna let you, nor your family, get hurt or killed in a suicide mission when I can take that weight off without any of you suffering consequences, Daryl. I can't.” Your voice wavers on the last words, your anger fading into a heart-wrenching sadness that makes your throat tight with the strain that comes with holding back your tears.

“S'your family too," Daryl just as quietly corrects you and you have to bite down on the right corner of your mouth not to burst out into sobs right there and then.
The hunter takes a hesitant step towards you. “I don't want'cha gone,” he whispers, his voice small compared to how loud it's previously been.

“I don't want to be gone,” you tell him just as quietly with a shrug and a watery smile.

You're exhausted, your head hurts, your shoulder is killing you and the big bruise left around the slowly healing bullet wound in your belly is aching- At this point, a leaf grazing you could make you crumble.

“I'm so tired and I- and I-I just... I just want-” The dam breaks then with a sob that makes your tummy jump, your arms coming up to wrap around you, your hands balling into your over-shirt and your head falling down against your chest in an attempt to hide you away.

Your body flinches, more surprised than afraid, when you're suddenly wrapped into the hunter's arms, his embrace tight but gentle all the same. “I'm sorry,” he speaks against the crown of your head, his eyes finding Eric and Aaron's illuminate porch a few houses away. Rick, Michonne and Carol still standing outside.

“I don't wanna leave, D'. I- I like it here. I feel s-safe here, w-with you.”

“I ain't goin' nowhere, darlin','” he assures you, his arms tightening a little around you when you start to shake some more. “You said—” “Screw what I said. M'a dickhead. I get scared and say stupid shit. I should've thrown that at'cha, it's just- I want ya to be happy and safe. I love you, that ain't never changed.”

He feels you reach up to cling to his vest and swears his heart could break. He knows you're terrified of abandonment and he can't believe he let his fear push those words out of him.

“Merle loved ya too, looked for ya every day after that night.”

“He's gone,” you whisper. “He's gone a-and I-I didn't even get t-to say goodbye.”

“Yeah, I know, sunshine. Me neither.”

“I'm sorry, Daryl. God, I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry.” Your balled-up hands tighten on his vest. “I need you t-to be safe. I just want you t-to be safe. I swear that's all I want.”

In your state of mind, you barely even register Daryl’s soft reassurances, let alone realize that the hunter has taken you off the ground and into his arms and is carrying you through the threshold of his house.

You’re crying and clinging to him, terrified that he’ll leave if you so much as loosen your grip on the worn-out leather of his vest, and the heavy clouds in your head only clear when you feel a shift that makes your head spin so much you have to squint against the feeling.

Daryl keeps a careful eye on you as he lays down on the couch with you in his arms, keeping your head against his chest as he settles. He used to do the same thing when you were younger because he knew that hearing his heartbeat helped regulating your own, so he just kept that little trick in
mind for whenever you'd get anxious or upset and it always worked. It still does.

“Hey, you back,” he quietly greets you when you blink up at him, filling showing some sign of consciousness. He knows you’ve struggled with dissociation ever since your father passed and, over the years, he’s learned how to behave around you when it happens.

You give him a silent nod, trying your hardest to ground yourself and adjust to what is a sudden change of scenery to you. Daryl walked and moved to his couch but, as far as you’re concerned, you were standing on his porch before you blinked and spawned on top of him.

“If ever he lays his hands on ya- If he ever hurts ya? I’ll fuckin’ tear him apart limb from limb, y/n. Are we clear? Limb from fucking limb,” Daryl quietly speaks though his words are set in stone.

“Will you let me come and visit you?” You timidly venture to ask, afraid that he might have meant what he’d said earlier on.

“I’ll come get ya myself and you don't show up,” he lets you know with a small smirk, making your heart lighter in a fraction of a second. Leave it to Daryl Dixon to make you feel safe even when you’re not too sure of how the hell you got to where you are.

“Everything hurts so bad,” you admit with a small, tired laugh. “It does? Shit, you need somethin’? I could go get Denise or-” The hunter suddenly panics, his body stiff underneath you.

“No. No, I just- Can we- Can we just stay here, like this, for a bit, please?” You shyly ask, not wanting to come off as needy or push your luck.

“F’course. We can do that,” Daryl assures you as he tightens the grip of his arms around you and plants a lingering kiss to the crown of your head which you melt into with no hesitation.

Those three weeks spent in Alexandria have been the most relaxed you’ve been in years. You’re gonna miss that.

“Who am I gonna share this fuckin' house with when you'll be gone, huh?” Daryl quietly asks, breaking you out of your thought, and, despite his quietness, you can still detect the underlying sadness in his tone that makes you want to vomit with guilt. Tomorrow is going to be Hell.

“I won't be gone forever, you ain't gettin' rid of me that easy, Dixon,” you tease, making him chuckle though you can tell it's heavy. “It'll give you a reason to sleep in your bed- Keep it nice and toasty for me while I can't be here.”

“Smartass,” the hunter mumbles above but you can hear his smile without having to look up.

“You deserve to be happy, D’,” you sleepily whisper, the exhaustion of the day suddenly catching up to you. “So do you, ya dipshit,” Daryl whispers back, chuckling when you give a weak little punch to his chest.
“I’ll be happy later.” You struggle to keep your eyes open. “After... ‘fter you and... yeah,” you trail off, the archer not given a chance to protest when he hears your breathing has evened out.

Sure enough, he finds you already deep asleep when he cranes his neck to look down at you. “Sleep tight, sunshine,” he quietly bids you goodnight before shifting a little under you and settles for the night.

10th April ;
8:15 AM //

You’ve been hugging the passenger side’s window for an hour now, shifting uncomfortably in your seat all under Negan’s slightly amused slash concerned stare. You can’t help it; you don’t know where to put yourself. Everything feels like an effort, you even feel as though you’re blinking wrong.

the awkward energy in this cabin is real and you’re the damn tower emitting it.

There’s something bubbling and sizzling right beneath your skin and it’s making you itchy. The weight at the pit of your stomach is not helping either but, at least, you know what that is. The anxiety of leaving Daryl, you’re one beacon of familiarity and safety left in the world, behind, along with all the others.

You could tell Rosita was itching for a fight, hence why Rick told her to stay indoors, under Olivia’s supervision, while Negan picked you up. Part of you wonders how thing would have played out if she wouldn’t have been kept away, a little smile blooming on your mouth at the thought of Negan getting his ass handed to him by a strong, very much so independent woman- The extreme opposite of what he’s used to for the exception of Faith. You get a feeling her and Rosita would get along great.

The truck suddenly stops, lunching your body forward, Negan's hand finding your torso right when you’re about to smack into the dashboard in front of you.

It takes you a few, your mind only aware of the hand resting right above your cleavage, but you eventually blink the fuzz away and straighten back up, Negan’s hand only withdrawing from you when your back meets the bench-seat’s again.

Looking around, you spot a couple walkers ahead on the road, nothing overwhelming though- Sure as shit nothing he can’t just drive through. With a wince you reach up to rub at your right shoulder, the dig of the seatbelt when you got propelled forward making it sting and ache.
“Negan, what are you doing?” You calmly ask him, though the bubbling beneath your skin now feels like a full-on boil, like lava under your flesh.

“We’re gonna work some of that anger out,” he explains, his hand already on the handle of the driver side's door. “What? I don’t- I’m not-” You go to protest but the seasoned Savior cuts you off with a chuckle. “Yea, you're not angry, I know, darlin’.”

ok, uhm... rude much?

You watch, incredulous as Negan jumps out of the run-down R.V he’s picked you up in, one which you’ve quickly realized used to belong to Rick and his group and it took you even less time to understand that he’d traded his truck for this specific vehicle today to piss people off. It worked.

Your eyes follow him as he struts up to the front of the R.V, his hazel orbs finding your confused one through the windshield with a cocky glint in them.

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“You’ll figure it out, sweetheart,” is the only warning you get before the walker that had stumbled the closest is literally shoved your way with a forceful push from Negan.

The moving cadaver almost trips over itself and you’re not doing much better even though your brain is of the fully, non-rotten, functioning kind. Your hands shake as you hastily snatch Lucille from Negan’s hand with a glare, your shoulder screaming when you bring your right arm back to brace the bat.

Through gritted teeth, you take the first swing at the walker, readjust your aim and bring the wired part of the weapon back down on the rotten skull until there isn’t much left of it and the creature limply falls at your feet.

The screaming pain stabbing into your shoulder and the sudden surge of adrenaline in your system make your ears rings something vicious, the sound louder and more high-pitched than usual. It went from little bees to a shit ton of pissed-off mosquitoes in your ears.
Still, even through the deafening sound, can you still hear the very distinct one of bones breaking and the disgusting, squelching one of flesh ripping under the pressure of the violent swings you take at walkers you can’t even see, Lucille’s barbed-wire tearing them apart.

You don’t know how to gain back control of yourself and you’re scared shitless because you’re clearly not the one behind the wheel at the moment. Negan ends it all when he stabs the three remaining walkers before turning to you to show off his pearly whites in a wolfish grin.

“There she is,” he leers and watches as you drop Lucille like you’ve been burned, your eyes glassed over with tears and your pupils dilated by adrenaline.

You’re out of breath, covering in fresh-ish blood and aching all over, your throat tight as you struggle to come back down from whatever just happened to you.

You’ve never felt so damn out of control in your life, it’s like you weren’t even there. This was different from the way you usually dissociate. You couldn’t see clearly but your earring was as sharp as ever, you could feel too- Feel the weight of Lucille in your hands, the way your shoulder stung with every move and made your head hurt… But you couldn’t control anything, couldn’t make yourself stop, and that’s fucking terrifying.

From the corner of your eye, you can see Negan intently watching you, like he’s waiting for something- You know he is. He’s waiting for you to blow a fuse or something. You should, but you can’t.

All the pain you’ve been holding in for weeks now, the grieving you’ve had to do in silence- Having a child was never in your mind, you’re too young and, regardless of that, your trauma has completely crushed, killed and buried any thought of ever having one, but to have that choice ripped away from you has been much more soul-crushing than you could have ever anticipated.

You can still feel that pain you felt in your chest when Denise brought you up to speed as gently as she could. You felt crushingly alone in that moment; sitting in the middle of Alexandria’s infirmary.

The gentle nurse told you that she’ll always be there if you needed to talk and you’d acknowledge her kind invitation with a quiet nod, your voice hiding away. You did go to her the next day, but you panicked and simply asked her to please keep that information to herself, which she promised you she would, instead of actually speaking to her about how crushed you felt.

You never told anyone, kept it in for weeks, silently cried into Daryl’s pillow at night and always walked out of there with a smile in the morning, acting as if your head wasn’t pounding from all the crying you’d been doing through the night.

“Go ahead, doll, fuckin’ snap, I know you need to. You’ve got so much fuckin’ anger in your li’l body, I can see it from here. You gotta let that shit out, s’unhealthy to keep it in, baby,” Negan pushes, keeping an attentive eye on you as he speaks.

“Negan, please, s-stop.” What you needed to come out as assertive and strong comes out as a
broken plea. “You just bashed, what? Seven walkers' heads in? For what, huh?” He ignores your words and closes the gap between the two of you. You don't move a single inch, going against every single instinct you have.

“I'm gonna tell you what for, baby. It's 'cause you're fuckin' pissed. You're pissed beyond fuckin’ belief and you don't fuckin’ know how to deal with it, do ya? You're angry. Yeah, you're real fuckin’ angry, aren’t ya? And you're scared of that, right? You're scared of the things you might do? Is that it, baby girl? Are you afraid that you might hurt someone? Or are you just gonna keep it all bottled inside your pretty li’l head and let it all out on your own goddamn self later on? Is that the fucking plan? Go home and cut yourself? Y'know it's not fuckin’ happenin’, right, baby?”

“Please s-stop.” You can feel your hands itching to come up and conceal your ears. You have that scary urge to hold your breath until you see black spots. You haven’t felt so overwhelmed in such a long time, you’re not sure how to handle it.

“Let it out, y/n,” he insists, his voice ringing in your ears like a devil on your shoulder. “C'mon, princess, let it the fuck out. Do it,” he orders once before stepping away from you. “Do it right fuckin’ now! Don't ya make me repeat my goddamn self!”

“STOP! STOP IT!” You finally bend “Why can't you just leave me alone! What did I ever do to you? You have plenty of women at home already, why isn't that enough?!“ You cry out in anger, hot tears streaming down your face, leaving clean trails through the blood splattered on your face on their way down.

“It fucking hurts!” You scream out, unconsciously bringing your shaking hands up to pull at your hair. “I'm so fucking stupid! I hate myself! I'm such a fucking moron, I can't understand it- I hate it! I hate it! I hate it! I'm sick and disgusting and I hate myself so much!” You exclaim, tugging on your messy strands to fight of the urge to just curl-up into a tight little ball and let the world around you melt away.

“I wish I could hate you as much as I hate me,” you whisper, the anger suddenly draining from you, your hands falling from your hair, your scalp stinging from the constant tugging, as tears fall free from your eyes one right after the other.

Your cheeks are squished as Negan’s hands come up to frame your face and lift it up to him, frowning when he sees your tear-soaked face and the pain and anger dilating your pupils as you frantically look everywhere but directly at him.

“How hard was that, baby girl? Did it hurt? Does it hurt right now? 'Cause it fuckin' should, it should sting like a bitch and make ya wanna hurl,” he whispers, letting his forehead drop against yours though you still refuse to look up at him.

“S’just you and me here, sweetheart, s'okay to let go. S'just me, s'just for daddy's eyes to see 'n' keep to himself. I ain't never gotta let anyone have this part o'you, y/n, that's for me and me only.”

“How many times did- How-” You try, you try really hard to form that one goddamn sentence, but you're scared. You're afraid because you know that you're not ready for the answer. You know
that, deep down, you don't want to know. You really don't.

"Not every night," he quietly confesses, his hands falling from your face, already knowing what your question was going to be. The sorrow and disgust in your voice when you tried to formulate it gave it away.

*yup, okay, that hurts. ooh shit, that actually hurts like a bitch...*

"If- If I g-go back, I wa-want you to l-let me be. I won’t- I won’t go back t-to R-Randall, but I want him s-safe."

"Don't be fucking stupid, doll-" "M'not yours and you're not mine," you cut him off, trying your hardness to sound sharp and sure of yourself but feeling your throat flutter at the end of your sentence.

You’ve never, ever thought that saying those words would hurt you so bad. You thought you were prepared yet, in the very back of your mind, you’ve been holding on to false hope that he might reciprocate. It was naive, yes, but, for a while, it made you feel a little better, helped you through the shit-storms he's put your through.

"I can't, s'not happening, doll."

"Why-" you take a deep, shaky breath. Why can't he let you have that one little thing? Why does he always make sure that you're alone and only for him to have access to? "Then let me go back to my friends. Let me go back to Alexandria and be happy, please,” you try to bargain.  “You're hurting me, Negan, and, in all honesty, I don't know how much more of you I can take,” you admit in a whisper, looking down, unable to look at him, before wiping away your tears, smudging the blood on your face.

"Hey, baby," Negan disturbingly softly calls out, his hands framing your face once again to bring it back up and make you look up at him, his thumbs swiping across your cheeks to wipe your tears away.

"Breathe, sweetheart, it's okay," he coos, carefully examining your tired and bloody, tear-streaked face.  “I know I’ve fucked up, that's all I ever fucking do with you, baby girl, and- I'm fucking sorry. I know I'm fucking hurting you, I'm a fucking asshole and I don't know what the fuck to do with the shit I’m feelin’ but, goddamn, I felt so fucking empty when you left and I felt like a fucking idiot for feeling that way because I don't fucking do that; s’not me... at least it fucking wasn't ‘til you showed up.”

You shyly look up at him underneath your lashes, tears still steadily dripping from your eyes.

“You're so fucking pretty. My pretty baby,” he whispers, his thumbs still absently rubbing soothingly across your cheeks.

“I'm fucked up and I'm sorry you have to deal with my shit, baby. Your li’l heart’s already been through enough shit- You’ve already been through enough fuckin’ shit, and I shouldn't add up to it, it ain't fair, I know that but, goddamn, you're makin' me lose my fucking mind, girl.”

Negan stands there for a bit, starring at you, a little worried over how badly you’re shaking. He
doesn’t know what to do to make you better.

Once again, he’s forced you over the edge without knowing how to put the pieces back together once you’ve fallen and crashed.

“I had n-no marks out there,” you finally speak up even though it’s really quietly so. “I felt lost a- and guilty, and you... you weren’t there.”

He silently watches as you shyly look up at him with teary eyes. “You weren't there, Negan, and it-it scared me and- I thought that i-if I changed something a-about me then I'll be able t-to shake you off but- It didn't work 'cause it's not about me... M'scared,” you whisper the last word, your voice tight from the constant straining in your throat.

At this point, it doesn't take much for the coil to snap and you break down into tears again, your body flinching when Negan pulls you in and lifts you up into his arms, your legs thoughtlessly wrapping themselves around his waist, your arms folded between your torsos, and your head hiding away in the red scarf around his neck. Of course he’s wearing a scarf in spring.

“M'here now, baby,” he whispers against the side of your head. “You ain't got shit to be scared of, alright? I got you, princess, it's okay. Shh, you're okay, baby,” he coos when you sob into his neck, the voice only barely muffled by his scarf. “Shh, c'mon now, pretty girl, you know I fuckin’ hate it when you cry.”

no, actually.

You cry yourself out into the red cotton around Negan’s neck, the fabric quickly soaking up your tears but he doesn't seem to mind at all, he just keeps on rocking you back and forth, gently hushing you until he starts to whisper stupid jokes into your ear and finally gets what he wants; a giggle, a real one.

“I'll make it all better. Y'know I will, baby girl,” he says before pressing a kiss to the crown of your head. “But, right now? All I fucking want is to take you home, take care of you, take a warm fucking bath with you and have a li’l talk, a calm one. Y’think you can do that for me, baby?”

You slowly push your head out of hiding to look at him and nod your head, your hands softly sliding up his neck to get into his hair, giving the tiniest of tugs and he seems to understand what you're silently asking from him.

With a shit eating grin, Negan pushes his head closer to yours to capture your lips with his, one of his hands snaking to the back of your head while the other is holding you to him, his arm right beneath your butt-cheeks.

This is the most chaste kiss you’ve even shared with him and it makes your heart clench in your chest it feels so right.

You know that you'll get sick of getting hurt over and over again eventually, you know you will, and you're bracing yourself for that day to come, but you'd be lying if you said that you hadn't been trying to keep on doing your very best to try and push it away as far as possible, to make the fucking
You don't know what this man wants from you, but you're willing to stick around until he figures things out, at least for now.

That’s the scariest part to you; he's the one in control here. You've lost grip on this whole situation the moment he first kissed you and you know that; he probably does to. But you also know that, if he really wants you to be his and his only, if he really cares about you, he'll do what needs to be done. If not, then, you keep Rick's words in mind.

You're not alone anymore and Negan won't get to make you believe so ever again.

Chapter End Notes

Hi, it me again. Just a quick PSA. THIS IS PURE FICTION, AN OUTLET FOR ME TO EXPRESS SOME SHIT I STRUGGLE WITH DUE TO MY VERY OWN TRAUMA. YOU SHOULD BY NO MEANS STAY WITH SOMEONE IF THEY EVER PUT THEIR HANDS ON YOU. THERE IS NO EXCUSE FOR THEIR BEHAVIOR. WHETHER IT'S YOUR SIGNIFICANT OTHER OR A FAMILY MEMBER, THEY HAVE NO BUSINESS LAYING HANDS ON YOU.

AGAIN; THE ORIGINAL POINT OF THIS ENTIRE STORY WAS FOR ME TO EXPRESS SOME THINGS THAT ARE DIRECTLY LINKED TO MY TRAUMA, THINGS I NEVER TALK ABOUT BECAUSE I DON'T KNOW HOW TO, BUT THE STORY ITSELF STAYS SOMETHING OF FICTION. I AM COMPLETELY, A HUNDRED PERCENT AGAINST ROMANTICIZING ABUSE, WHETHER IT'S VERBAL, MENTAL AND/OR PHYSICAL.
Old Wounds, New Feelings

Chapter Notes

[UPDATED SEPTEMBER 4. 2019]

TRIGGER WARNINGS; TALK OF BODY IMAGE ISSUES/DEEP INSECURITIES, PHYSICAL ASSAULT, AND BRIEFLY MENTIONS OF PAST CHILD-ABUSE/NEGLECT.

A/N; Anyway, so, the first part of this is pure porn… Yea.

THIS CHAPTER DEALS WITH HEAVY SELF-ESTEEM AND BODY IMAGE ISSUES. JUST TO CLARIFY! Y'ALL ARE BEAUTIFUL NO MATTER YOU'RE SHAPE, WEIGHT, HEIGHT, ETHNICITY, THE GENDER YOU IDENTIFY AS, IF YOU DON'T IDENTIFY TO ONE, AND SEXUAL/ROMANTIC ORIENTATION. BODY POSITIVITY IS FOR E V E R Y O N E. IN THIS STORY, THE OC IS MEANT TO BE A SOFTER GIRL AND HER GETTING VALIDATED IS NOT AN ATTACK ON SKINNY, MUSCLY NOR "NORMAL" WOMEN. Y'ALL ARE BEAUTIFUL TOO. Also, hi, a lot of background(-ish) characters are here to represent other "types" of people.

‘K, I'm done being a mom now. Y'all stay safe. Enjoy! -if you can-

See the end of the chapter for more notes

11:00 AM //

You don't know what to feel; satisfaction for finding an harmless way to help Daryl and his family, sadness for being back to this damned place, or guilt for falling right back into Negan’s arms with no consideration whatsoever for all the efforts you’ve had to make to actually get out of this whole situation in the first place.

two months… i’d say we've had a good run... though you fucked it all up in the end...

You feel like crap as you let Negan carry you around the place, his breath hitting your bare neck as your head rests heavily in the dip of his shoulder, your eyes screwed shut. You're trying hard not to let yourself cry again, trying to forget where you are and why, but his smell, his touch, his breath and the scratch of his stubble rubbing against your skin all keep you from doing so.

Your entire being is in pain and you want nothing more than to numb it all. You want it to stop. You need it to stop.

You hate to admit it, but you wish Negan would have snapped at you after your outburst earlier on the way back. You don't know why but, because he hasn’t, you feel as though you're in the
wrong. It feels like there's a tension left between the two of you, like he's ready to drop a bomb on you the second you'll get out of line again.

You need him to let his anger out if he has any in him, which you know he probably does, and you don't care if it hurts you when he does. You need it to reassure yourself that nothing has been left unsaid and that he won't lose his shit on you for no goddamn reason because he would have kept that anger bottled up for too long.

It scares you. The fact that he didn't blow a fucking fuse on you scares the living hell out of you and you know that's not normal but it's there and you're forced to feel this suffocating feeling of guilt mixed with sheer, nauseating anxiety.

His grip on you is tight but it's possessive; not mean or angry. You can't help the mess happening in your stomach as you let yourself relax a little against his chest.

"Thatta girl," you hear him coo as soon as he feels you going the tiniest bit laxer against him, a smirk apparent in his voice.

You have to say, the fact that he knows you so well, that he knows your body so well, freaks you out a little. He always knows when you're nervous, angry, upset, excited, anxious or happy, sometimes before you even get the chance to feel it yourself.

What really gets to you though, is that you've come to realize; he's also the only person who knows how to reassure you, comfort you, make you blow a fucking fuse (he's specializes in that one), relax you and make you laugh even when you don't feel like it. It scares you how much control he actually has over you if you really think about it.

It's odd, you never thought that this man could ever be anything close to good for you- Though, let's be honest, when it all comes down to it, you know the bad easily outweighs the good, you're not stupid. The two of you did go through a lot of changes since you've first met three months and a day ago -yes, you've been counting- and there's no denying that you're not in the same place you used to be. After all, you two did have a real fucking rocky start, there's no denying that.

"What'cha thinkin’ about, angel?" Negan asks, his gravelly voice pulling you out of your thoughts.

"How much of a pain in my butt you are," you whisper, giggling when you hear him chuckle, his chest vibrating with the sound.

"Aw, c'mon, baby, you gotta give a man some credit. I went goddamn soft on you and God fucking knows that I'm anythin' but whenever you're around." You don't say anything back, just bury your head into the crook of his neck and let yourself blush furiously.

"M'tired," you whimper into his neck, making him chuckle some more. "Yeah, no shit, baby. Don't worry, daddy's gonna take care of ya," he whispers right into your ear, kissing your temple before getting an even tighter grip on you and pushing you further against his chest which you didn't think was physically possible at this point, but you're not complaining.

He carries you the rest of the way to God knows where and your head only snaps up to look at your
surroundings when you hear a door being locked and a certain smell invades your nostrils. You know that smell; it's Negan's. It's all Negan.

You look around and it doesn't take you long to realize that he's dragged you back into his apartment, the same place he locked you in almost three months ago now after he'd almost choked you out, and you can feel the knot in your stomach tightening.

“Y-You can p-put me down n-now, Negan,” you quietly let him know, wishing you could make your voice firmer.

He doesn't say anything, he actually completely ignores your words and carries you to the bathroom through his bedroom and you can't help but shift uncomfortably when you spot the big bed that takes up most of the room, jealousy and hurt taking over as your mind reminds you of the other women he's been with while you were gone.

“Negan- Put me down,” you repeat, this time more firmly, desperate to get a little space from him because you can’t think straight.

“Would ya fuckin’ relax for a second, doll?” He sighs and rolls his eyes though he does let go of you.

Negan waits for you to find your balance once your feet find the carpeted floor before giving you a challenging look. “Go ahead, then. You wanna be a big girl and do shit all by yourself? Go ahead,” his voice is calm but daring.

do not take one fucking step, y/n. you can't feel your fucking legs so just admit that today ain't the day and don't give him the satisfaction of seeing you fall flat on your ass, i swear to god-

You know he's right; your body is aching and way too sore to actually be able to carry you, at least not as steadily as you need it to, but your stubborn nature isn't having it. So, with your stubborn streak in full gear, you naturally decide to do the complete opposite of what your own brain is screaming at you to do- You take a step forward.

You barely manage to get to the sink before your legs completely give out underneath you and you're that close to falling flat on your ass when Negan’s hands wrap themselves around your waist to secure you.

i wish i could disown you sometimes.

You’re so damn embarrassed that you can’t even look up, instead, you keep your eyes down to look at your dirty combat boots like they're the next best thing.

“You gonna tell me what's goin' on with you, baby? Or am I gonna have to get that shit out of you again?” Negan inquires, his voice low against the shell of your right ear and, no matter how hard you try, you can't help the shivers running down your spine and you know he can probably feel them.

“Why are you being s-so sweet?” You ask in a whisper, still looking down at your black footwear. You realize how fucked-up it is for you to think that way, but his calm is perturbing you.
“'Cause I don’t see a fuckin’ point in bein’ mad right now, darlin’,” he calmly replies.

When you slowly lift your head back up, you have to screw your eyes shut for a second at the sight of him so damn close to you, holding you from behind and looking straight back at you through the mirror.

“I don’t know what it is, but I know somethin’s hurtin’ up there,” Negan nods at your head and your loud, nervous, swallow lets him know he’s hit something. “Yea, and it ain’t just you bein’ worried I’m gonna pull the rug beneath your feet,” he states more than he asks but you nod regardless.

“I just- Please don’t use this against me.” Your plea is quiet, but it still reaches the man standing at your back loud and clear as thunder. “I’ll give a-all the rest away just… just, please, don’t hurt me like this.”

Something in Negan’s head mocks him with an obnoxious “wow, that’s how bad you’ve fucked her up. How good does that feel, huh?”

“Listen, baby girl,” he starts with a clear of his throat, keeping your back flush against his chest as he keeps eye contact with your reflection in the mirror, “I never do that kind of shit, ever, so, how about you just take it for what it is and stop overthinkin' shit for once, huh?”

“That's ea-easy for you t-to say,” you point out with a whisper before dropping your head back down, not able to keep up with the intensity of his stare any longer.

“Yea, you’re right, it is. I don’t have the overactive noggin you do, darlin’, and I know s’hard for ya to just shut that shit down, but you’re gonna have to learn to let go,” he explains before kissing the side of your neck, the little whimper you barely manage to stifle making a grin sprout on his lips.

“When I say ‘jump’, you say...” Negan trails off, tightening his grip around you when you complete him with a soft “how high?”

“Good girl. Now, are you gonna let me clean you up and take care of ya, or d’you want us to argue about the fuckin’ weather, too, doll?” He teasingly asks with a smirk.

don’t laugh.

“W-Well, what if I wanna argue about the stupid weather?” You sass with a small smile. “Oh, sweetheart,” he chuckles, “you ain’t doin' this shit to me, no fuckin' way.”

Carefully, the seasoned Savior turns you around to face him and kisses your forehead, making your eyes flutter at the gesture, before carefully lifting you up onto the bathroom's marble countertop, a just-as-fancy-looking sink sank in the middle.

You take some time to look around the room as Negan turns his back to you to and dig around for some medical supplies to clean your wounds.
You’ve already been here but never really took the time to take it all in. It's all so luxurious looking compared to the industrial look of the living area of his apartment. White marble tiles are covering the floor, there's a huge mirror adorned with a gold frame on the wall right behind your back, a huge, clean, white bathtub, which you blush at the mere sight of as it reminds you of the last night you’ve had with him.

The shower is protected by glass doors and you remember how awful it felt using the communal showers the morning after having used this one. It’s almost laughable how clearly you remember just how good the water pressure felt on your skin.

*how can this man ever complain about anything?*

You've never lived in any kind of luxury, ever, and you have to admit that it feels kind of wrong that this type of bourgeoisie still exists in this ruin of a world you're living in. It just feels unnecessary, vain, and pretty damn stupid.

“Alright, baby, lemme see you,” Negan demands as he puts a bunch of medical stuff down on the counter next to you and kneels down to take your boots and socks off, carefully inspecting your ankles.

“S’weird to see you on your knees,” you quietly tease, referring to the stupid habit he has to always make people kneel in front of him like he's all that.

“That mouth o' yours is gonna get you into some shit, baby girl. Y’realize that?” He warns with a chuckle, but you know he means it.

Negan stands back up and takes a good long look at your face, inspecting it from every angle, before reaching for your jeans. Immediately, you tense, and your hands shoot down to grab his wrists, your short nails digging into his skin.

Your breathing is a little frantic and your eyes wide when he looks up at you. “S’alright, doll,” he coos. “Everythin’s alright, I just gotta take a look at’cha,” he slowly explains, speaking like he would to a wild animal.

You’re not budging though so he takes a different approach. “Alright, s’alright, baby girl,” he assures you, keeping his eyes on yours. You look the picture of a deer caught in a truck’s headlights. “D’you wanna get ‘em off yourself?” You shake your head. “Okay, then will you let me take ‘em off? I promise I ain’t gonna hurt ya, darlin’. Just need to make sure everythin’s okay.”

The click of your throat echoes in the bathroom before you silently nod your consent, your hands shaking as they hesitantly free Negan’s wrists and come down to grab onto the rounded edge of the marbled counter in a white-knuckled grip.

The usually ruthless leader is careful as he moves, watching the way your eyes follow his every movement. He makes sure to make it clear to you where he’s heading before getting there and then gives you a little time to get comfortable with his hands on either side of the brass button of your jeans before undoing it. The zipper follows, the sounds of the steel teeth parting making your breath pick-up a little and Negan hushes you as he gently slips the piece of denim off of you,
letting it drop to the floor without a care.

You immediately feel extremely uncomfortable and try to hide your thighs. He only indulges you for a minute before peeling your hands away and putting them back down on each side of your legs, your fingers quick to get back to white-knuckling the edge of the counter.

Regardless of how tender the touch is, you flinch and tense when Negan reaches out to run his hands up and down the smooth skin of those thighs you’re so insecure about.

“I fuckin’ love your thighs, baby girl. They’re so fucking soft and full.” You internally cringe at that, not liking him mentioning your chubbiness oh so casually because it’s unsettling to you. “They ain’t nothin’ for you to be ashamed of, darlin’,” he finishes, his voice raspier than it natural already is.

Keeping his eyes on your face, though you’re doing your best not to make eye contact with him, he carefully reaches for the hem of your top to get rid of it and gives a little disappointed exhale when your hands find his wrists again, your eyes much more frightened this time around when they find his.

Negan keeps his calm and patiently goes through the same process. He assures you that everything is okay, he’s not going to hurt you, and asks you if you’d like to take the top off yourself – he gets the same answer – before asking you if it’d be okay for him to, which you, this time around, take much more time and reassuring to agree to.

Still, your hands shoot up multiple times as he slowly lifts your shirt off and, every time, he lets you compose yourself and waits for your hands to come back down before resuming. That goes until the garment is off and carelessly thrown on the floor to join your jeans, socks and boots.

The second your shirt is off; he sees you fighting the urge to curl up on yourself. You’re so damn terrified that you can’t even lift your arms up to cover yourself.

“Tell me what it is you don’t like about your tummy, baby,” he demands, and you swear you could cry you feel so embarrassed.

“S’not like-like the o-other girls’,” you quietly tell him. “And that makes it bad?” He asks and you silently nod. “Why’s that, darlin’? Why are theirs good and not yours?”

“Cuz it’s not,” you point out in a whisper. “It’s not what?” Negan insists. “Normal,” you reply, your voice cracking a little. “And why the fuck not? Why should yours be the abnormal one?”

“Fat.” A tear escapes you, hating that you’re being made to talk about the one thing you always make a point to ignore. “It doesn’t look like anything, s’all pudgy and there’re r-rolls a-and marks…” You trail off with a strained sigh, trying not to completely lose your composure. He’s seeing your belly before, but it’s completely for you this time around.

“It looks like a belly, darlin’. Just ‘cause it’s soft doesn’t make it ugly, first of all, and neither do those rolls and marks you hate. Being a soft, fuller girl doesn’t make ya ugly, sweetheart, you need to understand that. Anyone who’s ever made ya feel bad for it can go suck a flaccid cock.”
His hands immediately grab yours to keep you from covering yourself up which you were just about to do. “Hey, listen to me, y/n,” Negan demands, and you reluctantly oblige him, your eyes watery as they met his. “You’re not repulsive, you ain’t some sort of oddity just ‘cause you ain’t skinny or whatever the fuck. I fuckin’ love how soft you are and it ain’t some gross-ass fetish shit- I mean, I do love some nasty shit but I kinda draw the line at fetishizing body types ‘n’ shit.”

“People do that?” You timidly ask, your cheeks darkened. “Oh yea, sweetheart, you’d be surprised the shit people get off on,” he casually informs you, chuckling when you whisper a soft “oh.”

“That tummy deserves some lovin’, baby girl,” his voice is so low and rough by now that it's covering your skin with goosebumps and making your legs shake

He's not touching you; he's just looking at you, and you don't think your cheeks have ever burned so damn hot in your life.

“There’s so much strength behind that softness, I know you know it too, darlin’. Why don’t ya think about that every time you feel like hatin’ that body o’ yours?” He whispers as he talks but his voice is so rugged that he might as well be shouting. “Think about all the shit it carried ya through. How many time d’you get beat to shit? Shot? Stabbed and dragged through the fuckin’ mud, huh? That body take bullets for ya, sweetheart,” he points out.

His hands carefully let go of yours and you twitch and whine low in your throat when Negan brings them up to gently run up and down your sides. His eyes keep on going back and forth between your timid ones and your bra-clad breasts heavily moving up and down as you struggle to breath properly.

Neither of you says a word, you just keep looking at each other and you've got to hand it to yourself; this is the first time you've held eye contact for so long without feeling like crying or awkward about it. For some reason, you can't look away- You don't really want to actually, because looking down would mean looking at the hands roaming over your barely covered body.

“You've pulled through, though, darlin’,” he finishes his thought and you quietly nod, your brain slowly processing the words.

Your body jumps again when Negan's hands snake around your waist and up your back, his eyes staying on yours the whole time, making sure that you're okay with what he's doing but, if you're being completely honest, not only are you completely frozen on the spot, you're also not a hundred percent sure of where this is all heading.

That is until you feel your bra snap open, the straps loosely slipping off your shoulders and you don't dare to move by fear that your bra might completely fall off if you do. Yet, when Negan hooks one of his fingers right in the middle of the piece of lingerie, you don't fight him.

You let him pull the material off your shoulders, internally screaming as you feel the straps sliding against your arms the whole way down, almost tauntingly so, and watch as he carelessly throws the piece of fabric on the ground. You're surprised but also extremely intimidated by the fact that his eyes still haven't moved, they're still looking straight into yours and you know that's his way of making sure that you're okay.
When you don't say nor do anything to stop him, he tries to gently drag you to him but, Negan being Negan, ends up showing much more greed and lust than he first intended to as his hands wrap themselves around the back of each one of your thighs before forcefully dragging you across the marbled counter until you're sitting right on the edge of it.

Neither of you breaks the silence in the room as you keep your eyes locked together, until his finally give yours a break to find your pierced breasts which he seems to enjoy a whole lot. So much so that, not even a second ticks by when you see him leaning down, a needy whimper leaving your mouth the moment his lips wrap themselves around one of your already swollen nubs.

You can't really control the way your legs wrap themselves around his waist all on their own and one of your hands immediately finds refuge at the back of his head, your nails scratching his nape, making him groan against your oversensitive bud, the raw sound only causing your legs to tighten around him and your fingers to dig a little deeper in his flesh.

“N-Negan…” you trail off not sure what you even wanted to tell him in the first place anyway. “What is it, princess?” He asks as he lets go of your left nipple with an almost obscene popping sound only to go and kiss the middle of your chest.

He doesn't even wait for you to actually answer him before his mouth almost hungrily wraps itself around your right nipple to give it the same treatment he gave its twin.

“I-I just- I-” you try to tell him that you don't know what to make of what he's giving you right now but it's all too much for you to even form a sentence and you don't know if that's normal or not. Every little atom in your body feels alight and you don’t know how to deal with how overwhelming it all is.

“You're fucking soaked, baby girl,” he growls out, his voice low and quite frankly intimidating, and you immediately feel like a child getting scolded even though it wasn't his attention to make you feel that way. You feel as though you've done something wrong and Negan immediately catches on.

“Hey, s'not a bad thing, baby. You didn't do anythin’ wrong,” he assures you before giving a low, deep chuckle. “Though, good girls don't do behave like that now, do they?”

“I-I don’t- I don't kn-know,” you whimper, barely making it through the damn sentence as Negan keeps on rubbing the pad of his finger on your swollen clit.

“No, sweetheart, they fucking don't. Y'know what else good girls don't fucking do?” He asks, his voice getting even lower, and you realize that, right now, right fucking now, is the moment he's decided to lecture you for running away, for being around Randall too much, for talking back to him, and you fucking hate him for that. Although, you can't really concentrate on feeling hatred for him when he switches the finger working on your sensitive bud with his thumb only to press the pad of the big digit flat against your clit, completely covering it and rubbing circles on it at a deadly, slow pace, leaving you a whimpering, choked-up mess.
“They don't fuckin' run away from home, baby.” You can tell that he's angry and you don't know if his lust is going to be a calming factor or if it’s only going to agitate him even further. “I'm supposed to be the one takin' care of you, princess. That's all fucking me, not Randall, not Dwight, not Simon, not Faith- Nobody else but me. That's my fuckin' job, we clear?” The latter then.

“Y-Yes,” you compliantly whisper, one of your shaking hands reaching down to hold onto the wrist the hand Negan has in your panties is connected to, but he doesn't let up and that's fine by you because you're not even sure if you want him to stop anyway. All you know for certain is that you need to touch him. You need something to keep you grounded.

“Who're you talking to, sweetheart?” He asks as he finally brings his head back up to look at you, his lips leaving your throat and you have to fight a disapproving whimper at the loss, his eyes darker as they find yours, and that's enough to turn you to putty in his hands though you both know you were done for the moment he'd touched your thighs.

“Y-Yes, d-daddy. M'sorry,” you rectify yourself, your voice unsteady as you do your best to hold his gaze. “Good girl,” the man praises, smirking when he feels your clit swell at the praise.

He's not stupid, Negan quickly figured out your need for validation, but he also knows that it's not sexual, if anything, it's a great source of anxiety for you. Still, seeing and feeling that need carry through into a more intimate setting, and the way your body reacts to it, is enough to make him high.

You give a little yelp when, with a single hand, Negan rids you of your panties and brings your feet up onto the counter, letting you brace them right at the rounded edge. “Keep 'em there, kitten,” he demands, and you oblige him even though you feel the urge to shift and hide.

You’re obscenely opened in this position and you quickly realize that’s the point, but it makes your cheeks burns nonetheless.

Although, you quickly forget about your insecurities when Negan’s thumb resumes its pattern on your engorged clit and, this time around, it feels as if you’ve just shoved your fingers into an electrical outlet. You don’t realize it, but that’s because, with your legs stretched on either side of you the way they are, the hood normally protecting the oversensitive bundle of nerves has been pulled back, leaving it much more vulnerable.

“D'you know how fucking angry I get at the thought of someone else cutting your damn hair? Helping you do shit I’m supposed to be there for?” His free hand settles right below your jaw, keeping you from looking away as he scolds you. “Cleanin' your fuckin' wounds? Making you laugh? You have no fucking idea how much that pisses me off, baby. I can't fucking stand it. You're mine,” he firmly reminds you before crushing his lips to yours in an angry, lustful, needy, yet somewhat caring, kiss.

It's all tongue and teeth, whimpers from you and groans from him. You pulling on his hair and his hand sliding down your jaw to wrap around your throat, making you shiver and moan into his mouth, your reaction only turning him on further, and you both let you a noise of your own when one of his fingers slips past your swollen lips, only pushing the very tip of his pointer finger in and letting it rest there.
“You alright with me touchin' you there, baby girl?” Negan breaks the kiss to ask, letting his forehead rest against yours so he can watch your face. He smirks when you nod frantically but don't give him a verbal answer.

“Nuh-uh, use your big girl's words, y/n.” He can't help but chuckle when your cheeks turn an even deeper shade, though feeling the warmth of your core at the very tip of his finger and not being able to completely sink it in is driving him mental. “C'mon, baby, use your words and daddy'll give ya what you need.”

“I- I'm-” You screw your eyes shut and push your forehead further against his, nudging his nose with yours as you try to ground yourself. “Want you t-to touch me th-there. Please,” you finally let out, panting at the effort like you've just run a marathon.

“There where, baby?” He taunts before inching his finger further in to the very first knuckle. The sudden movement makes your legs twitch and tears a whine out of you, making Negan's smirk grow from cocky to feral. “Right there, sweetheart?”

You know he's getting a kick out of watching you squirm and break right in front of him, but you don't really give a shit right now- you'll beg until there's nothing but dust left of your pride if it keeps him from leaving.

You manage to mewl out a ‘please’ before leaving a soft kiss on his lips and that's all it takes for him to finally give. Pressing his lips back on yours, he starts to gently work his pointer finger in your soaked, slicked channel, pushing the digit further in each time he pushes it back inside.

His thumb keeps on stimulating your clit to distract you from the slight possible discomfort of his not-so-thin-at-all-finger entering you until it's eventually sheathed all the way to the last knuckle and the rest of his hand is resting against your soft inner-thigh.

Negan watches as your legs twitch at the alien feeling, the single digit thick enough to make you feel a stretch, though you eventually find yourself giving in and slowly start to relax when you feel no pain, only the discomfort of being penetrated for the first time.

“How we doin', baby girl?” He asks, his voice right into your ear, making you shiver and tighten your grip on his hair, his thumb not letting up on gently rubbing your clit.

You incoherently whimper against his lips and let him kiss you breathless, his free hand getting a firm hold on the back of your head to keep you from pulling away.

He doesn't voice it because he knows you probably wouldn't be able to tell him about it anyway, but he's surprised to feel the round curve of your pelvis bone so low, the whole thing making you much narrower than you should be; even as a virgin. Instead, he settles on making sure he doesn't hurt you.

You audibly gasp into the heated kiss and feel your belly clench when Negan's finger starts to work you and what started out as a weird, foreign and uncomfortable feeling ends up turning into white-hot pleasure. You find yourself craving more but don't know what that implies.
“Fuck, baby girl,” he growls with a snarl, pulling away from the kiss to look down where his finger is pushing in and out of you, groaning low at the sight of it coming out glistening with your arousal each time.

Wiggling on your butt, you try and get closer to him even though it's physically impossible for you to and let out a frustrated whine when you realize so, which only seems to amuse Negan, the deep chuckle he gives enough of an indication.

“Please,” is the only word you can think of, the only word you manage to let out, the only word that makes sense to your lust-clouded mind. “Please what, pretty girl?” He asks, keeping on thrusting his finger in and out at an agonizingly slow pace. “What is it, y/n?”

Again, all you can do is whine and try to push the two of you closer together though it's already been established that it's not possible at this point. You're about to protest when you feel Negan's finger coming to a stop, but you don't get to as the digit curls up against your front wall, the new sensation making you gasp and jump against his body.

“Shh, baby. Daddy knows what ya need. You just be a good girl and let him take care of you, yeah?” He formulates his sentence like a question, but you know it isn't one.

Still, you frantically nod your consent and let your head fall into the crook of his neck, whining against his skin as he alters between thrusting his finger and pushing the pad of it flat against your front wall, applying more or less pressure each time.

You almost sob when you lose his warmth and watch as he crouches down in front of you, your back needily arching off the mirror behind you when Negan plants a kiss to your engorged clit.

“You're so fuckin' tight, kitten,” he mutters against your flesh before biting into the softness of your inner thigh, your body jolting with it. “Don't wanna hurt ya,” he rumbles, almost sounding drunk, and you cry out when he runs the tip of his tongue straight across the little pearl crowning your labia.

He can feel your legs shaking on either side of his shoulders as you oh-so-obediently keep your feet braced on the counter, your thighs straining with the effort you put into not closing them around his head.

“Fuck, you're such a good girl, baby,” he praises, relishing in the whimpered 'thank you' you give him back before one of your hand frantically finds his salt & pepper hair, not tugging, just taking a handful and resting there.

That soon changes though when Negan maliciously seals his lips around your clit and you give a sharp tug that you quickly apologize for, making the man smirk and chuckle against your engorged flesh which doesn't really help calm you down.

It only gets worse when he curls his finger just right and hits something within that makes your ears buzz and your thighs twitch with the need to close, though you're dedicated to being good and keep them wide open.
Negan is a little taken aback when he realizes that he's just touched your g-spot dead-on and it's not located where he's used to it being. Guess practice doesn't always make perfect after all. Still, now that he has it; he's determined to fucking ruin you.

He hears you choke on a gasp above him and looks up from beneath his lashes with a smirk when he finds you struggling to breathe and stay still. Between the constant suck on your clit and the unrelenting press of the pad of his finger on that oversensitive spot nestled within, he can tell you're slowly slipping.

“That feel good, kitten?” He asks with a taunting edge, smirking at the whimper you let out at the pet name. He likes that one too. “Please!” Is the only coherent word your hormone-drunk brain can come up with.

“Yea, that feel good right there, huh?” He croons, pressing his finger even harder against the swollen patch of flesh inside to make his point and watches as you frantically nod, a little tear slipping out of your eye. This is all so new to you, he almost forgets how sensitive you must be and how overwhelming it all has to be for you to feel, let alone process.

Keeping his attentive eyes on you, Negan carefully brings his middle finger closer to your swollen flesh, letting you feel it and allowing the jolt you give at the unexpected touch.

Once again, you reach out with a shaky, frantic hand to grip his wrist as if he'll ever do something to you without your permission. He understands why you so strongly feel the need to protect yourself though, which is why he lets you hold his wrist hostage for as long as you deem necessary.

Still, he doesn’t stop his other ministrations, his thumb is massaging your clit that is now ridiculously swollen and his index finger still torturing that patch of flesh within that has your toes curled- He briefly wonders if you even feel them anymore. Honestly, he’s impressed that you haven’t cum yet, touch started and sensitive as you are.

When your grip around his wrist loosens, he starts to slowly move his middle finger a little closer to the one inside, his eyes on your curious and slightly alarmed ones. “You say the word and it stops, alright, sweetheart?” Negan tells you and you nod even though you’re unsure of what’s about to happen.

“If you’re hurtin’ and you don’t let me know, I swear to God, I’ll put ya over my knees and beat your ass ‘til it burns, y/n,” he insists, his eyes boring into yours and, even though they’re lustful, you can tell he’s being serious.

“What- What’re you d-doing?” You somehow manage to ask, his warning making you curious and a little anxious.

The smirk that blooms at the corner of his mouth is carnal and it damn near makes you whimper. “M’gonna try to give ya another finger,” he smugly informs you, loving the way your throat clicks at the idea. “But I ain’t gonna push it. S’like I told ya, I don’t wanna hurt ya and, honey, you’re tight as a fuckin’ vice.”
He hushes you and your hips buck-up on their own, his words getting to your lust-crazed brain. Soon enough, you feel the second finger joining in, whimpering at the sharp burn of your untouched entrance being stretched out. Two fingers probably aren’t a lot for experienced women, but it doesn’t feel like a little to you.

Negan stays careful as he pushes his middle finger alongside his index, keeping his eyes on you the whole time, making sure you’re not silently hurting and afraid to tell him to stop.

“**Breathe, baby girl,**” he reminds you when he sees that your chest has stopped heaving.

At his words, you release the breath that was stuck in your throat and it must have been there a while because the exhale makes your head spin a little.

Negan’s eyes only leave yours to look down and what was meant to be a quick check-up to make sure he isn’t hurting anything turns into a staring contest between him and the pussy his fingers are softly sinking into.

He can feel himself holding his breath as he watches his middle finger move and stops it mid-second-knuckle with a hiss, seeing the way the thin skin at your entrance is pulled taut at the stretch and he’s not even all the way in, and his finger only gets thicker at the root. There’s no way he’s not going to hurt you if he pushes in.

Your legs are shaking, straining to close around his hand, but his frame is keeping them wide open and he can see and feel you flutter, slick leaking around his fingers. As erotic as the sight and feeling may be, the seasoned man also knows damn well that this isn’t pleasure. Your body is freaking out, trying to push him out and slick his path at the same time.

Looking up at your face, Negan finds it tear streaked and feels a tight ball of guilt form at the pit of his stomach but the way you’re looking at him doesn’t show any distress- Right there, he understands that you trusted him to know when too much was too much and, he can’t lie, that definitely does something to his stupid heart.

“**You’re hurtin’, y/n,**” he calmly scolds, watching you gasp and fail to hide a little grimace as he slowly withdraws his middle finger.

“**M’not,**” you mutter, “**s’just un-uncomfort-table,**” you tell him, slumping a little when the intrusive digit leaves your body, only his index remaining.

“**That’s the same thing, sweetheart,**” he informs you. “**Sex ain’t supposed to be uncomfortable or painful. Somethin’ hurtin's your body tellin’ you that it doesn’t like whatever’s bein’ done to it, so you shut it the fuck down.**”

It’s a little dumb maybe, because it seems like such common sense, but, deep down, you needed to hear those words and you feel your heart swell at the sound of them. Growing-up, you’ve always been told to just do as told and not question it; people hurt you as a result of it. It just feels securing
to hear those words, especially from Negan, someone you know is a very sexual person.

Your hand shoots down when you feel him slowly move his index finger, your eyes finding his in a silent plea. “Stay,” you whisper, slowly straightening up so your back leaves the mirror behind you and you’re closer to the man you crave.

You bump your nose into his, silently asking for a kiss which he’s quick to give up, his smirk returning when he pushes his digit back in and you whine into his mouth.

“Oh God,” you squeak out into the kiss, your voice embarrassingly high-pitched but neither of you seem to give a shit. “Pl-Please- Daddy, please!”

“You're so fucking tight, baby girl,” Negan growls out, his guilt retreating back into a corner for the moment. “Gonna take some time 'fore I get to fuck the livin' hell out of you 'cause, right now, there ain't no way I'm fittin' in there.”

“You didn’t fuckin’ tell me,” he scolds though he never stops moving his finger, the obscene squelching sound of your own arousal making your cheeks burn. “I-I'm so-sorry, daddy.”

“Are you, baby girl?” He asks with a dark smirk, enjoying watching you break right in front of him. “Y-Yes- Fuck!” You cry out when he starts to viciously press the pad of his finger against your g-spot again. “Yes! Y-Yes, I a-am.”

With his free hand on your midriff, Negan pushes you back against the mirror, leaving a kiss on your lips before focusing on your cunt, completely bared and opened to him, your legs not having moved a single inch ever since he’s told you to keep them apart.

“Did he help you eat, princess?” He suddenly asks, not waiting for an answer. “Did he fucking help you with that? Did he help you like I fucking do, or do I still have that to my own goddamn self, baby? Or did you forget who you fucking belong to? Is that it?” He asks, bringing his head down to bite into the full flesh of your left inner-thigh.

“No, 'cause, if that's the fuckin' case, I can remind you real quick, princess.”

“N-No, daddy, m'sorry- M'sorry! I'm yours, m'all yours,” you hastily whimper, tears blurring your vision, and, at this point, your brain feels like putty and you don't know what you're crying about anymore.

“Good girl,” he praises, feeling your walls clench down on his finger, the feeling pulling a deep growl from him. Your reward is another bite, this once much closer to your crux, and your belly jolts with it.

Negan leaves a lingering kiss on a clit before pulling away to admire his work only to find you looking down at him with glossy eyes, flushed cheeks, parted lips and a small frown of pleasure wrinkling your forehead.

He plants a quick but sweet kiss on your lips before stepping a little away from you to get a good look. “Look at you,” he coos with a smirk. “You're dripping on my marble, princess. Goddamn-
Such an obedient little girl, baby. You're so good- Makes ya wonder where all that damn attitude comes from,” he teases with an arched brow, chuckling when you pout and attempt to swat at him only for his hand to catch yours and his lips to kiss your palm.

“A-Asshole,” you complain but don’t make a move to snatch your hand away from him, all you do is needily slump against the mirror behind you to get your hips closer to his, biting down on your lip when the movement presses the pad of Negan’s index finger even more firmly into that pleasure patch inside. The pressure so much that it makes your legs shake and your ears ring.

With a smirk, like the fucker knows - and of course he knows - Negan leans down towards you and attaches his lips to your throat, making you mewl and whine beneath him. “Oh, you did yourself so dirty, honey,” he mocks, grinning against your skin as he starts moving his thumb a little hard on your clit but doesn’t move his finger.

“Good God, baby, you're so fucking wet I can fucking hear it from here, I don't even need to look at it.” You can feel the smugness practically radiating from him, but you don't care; his cockiness suddenly not so much of a bother to you anymore.

“D-D-Daddy, I- Fuck- Please!” You plead, feeling your stomach dangerously tightening. “Yeah, I feel ya, baby,” he lets you know with a snarl, nudging your head to the side with his nose so he can bite down on your jaw.

“You wanna cum, don't ya, sweetheart? Yea, I bet you do. Your li'l pussy's clenching up a storm. Hell, I can barely move my fucking finger, doll,” he pulls back from you and brings your head back to his with his free hand, the smirk on his lips letting you know that he's up to no good.

“S'okay, princess, you can cum if you want,” he pauses and gets right in front of your face, the tip of his nose touching yours. “You can cum all you fucking want and make a fucking mess if you ask daddy for permission first-”

“P-Please, d-daddy, let-let me c-cum! Please! Please! Please!” You cut him off to beg desperately as you feel your curled toes finally cramping and the tight coil in your belly about to snap and break you in half.

“Without stuttering, princess,” he whispers roughly, finishing the sentence you didn't give him the time to before you cut him off, and you let out an actual sob at his instruction.

You know damn well that it's not happening; it just isn't. You can't even form a proper thought, how the hell are you supposed to come up with a full sentence and then proceed to actually say it out loud without stuttering? This is a nightmare. You find yourself trapped between your overwhelming need to just let yourself get consumed by the pleasure Negan is giving you and your, probably extremely unhealthy, need to be good for him and make him proud.

“C'mon, baby, I know you can do it,” he croons, clearing the few damp locks of hair that fell and stuck to your sweaty forehead away. “And I know damn well that you wouldn't dare fucking cum without daddy's permission now, would ya?” He challenges with a smirk.

“Fuck- I - Please!” You cry out, letting your head fall against his, your sweat-slick forehead resting against his, your dry, parted lips only centimeters away from his.
“Shh, baby, I got you. You’re okay,” he coos before wiping away the few tears that are escaping your eyes as frustration and fatigue start to take a toll on you. He only makes matters worse when he finally starts to move his finger again, the knuckles of his free fingers flush against the swollen lips of your pussy, and you helplessly watch as he lowers himself down until his head is back between your obscenely parted thighs.

How you haven’t popped yet is beyond him. He’s made experienced woman cum within seconds and you, a literal virgin, have been holding yourself together for God knows how long- Fuck, how long has this been going?

Aside from the clear strain in your legs and the curl of your toes, you don’t move an inch when Negan’s lips hug your clit again though you do break when he sucks on it, your hand flying to his hair to pull at it. He can’t help but smirk at how indecisive your movements are, it’s like you’re both trying to push him away and press him closer at the same time. Like two sides of your brain fighting.

“Mh-fuck! More, p-please,” you beg, your eyes tightly screwed shut and your back arched, making your breast pop out much to Negan's pleasure when he looks up at you.

“Relax, princess, it's okay. Just say the words and I'll give you just what you need,” he speaks against your swollen, glistening flesh, his voice raw and sharp.

“Daddy, please- Lemme cum, please!” You finally push out, panting and gasping under his ministrations. “Good girl,” he praises, giving your clit a parting kiss before letting his thumb take its place back on it.

“Go ahead, baby. Let me have it,” is all he needs to say for you to finally let go and it feels like you're on fire for a short second, the rest of the way is white vision and almost painful fluttering below.

Negan’s never heard you curse so damn much ever since he’s met you and the way you’re calling out for him makes his already painfully aching cock twitch violently in his pants, to the point where he wonders if he’s about to burst completely untouched.

His finger carefully slows down as he helps you come down from your high and you find yourself whimpering when it leaves you- You hate how empty you suddenly feel but find solace when you feel Negan lapping at you, his tongue avoiding your painfully sensitive clit, working around it and sinking briefly into you to get to whatever he can get until you eventually push him away with a weak foot on his shoulder.

You’re still panting, short on breath, when Negan comes up and steals what little air you have in your lungs with a kiss that makes your sore feet dip a little, your legs finding his waist and your elbows resting on his shoulders as your forearms encase the back of his head, your fingers gently playing with the thick hair at the top.

There’s an odd taste to him and your cheeks burn when you realize that it’s you you’re tasting on his tongue. As if he realizes your sudden discovery, he smirks the second it hits you and it’ll always freak you out a little how easily this man can read you.
“How ‘bout that bath, huh?” Negan proposes against your lips, closing his eyes to relish in your touch for a moment. Fuck, he’d forgotten how good intimacy like that could be.

“What about you?” You ask with a concerned frown, the same thumb that was making your body sing seconds ago smoothing it away. “Don’t worry ‘bout it, darlin’,” he assures you.

“But- I mean…” You trail off, unsure of how to formulate your concerns. “It’s just… It’s always a-about me and I feel bad. I mean… I know you- I know you have the others…” You trail off, your brain suddenly on overdrive.

that’s why he never bothers with you returning anything. he just goes to another woman. he has plenty to go to. ones that actually know what to do, unlike you.

“Stop that, sweetheart,” Negan stops the mad traffic in your head. “Right now, I just wanna take care of you, alright? The moment passed and my dick’ll get over it, I already have, so stop overthinking shit ‘cause I can tell you’re on the verge of tears. You’re hurtin’ yourself tryin’ to read between lines that ain’t there, darlin’.”

“M’sorry,” you whisper, timidly finding his eyes and relaxing a little when he smiles at you. “Don’t apologize, I know why you do it, but let’s try to quiet it all down for a while, yea?”

You’re quick to slip through the crack of the door he’s just opened, tightening your grip around him and silently nodding. He’s right; you need to stop overthinking – hell, you need to stop thinking period – for a little bit, even if it’s merely minutes. You just need some calm and quiet.

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After having checked on you and applied ointment to your slowly scarring bullet wounds, Negan made sure to feel the still slightly swollen flesh around the entry point in your belly even though you tried to keep him from doing so, your hand gripping his wrist the entire time.

It wasn’t necessarily painful, the flesh there still a little sore but it’s barely uncomfortable- No, it’s more about not being to tell him what you’ve been struggling with for two weeks now and him touching your belly wasn’t helping your heartache. When he finally was satisfied that nothing felt odd, he peppered kisses all across your face, a side of him you’d never hoped to see, one even he didn't know he had.

As promised, Negan took a bath, in his boxers, with you, having you laid completely nude against his chest. Knowing him, you can’t believe how innocent your interactions were. Him washing you wasn’t an excuse for him to cope a feel, he was so gentle- If anything, you were the squirmy one, but the lingering kisses he’d plant all over your neck were to blame. For a little bit, you got to have the man you’ve got to get acquainted with over the radio for two months. It felt good meeting him.
After bath time, he helped you change into a white t-shirt of his – you swear the man’s closet has to be filled to the brim with those – and took you both to bed.

“I don’t know ‘bout you, darlin’, but I could use a nap or twelve,” he declared and you eagerly nodded in his neck, exhausted from getting up so early when you’d gotten used to sleeping until nine with Daryl, and the busy morning you’ve had so far.

Now, here you are, curled-up on Negan’s mattress, a silky blanket and his left arm thrown over you, chest to chest with him, your head nestled beneath his chin and your right leg draped over his hip.

You don't understand how something can be so good yet so fucking terrible. It's messing with your head; you don't understand it and it scares you, but you don't want it to disappear. You don't want him to disappear.

1:35 PM //

“M'gonna head down for a bit, baby girl, make sure the ship's sailin' smoothly, alright?” You can hear Negan quietly let you know and chuckle when you incoherently mumble into your pillow.

“Alright, you sleep all ya need, sweetheart, I'll be back with somethin' for you to munch on when I'll get back. We skipped a meal and you need to eat.” You sleepily nod your head and weakly whine in protest when he delivers a playful smack to your right butt cheek, dancing between the thin line of your deep slumber and sweet, sweet consciousness.

The kiss that’s left on your neck is like an electric shock running through your entire body, setting every nerve alight in its wake. But then you’re back into a deep sleep before Negan has even left the bedroom.

3:00 PM //

Your eyes finally open as you slowly emerge from your slumber, a loud squeal bursting out of your mouth as you stretch on the mattress like a cat in the sun before slumping back with a huff.

You feel like you've been ran over by a truck filled with elephants, your entire body aches and you already regret waking up, but you force yourself out of the devilishly comfortable satin sheets covering Negan's bed and whine your regret the moment your feet touch the ground.

It takes you a minute to rub the sleepy haze from your eyes before you’re able to get up, though not without a yawn, and make your way to the puffy chair sitting in the left corner of the room where it seems Negan has left fresh clothes for you to wear.

You give a little smile at the sight of your dad’s clean Thin Lizzy concert t-shirt laid on a pair of dark jeans, the ones Jesus gave you, a brown belt, that could definitely help, and your combat boots are at the foot of the chair. Unlaced and all.
Taking the pile of clothes in your arms, you pause just as you’re about to turn when you spot another little pile that was hidden under your jeans, a little note resting on the white fabric of whatever piece of clothing is laying there.

You’re quick to put your clothes down on the bed before making your way back to the chair, curious to see what else Negan has left you. The little yellow, stick-it note reads; “found these a couple weeks back, though you might like ‘em.” You smile a little at that and find yourself neatly folding the little piece of paper and hide it in the small pocket in your backpack like a schoolgirl with a crush.

A couple weeks back, you were still M.I.A and anxious at the thought of Negan not caring anymore. Maybe it’s a little foolish, but it makes you a little giddy that he thought of you-Something made him think of you.

To be honest, you’re a little reluctant to look at what he’s left you, not really wanting to find a pile of lingerie- Not that you wouldn’t appreciate it, it’s just that it’ll kind of drastically change the context in which he thought of you and you can already feel a little ball of disappointment form at the pit of your stomach.

Lingerie is not what you find though. What greet you are a cute pair of white shorts with a rainbow of pompoms at the hem of each leg and a white crop top with the same array of pompoms at the hem to complete them.

You’ve never worn a crop top because of the insecurity your belly brings you, but the shorts are high-waisted enough to cover most of it you’re pretty sure. As insecure as you are, you’d much rather have your thighs exposed than your upper-body.

Still, as cute as the set is, you settle on your own clothes for the day because of the weather and head to the bathroom with them in arms.

“Oh come on,” you gently scold at the air when you find the dreaded set of lingerie sitting on the marble counter you were sat on this morning, the fresh memory making your cheeks burn.

There’s a note on that too, it reads; “okay, so, this one’s more of a me thing I’ll admit.” You have to bite back a smile, the picture of him writing that with a smug smile crystal clear in your head. Scary as the man can be, he’s such a fucking man-child sometimes.

You’ll give him that; this set is much more you than the first one he’s gifted you. It’s all cotton covered with angel-white lace and, this time around, there’s no evil thong awaiting you. In its place are a pair of hipsters and a bra that has pansies and bees embroidered in. You have to admit, it’s really pretty.

You’re biting back a smile as you slip them on, Negan’s shirt discarded and neatly folded next to the sink, and there’s no disgust on your face when you look at your reflection in the mirror. For once, you don’t mind your body, you’d even say it looks damn good framed by white cotton and lace.
You’ve said it before; this man is the only person able to bring you confidence, but he’s also the only one able to fucking decimate it and you loathe him for that.

With a little sigh, you finish dressing yourself up and decide to go and get some air, see if you can find Negan.

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You feel kind of stupid as you walk around the compound looking like a lost puppy, men looking at you in ways you really don't much care for, it honestly creeps you out, but you keep on making your way through the crowd.

When you reach the corridor leading to the dorms, your eyes zero-in on Randall’s door. Even though you told yourself that it’d be better if you’d stop going to him, you can’t help but feel the urge to go and knock at his door. You miss him so much that it makes your heart ache, but you really want him to be happy and you know that he can’t be around you. You don’t want him to feel as though you’re trying to lead him on, plus; he’s always the one paying for your closeness and it’s not fair.

The only warning you get is the intake of breath you hear that makes the hair at the nape of your neck stand right before a hand comes covering your mouth, muffling your protests. Whoever this hand belongs to doesn’t care for your nails digging into their forearms and your feet kicking as they drag you to the shower room.

well, if this doesn't spell bad fucking new to you, you might want to learn how to fucking read, darling.

In what feels like the blink of an eyes, you’re thrown down on the hard, cold floor like a ragdoll, the impact stealing your breath, and you don't even get to look up when what you assume to be the tip of a hard working boot nails you straight in the lower stomach.

Your instincts take over and you put your arms up and drape them over your head, biting down on your lip to stay quiet. Whoever's delivering is strong and, damn, those hits hurt, the pain only amplified by the fact that you're already sore and aching.

It goes on for what feels like hours until your quiet vow is broken when the pissed-off foot comes down on your shoulder and you can't muffle your scream when the thin, scarring tissue that had started to form on your wound rips open and you feel blood run down your skin beneath your shirt. It feels even worse than when you got shot. Your skin literally just popped open.

“I told you only below the waist, you moron! Christ, make her shut up,” an all too familiar voice
reaches you through the high-pitched buzz in your ears. That's Sherry, you'd recognize her voice through a room filled with screaming ducks on helium.

“Shit, why the fuck is she bleedin’?” Another voice, this one foreign, reaches you and you guess that it belongs to the person who's the cause of your current pain. It's a man, but you don't know who.

“Who cares, leave it,” Sherry is quick to dismiss, her voice echoing in the shower room and mingling with your sobs.

As the pair leaves, you stay on the ground for a couple more minutes, trying like hell to calm down and get your bearings. You're panting, your hands finally leaving your face so that you can press one down onto your bleeding wound, blood soaking through your shirt and onto the palm of your hand. Your heart is racing and your body aches... did Sherry get a goon to jump you? What the fuck is this?

You used to get beat up in school and they would always go for the middle of your body, starting from your stomach and finishing at you hips, not an inch lower or higher, just to avoid having people spot the bruises. Well, those two geniuses royally fucked up on this one since the right sleeve of your shirt is now soaked in your blood. Fuck- That’s your dad’s shirt for fuck’s sake.

“Good for nothing, stupid, brainless bitches,” you quietly snarl out as you try your best to get out of the room, leaving the floor stained with blood behind.

You decide to head to the infirmary, maybe whoever the doctor working for Negan is will be able to help you out, but you don't get your hopes up. Most people working for the guy are either creeps or cowards.

When you finally get there, after walking up a bunch of stairs and navigating through the ridiculous amount of corridors with blood pouring out of your frigging shoulder, you feel like you could cry at the sight of the sign on the infirmary door announcing that the room is closed.

“Are you fucking kidding me? C’mon!” You bitterly exclaim, letting your head thump against the cold door. “I hate this place,” you whisper, defeated, against the steel.

“Hey, y/n,” Dwight greets from behind you, his voice making you jump. “You alright?” He asks with a frown and takes a tentative step towards you.

Heaving a shaky sigh, you slowly turn to face him, bloody hand still holding your wound. “I- I just- My... The skin- The skin broke a-and I- I just ne-need a bandage b-but the- the infirmary is c-closed so-”

“Shit, here, come in,” he cuts you off, stepping in front of you and pulling out a bunch of keys, one opening the room in front of you. “C’mon, let’s take care of that,” he gently urges and guides you in with a warm but worried smile and a hand on your back to keep you steady.

“Th-Thank you, Dwight,” you shyly thank him as you walk in the room, thankful for his support as he helps you sit on one of the medical tables.
“Alright, let's see,” he breaths as he looks around for some stitching material and, once he's found it, he approaches you with a bottle of alcohol in his hands, the look on your face giving your reluctance away. “I know, I'm sorry but—”

“No shit,” he empathizes. “Do you uh- Do you mind taking your right arm out of the shirt to-y'know, give me access.”

With a hard swallow, you nod your head at his gentle demand and go to slip your arm out but quickly come to find out that, big surprise, you're completely unable to move it. “Shit, hold on,” Dwight rushes in when he sees your struggle.

“There ya go, better?” He asks as he guides you through the process to help you get out of your shirt completely, leaving you in your white bra. Thankfully, he doesn't make it awkward and immediately starts to clean your wound instead.

It’s odd, but you’re glad that the undergarment somehow didn’t get stained, if not just a tiny bit of the strap. Yea, not necessarily the thing to be thinking about right at this instant, but you need something to get your mind off the fact that you’re shirtless in front of Dwight. You’ll take a molecule of dust right about now.

Tears silently flow out of your eyes, but you keep on telling him that it's okay. You just need to grit your teeth through and it’ll be over soon.

Your blood is staining the Savior’s hand by the time he's done stitching and dressing your wound, you're exhausted thanks to the blood you've lost, but you're thankful that Dwight was willing to help you.

“Th-Thank you, Dwight,” you whisper with a small smile when he hands you a black cardigan that was neatly kept in the dresser next to the doc's desk so that you can cover your bloody shirt up with it.

“Hey, no problem, y/n, anytime.” You give him a hug which he carefully gives back, before slowly jumping off the table that you've been sitting on for the last thirty minutes.

Just as you're about to walk out of the room, he stops you. “Y/n, not that it’s any of my damn business, but- How the hell did the skin just pop like that? ‘Cause it ain’t pretty.”

“I- I don't- I don't know,” you lie, terribly. “Y/n, if there's something you need to talk about-”

“I know, Dwight. I know. I- I'm okay, re-really, I just- I just n-need some time a-alone,” you lie, yet again, and still as terribly, before giving him a small smile. “Sure, okay,” he eventually lets it go.

You walk out with him next to you and wait for him as he closes-up shop. “I'm guessing I haven't seen you?” He asks, not looking at you as he locks the door.

“I- Please?” You plead, with tense shoulders and tears in your eyes. “Right. Yeah. No problem,” he
breaths out. “J ust... Come find me if you need anything else, doc's not really available right now and you need that shit checked,” he tells you, giving you a quick smile and a pet on the head before walking off to God knows where.

You watch as he walks down the stairs to the ground-floor and decide to make your way to the empty break-room, immediately letting yourself fall on the couch sitting in the middle of it, your tears no longer silent as sobs start to roll through you like waves.

You feel like shit. You feel like the powerless little girl you used to be, getting beat up just to be taught a lesson. You feel completely worthless, like no matter how hard you try, you somehow will always get brought back to being the fragile little girl people get to throw against the walls and drag around.

Your mother did it to you, her boyfriends did it to, you were a toy for Jason and his men, you might very much be one to Negan, and now you’re his bitch's too... Great.

8:00 PM //

You're all cried-out after non-stop tears, sobs and snot all beautifully topped-off by a magnificent headache. Needless to say; you're a mess. Your eyes are all puffy, your nose hurts from constantly blowing it and sniffling, your cheeks darkened, and your head hurts like a bitch, but you try to distract yourself from it all by looking out one of the big windows in the room from the pool table.

“I've been looking all over the fucking place for ya, baby girl,” Negan's voice makes you jump. “What the hell are you doing in this shithole?” He asks and you don't need to look to know that he's frowning.

You feel tears running back to your eyes even though he didn't say anything mean, you're just too tired to interact with anyone, let alone Negan.

“Just... gimme a little time, please. I just- I just need a little time, is all,” you whisper. “Time for what, angel? What are you-”

“I just- I just n-need a little time,” you insist, your mind not really fully there. ‘M’not in the right- in the right pl-place right now to- to be a pain in your ass and to stand you being one in mine, Negan. Just need a little time and- and-’’ You trail off your obvious sadness in control of your thoughts, breaking all kind of filters you'd normally have.

“Hey, princess, c’mon,” he surprisingly softly calls out as he walks up to you and gently wraps his arms around you, making you whine in pain when his arm hits your wounded shoulder. “Hey-”

“S'okay,” you whisper as you carefully grab one of his hands in your own shaky one.

With a careful hand, he lifts your head up to make you look at him. “Shit happened while you were fucking gone because I was frustrated and angry and pissed off and I don't know how to deal with
all that crap. That's not how I function, y/n,” he explains, clearly thinking that's what your sudden change of heart is about, letting his forehead rest against yours.

“Goddamn it, I wanted us to have a calm fucking chat but the timing's always fucked, huh?” You give a little, tired smile at that.

“I fucking need you. Things don't fucking make sense when you're not by my side and that's the cheesiest shit I've ever said.”

“That's the thing, though, isn't it? You never talk to me 'cause feelings are stupid and...” you trail off with a heavy sigh, silent tears freely rolling down your exhausted face.

“I wasn't always like this, but shit changed and so did I. Ain't sayin' it's for the best either, but it happened and it's gonna take some time for me to reel that shit back. Hell, you've always piqued the interest of the old me, darlin'.”

“I'm sorry,” you whisper with a frown. You didn't mean what you said as a judgment, but you're too tired to elaborate.

“You're tired, baby, you need to eat and get some fucking rest, alright?” Negan declares, his eyes watching your face like he's looking for a way to make sense of your sudden heartache.

“It's not- I'm not-” You let a frustrated sigh.

tell him, if he really gives about you, he'll believe you.

“What is it, sweetheart?” He nudges, hoping that you’ll let him in a little. “I... Never mind, I just- You're right, m'exhausted,” you lie with a half-assed smile.

fuck's sake... i'm tired of you, woman.

“What's going through that pretty mind of yours, doll?” He asks with a frown, one of his thumbs absentily wiping a few of your tears away only for them to be immediately replaced by fresh ones.

“I don't- I don't want you to change for me, I don't- It's not-”

“Things do need to fucking change though, for both of you. I need to learn how to fucking talk to you without bein’ an asshole, and you need to learn to trust me,” he explains. “Things around us need to fucking change too, shit that don't fucking bother me as much as I thought it would... Well, maybe not when it comes to Rick's group, gotta admit, I'm gonna miss that asshole. He's a though son of a bitch, I'll give him that. He's a scary motherfucker. But don’t tell him I said that. We got a whole thing goin’.”

“He's a good person,” you tell him with a small smile, this one much more sincere. “With the people he loves? Sure, why the fuck not, baby, but, damn, you'd shit your pants if you were on his bad side like am I,” he says with a chuckle before stepping away from you only to come and sit next to you on the pool table.
“You killed one of their friends and took from them. I’d say you brought this on yourself, Negan.”

“Oh, c’mon, they didn't even like the dude that much, I can tell, y’know,” he nonchalantly defends his actions almost making you laugh but you keep yourself from doing so. You're not about to mock someone's death. Even though you know he's somewhat right. Daryl told you about Spencer and he didn't seem to shaken up by his violent death.

You both take a moment to look at each other, taking him by surprise when you shuffle around and come settling down on his thighs, giving him a small smile and receiving a smirk in return. You can't help but bring your hands up to snake them around his neck and play with the dark hair covering the back of his head.

You've missed this, you've missed him, no matter how much he gets on your nerves. Plus, what he just said to you isn't something you can just brush off but, you have to admit, it feels way too good to be true or not to have a gigantic catch at the end of it.

“How do I know I can trust you, Negan?” You ask, your voice barely above a whisper. “I mean- You've been living the way you do for so long and I'm just supposed to believe that-that you're willing to get rid of it all for- for me? Of all people?”

“K, first of all; don’t talk about yourself like that,” he scolds, not-so-playfully pinching your left butt cheek. “Second…” He trails off then to clear his throat and you can tell he’s already struggling to get the words out.

“What you said this morning? On the road? About me never lettin’ you have the man you spoke for hours to through the damn radio?” Part of you is a little dumbstruck that he actually remembers that. “I fuckin’ hate that you feel that way, ‘specially because I know it’s justified.”

Your heart feels tight in your chest as you hang to his every word, depending on them like lungs on oxygen.

“Baby, I already told ya, I don’t just talk about my fucking feelings for the thrill of it, alright? I’m so fucking uncomfortable with that crap, why would I fuck around with that? I know I gave you more than enough reasons to believe I would but, you have to trust me,” Negan tells you, gently nudging your nose with his to get you to look at him.

“It ain’t gonna happen overnight, and I can’t promise you that it’ll be smooth sailin’, but shit’s gonna change. You have my word,” he promises and looks into your watery eyes, his brows shooting up damn near up to his hairline when you leave a shy, gentle kiss on his lips.

“We shouldn't be having this conversation right now, Negan. I mean- I'm a mess a-and I don’t want you saying pretty things j-just to make me f-feel better. If this still s-stands t-tomorrow, come see me and we-we'll talk, alright?” You softly speak against his mouth before giving him one last kiss and jumping off of his lap to walk out of the room and get back to yours, leaving him high and dry.

He's not used to being in this position, but he sees where you're coming from and he understands
why this is important to you, why you're protecting yourself the way you are, and he knows damn well that he's heavily contributed to that mechanism.

He's let you down so many times, made promises he didn't even try to keep, and hurt you more than he's comfortable even quietly admitting to. Yeah, he understands but, still, he'd be lying if he said that you walking away like that didn't sting. God, he hates this.

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You've finally reached the dorms, and, for a good minute, actually consider knocking on Randall's door. You gently press your head to it to fight the urge, pressing your hand on it too before leaving it alone. He's probably deep asleep by now anyway. Doesn't matter, you don't really want anyone seeing you looking the way you do anyway.

The door of your bedroom creaks as you gently open it and push it close before taking in the fact that you're back here again. You're in a room meant to be yours but, aside from the fairy-lights Negan gifted you, holds nothing that reflects you.

You're in a place you despise but find yourself rubbing softly at the rose burned on the right side of your left thumb as memories of the night Randall tattooed it there come running back. That's one good thing about this ordeal.

“Please be okay,” you softly whisper before stripping out of your clothes, slipping the old cardigan Dwight gave you back at the infirmary off and letting it join your shorts and your socks on the floor.

You settle on keeping your dad's old, bloody shirt by fear of hurting yourself if you try to take it off all by yourself.

Slipping into your bed with a sigh, you rejoice in the warmth the blankets provide before turning to your left side not to put pressure of your right shoulder and swiftly push your hand underneath your pillow only to feel something cold there which you curiously pull out and are greeted by the picture of the man you've killed two months ago with Lucille. You can't lie, you actually feel nauseous as the moment comes running back to haunt you.

*hey, so, i forget; did we forgive that too, or...?*

You shove the polaroid into your nightstand and turn back around to try and get some sleep, but your mind is now wide awake and it clearly doesn't plan on going to sleep anytime soon.

You get lost in your thoughts, your mind wondering to Negan like a moth to a flame. You
think about what he said to you, what happened this morning, about the things he makes you feel, and find yourself getting scared shitless when it hits you just how much you care. Does he actually care too? Why is that terrifying to think about?

Being cared for, being loved, is usually a pleasant feeling for most people, some crave it, chase it even, but you? You're terrified of it.

You don't think about how nice it'd be to have something to lean on, to talk to, someone that supposedly would be your best friend, the person you could tell everything to. No, in your case, it's more; how much it's gonna hurt, how deep you'll get cut when that damn feeling will mercilessly shred you to pieces without a second thought, how much more tears you'll shed because of him, because of that feeling, how many times you'll fuck up because love would have make you dizzy and irrational.

It fucking hurts already. You can feel it coming and you know it's gonna fucking destroy you, just like it destroyed your mother; it's just what it does. You've seen it.

Love represents nothing but pain and chaos for you and you doubt that anyone could ever be able to change that mindset, let alone Negan. You've just seen too much of the damages it can cause.

Chapter End Notes

QUICK PS: my pelvic bone is 'sunk', which means that it's lower than it should be, hence why the O.C's like that. Again, I write with what I know and yo bitch doesn't know what a normal pussy feels like, alright? I'm a broken-down wreck.

Anyways. Hope you enjoyed. Stay safe, I'm here if you need.
Secrets Kill

Chapter Notes

[UPDATED SEPTEMBER 20. 2019]

A/N; OH MY GOD I'M SO SORRY FOR THE DELAY ON THESE UPLOADS! I genuinely feel awful but life happens and I had a bunch of shit that needed to be prioritized. THIS IS STILL HAPPENING THOUGH, I AM NOT ABANDONING THE STORY OR ANYTHING LIKE THAT, I PROMISE. There's seven chapters left for me to re-upload and then the story will pick back up where I'd first left it with a brand new twenty-eighth chapter.

ALSO IF YOU'RE HERE FOR THE SECOND TIME... YOU KNOW WHAT THIS CHAPTER WAS GOING TO BE SO DON'T YOU DARE SUE ME! AND YES, I HATE MYSELF COS Y'KNOW WHAT? I'VE MADE IT TEN TIMES SADDER THIS TIME AROUND COS I'M A BITCH AND SOMEONE NEEDS TO FIGHT ME.

'K BYE! HOPE YOU ENJOY. SMOOCHES! STAY HYDRATE AND EAT SOMETHING IF YOU HAVEN'T OR I'LL TELL MY DOG.

11th April:

7:15 AM //

A groan of protest slips past your cracked lips the second your eyes start fluttering open as you slowly emerge from your slumber. The light invading your room isn't exactly strong, but it’s enough to be a bother to your sleepy eyes.

Your upper body feels stiff and sore as you carefully move to sit up on the mattress with a grimace, your right arm shaking as you push yourself up on your hands to settle against the headboard.

There’s a blood stain on your dad’s shirt, right where your shoulder is. The outline is dry and cracking on the cotton but the middle of it is damp and clinging to where your injury lays beneath.

Needless to say; you feel like utter shit. Still, you force yourself out of bed when it’ll be easier for you to just stay in it all day long and cry the bad thoughts and memories all away. You don’t really want to reminisce, the constant ache in your body is reminder enough.

It takes you a bit, but you eventually drag yourself to the shower room, eyeing the dry blood that's stained the tiles covering the floor as you walk towards your usual cubicle. Once inside, hidden by the ugly curtain, you carefully rip the soaked gauze Dwight used to dressed your wound, grimacing a little at the way the medical tape holding it there pulls at the tender skin.

The stitching is impeccable, you can tell he’s used to working the needle, yet blood is seeping out where it can and there’s a nasty looking bruise discoloring your skin. You’d never experienced
skin bursting at the seam like that in your life and, now that you have, you can say with certainty; you’re not better for it.

As minutes tick by, it becomes clear that the cold has a strong hold of you no matter how warm the water pouring down on your bare body is and it’s not leaving any time soon.

You still feel like shit when you get out of your shower, keeping your head low in order to avoid meeting your reflection in the dirty mirror mounted on the wall above the equally filthy sinks. You don’t want to see your tummy and thighs and remember the exact moment you’ve been told that you weren’t worth loving, that you weren’t nor would ever be a pretty girl, that you have too many issues.

People gave you so much crap that you actually started to believe them. Now they're gone and you're left to deal with those things. You're still here, fighting to live every single day, fighting to learn how to love yourself even the slightest bit because those sorry fucks took that away from you.

You let out a dry scoff when you realize as you walk through the hallway just how much of a toll yesterday has taken on you. All that over a man. Jesus fucking Christ, how petty can you be? And here you thought you were the most insecure woman you knew.

Today is not going to be a good one, you can feel it in your gut, and the feeling makes your stomach churn.

“Y/n- Hey!” A familiar voice makes you freeze in your steps in the dead-middle of the hall on the way back to your bedroom.

Turning, you swear you feel yourself swallow a sudden sob at the sight of Randall walking up to you with opened arms. Fuck- You missed him.

In a blink of an eye, you’re wrapped-up in his embrace, clinging to the back of his jacket so hard your knuckles turn white under the pressure. “Hey, sweetheart,” the tattooed Savior gently greets you. “‘Y’scared the fuck out of me,” he scolds though there’s no resentment in his voice.

“I missed you. I’m so s-sorry, Randall, I didn’t- I couldn’t- I-” You bit down on your lip, pushing your head further against his chest like it’ll hide you from him somehow.

“Hey, s’alright, princess. We’re alright,” he assures you. “Just real fucking glad to be holdin’ you right now, not gonna lie,” he says with a dry chuckle that makes your grip around him tighten.

In his arms, you completely forget about the rest of the world, you’re even able to disregard that you’re standing there in the middle of the dorms in nothing but a dirty t-shirt and panties. Nothing matters but Randall and how safe it feels here in his arms.

“Why didn’t you come see me, y/n?” He quietly asks like he’s afraid the question might make you run off. “I didn’t want you to get hurt a-again,” you just as quietly answer him.
You feel his sigh brush over the skin of your neck and hear it straight in your ear. “You say that like you didn’t get hurt in all this,” he points out. “I haven’t,” you inform him and get an unamused chuckle.

“You got shot and left for dead, how’s that not hurtin’?” Randall asks and you can tell by the tone of his voice that he’s relieving that day. “That’s not the same,” you tell him. “I don’t want you getting bullied because of me, is what I meant,” you explain.

“And you thought pulling away would keep me safe?” He asks, speaking directly against the left side of your head. “And I thought… I thought staying away would keep you safe,” you repeat, nodding your head as you speak.

You almost whine in protest when you feel Randall pull away and have to force yourself to let go of his jacket to let him move. Luckily, he doesn’t go too far and keeps you at arms-length, his eyes boring into your slightly evading ones.

“Don’t.” The single little word makes you look at him with a little frown and a slight tilt of your head you’re not even aware of. “Don’t pull away from me,” he elaborates. “I won’t let you, not over something so stupid- None of this has been your fault,” he insists before you can protest.

“You could barely move three months ago ‘cause of me,” you remind him, the image of him bruised and beat up one that you’ll never forget nor forgive yourself for being the cause of.

“Negan,” Randall corrects. “Negan beat the shit out of me, not you. Y/n, you need to stop, sweetheart,” he pleads, tilting his head to find your eyes again.

You shyly hold his stare for a bit before shifting your focus on the head of the snake’s head resting beneath his jawline. You hear Randall chuckle, and watch his Adam’s apple bob.

“You were never mine, I know that,” he suddenly says, making your throat go dry and tighten. “Whatever’s going on between you and Negan- I know you’re his… Well, I know you’d like to be. And, I mean, yea, I’m not gonna lie, for a time? I really thought you could be my girl, but I think we both know it won’t happen in this life.” He sounds so vulnerable, even though he’s trying his best to keep a smile on his face, that it makes your throat constrict even more as you strain not to cry.

“Yeah,” you whisper with a weak smile of your own when you find his eyes again. “I wish it could be the one,” you quietly complain with a frown, “and I’m sorry that it’s not, ‘cause I really thought it could be too.”

You haven’t even realized you’d let a tear slip out until Randall is gently wiping it away. “I’ll still be there for you, no matter what,” he lets you know. “I don’t hold any of this against you, sweetheart, and I don’t resent you for belonging to someone else- I mean, you definitely deserve better, but I also know you won’t let him make a toy out of you.”

With a nod, you bring a shaky hand up to your lips and leave a kiss on your fingertips before extending it out to Randall to stamp it on his cheek but he softly catches your wrist mid-air and
gently brings your hand to his mouth to leave a kiss of his own right where you've left yours.

You don’t know how, but you somehow manage to reel-in the waves of tears and sobs you can feel bubbling in your throat- God, you want to wail like a baby.

“And, if you ever get sick of his shit, I’ll be here,” he speaks against your skin. “You’re not a second choice, Randall,” you frown, letting him hold your fingers to his lips a little longer. “I love you,” you whisper, a few tears finally slipping free. “And I hate myself because that’s not enough and you deserve better than a half-vacant girl.”

“I love being with you,” he lets you know, his voice cracking a little and, God, you hate how much this feels like goodbye. “I loved being with you even though I knew nothing could come out of it. You never made any promises and neither have I, you ain’t got nothing to feel guilty for, y/n.”

When his eyes find yours again, they’re all watery and it hurts like hell. “I missed ya,” Randall cracks a little smile. “I missed you too,” you reciprocate the feeling, your heart about ready to crack.

“I’m not going anywhere, sweetheart. Please don’t cry,” he tries to keep his tone light but the plead in his words is clear. “You don’t cry,” you childishly flip his words around, trying to make that weight at the pit of your stomach disappear.

The chuckles he gives makes you that tiny bit lighter. “Did you just ‘no you’, me?” He incredulously asks, the sudden shift in the air making you giggle uncontrollably with relief.

Your laughter dies when Randall presses his lips to yours, your hands frantically coming up to frame his face and hold him there. It’s the kind of kiss you rarely ever had with him; needy and desperate but still gentle only like he can make them.

You don’t want to let go because you know this is the last kiss you’ll ever share with the tattooed Savior, and part of you is still desperately clinging to what if’s.

“I love you too,” Randall speaks into the kiss, clearly just as unwilling to let it come to an end as you are. “And I’ll always be there, just like I promised- Remember?”

You nod and bring his head back down a little to steal another kiss. “I remember,” you whisper against his lips. “I’m here too, always,” you promise.

With one last kiss, a much slower, lingering one, you break apart only to fall back into each other’s arms, clinging to one another. You know this isn’t goodbye, but it is you permanently crushing the idea of a romance that seemed to make so much sense. You both will forever feel it because, no matter what, you still love him and he stills loves you, and not being able to let that mutual love flourish is soul-crushing and heartache inducing.

Letting yourselves feel that heartache, you fail to see and feel Negan standing at the very end of the hallway, his throat a little tight and it’s not jealousy he’s feeling- Well, not just jealousy.

Shaking his head, he silently backs off until he’s sure to be out of sight and puts his best shit-eating
grin on before rounding the corner, this time making his presence known with his casual whistling. He can see the exact moment you spot him from the corner of your eyes and, in the snap of a finger, you’re backing away from Randall like you’ve been burned.

The tattooed Savior frowns in confusion at your sudden panic before turning his head to look at what your wide eyes are seeing and sighs when he spots Negan walking up to you with a smirk on his face. “Am I interrupting somethin’?” He asks, his eyes going back and forth between you and Randall though you keep your head low.

“Just catching up,” Randall easily answers, not one bit seeming intimidated. “Haven’t seen each other in a while, wanted to make sure she was okay.”

“Alright.” You shyly bring your head up, slightly put off by Negan’s calmness. “You guys done? ‘Cause I need to borrow the li’l lady and you need to get to work, Randy boy.”

The younger man rolls his eyes at the nickname before settling them back on you. “I’ll see ya at lunch, alright? Faith’ll be there too,” Randall gently speaks, returning the smile you give him along with your little nod.

“Yes. I’ll be there,” you tell him, your eyes glued to him as he walks off. The further away he gets, the tighter the coil in your belly. Something’s off but you don’t know what and it’s driving you up the walls.

“You alright, darlin’?” Negan’s voice almost makes you jump and you’re quick to tear your eyes away from the tattooed man’s back to focus them back onto the floor.

You hear the man in front of you sigh when you stay silent and keep your head down. “C’mon, sweetheart, let’s have a talk you and me,” his tone isn’t harsh, but you know he’s not asking.

Silently, you follow him the two steps left to your bedroom and awkwardly step inside before him, letting him close the door behind the two of you. The air shifting the second it clicks shut.

“You gotta relax, darlin’,” Negan tells you and you stomp the urge to retort with ‘easy for you to say’. “You ain’t in trouble, Randy boy ain’t in trouble; you can unclench those cheeks.”

“Don’t talk about my cheeks,” you petulantly mumble under your breath, your face burning with embarrassment when he laughs.

“How you feelin’ this morning, baby girl?” He thankfully changes the subject and you tense a little more, unclear of how you’re meant to answer that. Honestly? You’re not doing too hot, but is that really what he’s asking or is he referring to the weird conversation you two had last night.

“M’ alright. You?” Is what you settle on, your voice quiet and your words mumbled.

You feel Negan’s eyes on you when you start to nervously pull and twist your fingers. “I- I’m sorry, m’all over th-the place. I don’t know- I don’t know wh-what to say,” you quietly confess, your eyes fixed on your shaking hands.
“I’m sorry about last night, I just needed to clear my head is all,” you whisper, frantic to fill the oppressive silence filling the room and hoping that it’ll suffice to not reopen last night’s odd conversation. In all honesty, if you could spare yourself some unnecessary pain and embarrassment; that’d be just fandabidozi.

When you’re met with complete silence, you timidly look up only to find Negan’s eyes narrowed at the blood stain on your dad’s shirt and your breath gets stuck in your throat. “Wasn’t that shirt clean when I left it out for ya yesterday, y/n?” The rugged leader finally speaks, taking a step forward that makes you take three back, your back desperately pushing against the door that’s keeping you from leaving the room.

“I don’t know,” you lie, oh-so-horribly, your voice barely above a whisper, your head low and your eyes taking an odd interest in your shaking hands again.

You’re so nervous and scared that you’d forgotten your legs are still completely bare, leaving your bruised flesh on full display for Negan to see.

All that can be heard in the room once you’ve come to that realization is the sound of you difficulty swallowing around the lump in your throat, and you can feel Negan’s eyes burning your flesh mid-thighs where the old Thin Lizzie shirt ends.

“Negan-” You start but decide not to say anything when you hear him roughly scratching at his stubble, the sound of the motion itself enough to intimate you. Though it’s such a normal thing for a man to do, and you always see him scratch his face whenever he’s deep in thoughts, right now; it sounds like he’s yelling at you without saying a word and it makes your blood freeze.

“Lift up your shirt, y/n,” he demands in a frighteningly calm and low tone that’s enough to spark tears into your eyes. God, you hate how small this man can make you feel.

You almost immediately regret shaking your head when you hear him walk closer to you, the terrifying sound of the barbwire covering Lucille scratching the bedroom’s floor along with Negan’s footfalls, and all your body can possibly do is push itself further against the door blocking your exit.

“I wasn’t askin’, sweetheart,” he points out, letting his bat drop to the floor so that he can hold you still whilst he takes the initiative to lift your shirt up on his own, fully exposing your thighs and tummy. All there is for him to see are a bunch of mean looking bruises and the red-raw scratches you’ve left with your loofah in your desperate attempt to feel clean.

Your hands are balled-up into tight fists at your sides as you fight the urge to curl-up on yourself and evade Negan’s hands which are pushing the right side of your shirt further up to your wounded shoulder, prompting you to quickly cup your breasts to hide them as much as possible from view.

The sharp intake of air he takes is almost deafening in the heavy silence bathing the room. You know it’s not pretty looking, even though Dwight’s stitching work is impeccable; it still looks like torn skin at the end of the day- the bruising and swelling aren’t making it look any better either.

The second your lips part the slightest bit, Negan butts in. “Don’t you tell me that shit happened all on its own ‘cause, darlin’, I saw it yesterday and, let me tell ya, it wasn’t at the point where it could just break open again. There’s scar tissue on there, it doesn’t just burst like that.”
okay, so, maybe he swept the rug from beneath your feet with that one… plan B; let’s say you fell on a knife. just… just a knife poking out of the ground. dead people are walking in the streets, knives can grow out of the concrete if you believe hard enough.

You’re startled out of your silence by a pair of clicking fingers, your eyes meeting Negan’s who has his head tilted and lowered- He’s clearly been trying to get you to come back down for a little bit.

“Who stitched you up, sweetheart?” He asks, his voice a little softer now though it still has that sharp edge it gets whenever Negan gets agitated, not to say angry. “Cause I don’t doubt you know your way ‘round a needle, havin’ been alone for s’long as you have ‘n’all, but this,” he points at your stitches, “this is way too clean for the angle you have of it.”

“Dwight… Dwight he-helped me,” you quietly confess. “I went to the in-infirmary but th-there was n-no one there. I told him not to tell you, it’s not his fault,” you’re quick to add, not wanting to get the man in trouble after he went out of his way and risked a serious ass-whooping to help you.

“Why didn’t you tell me yesterday?” Negan sighs, the clear disappointment in his voice making your throat tighten. “I didn’t want to upset you,” you whisper, your eyes fleeing from his for a bit.

You relax a little and let go of your breasts when Negan carefully puts your shirt back down but your shoulders tense back when his gloved, right hand comes up to cup your cheek and hold your head up. “M’upset now,” he points out and you feel like you could cry, “but it’s not because of you. I already told you; you need to trust me, sweetheart. You need to learn to talk, ‘specially when shit hits the fan like that-”

“It was Sherry,” you cut him off, the words coming out on their own and shutting him up. You watch him as he struggles to process the piece of information you just gave him, and mentally scoff ‘still want me to talk’?

“There was a-a man with her,” you add, Negan’s eyes snapping back to yours. “He’s the one who-The hits came from him, she was just… there.”

His right hand slips from your cheek to your jawline to hold your head higher up when he spots tears rolling down your face. “You thought I wouldn’t believe you,” he states more than he asks, and you only find the strength to nod slightly, a somewhat muffled sob rocking through your chest.

“When I say ‘jump’, you say…?” As usual, you quietly complete him with a small “how high.”

“How many fuckin’ times are we gonna have to do this, baby girl? I need you to trust me, you ain’t gotta think about it; just let me have it.”

He heaves a heavy sigh when your only response is a halfhearted, silent nod, and your shoulders slump when he steps back away from you.

“You stay right here, be right back,” he mumbles though the order in his voice lets you know to stay put and your face sadly scrunches-up when he walks through the door, ranting: “I can't
fucking take a fucking **break** for a fucking minute without things going to fucking **shit** around here.”

You give a little jump when he slams the door shut behind him, the loud echo startling you. You didn’t want to make him angry and now your brain is bashing you for souring his mood. *He’s mad at you now, congrats dumbass. Should’ve kept your damn mouth shut.*

The entire room jumps, and you’re suddenly crushed into someone’s chest, your stomach churning with the sudden shift.

“**Hey,** c’mon pretty girl, breathe for me,” Negan instructs in your buzzing ear, a shaky inhale from you following suit. “**M’**not mad at ya, baby girl, I promise,” he whispers into your hair before leaving a lingering kiss on the crown of your head.

“**Y-You're an a-asshole,**” you cry into his chest, making him chuckle softly. “**You’re breakin’ my heart, sweetheart,**” he teases and brings his hand from the back of your neck down to your back to gently rub it up and down in an attempt to calm and help ground you.

“You alright?” He asks and you silently nod against him. “**No ‘cause you looked about ready to hurl when I walked in, darlin’,**” he informs you and you let out the tiniest of laughs.

“That’s just you,” you quietly sass, feeling the urge to make the conversation deviate from you. “**Smartass,**” Negan huffs though you can tell he’s smiling and, sure enough, he is when he pulls away to look at you.

“C’mon, let’s take care of that shoulder.” You quietly nod, your eyes finally finding the packed gauze, bottle of antiseptic and the roll of medical tape he’s holding in his left hand.

“You’re gonna get some rest today, darlin’,” Negan speaks as he finishes dressing your wound. “**Don't let me catch you working, I'm not playing around, princess. We clear?**” He asks, his eyes boring into yours.

It takes you a minute to squash your stubborn streak under Negan’s watchful stare, but you eventually nod, knowing better than to try and argue when he’s looking at you like that.

“You’re gonna get some shit sorted out, I’ll be back ‘round noon,” he tells you and you keep on silently nodding along, watching his eyes narrow as he gets lost in his thoughts. “**I’ll take ya to Hilltop when I can, baby, have the Doc take a look at ya,**” he finishes before planting a kiss on your lips, one you weren’t expecting but are all too eager to receive.

“**Don’t you guys have a doctor?**” You quietly ask when he pulls back a little. “**We used to,**” is his answer and you’re not sure you want to dig any further.
“C’mon, let’s get you dressed, and I’ll take ya to breakfast,” he exclaims as he straightens back up to his full length. “I- I can-” You’re about to protest when Negan cuts you off. “No you can’t,” he counters with a quirked-up eyebrow.

“Yes, I-” Again, he interrupts you; “Then let’s see you put that shirt back on properly,” he challenges, and you almost deflate right there and then.

stupid, handsome asshole with his stupid handsome face… what a dickbag.

“Whatever,” you grumpily mutter though you do accept his quiet help when he reaches over to slip your t-shirt back on, not once making a smug remark and not a trace of a smirk in sight.

“Not that I don’t love you lookin’ at me, darlin’, but I don’t think I like that suspicious look you’re givin’ me,” Negan chuckles, making you aware of just how narrowed your eyes are at him.

You laugh off the embarrassment of having been caught staring and look down at your hands with a shrug. “I was just waiting for an ‘I told you so’ is all,” you quietly confess, earning yet another rich chuckle from the man in front of you.

“I know you’re stubborn, sweetheart, no need to embarrass you about it,” he explains and all you can do is silently nod, thankful that he didn’t feel the need to be a dick about the whole thing.

“Now, let’s get ya in some pants ‘cause there’s no way in Hell I’m lettin’ you walk around without them.” You blush at that, the interest you have in your hands suddenly doubled. “Which reminds me; don’t ever let me catch you walkin’ around dressed like you were this mornin’, doll; that’s for me and me only to see.”

Again, you simply nod along, too embarrassed to speak. Though you do let out a squeal when you’re suddenly lifted up the mattress and held to Negan’s chest, your legs frantically finding and hugging his hips.

“C’mon, let’s get this shit day started,” he exclaims, the words hitting something deep within you that makes you stomach turn.

11:36 AM //

Breakfast was… interesting? As promised, Randall was there but not Faith, and that’s not the problem- No, the problem was; he looked awful. How did you not pick up on it earlier this morning? You have no idea, but the man looked worn. Dark circles under his normally so vibrant eyes that looked dimmed, not to say lifeless.

He’d wince with every little movement he’d make and then act like he hadn’t. Even his smile
seemed wrong. The little moment you shared has done nothing to soothe the heavy weight at the pit of your stomach and, now, all you can think about is how heartbreaking it all truly was. You were just so relieved to be holding him that the state of him completely flew way above your head.

You’d let him be when he left the table saying he needed to get to work before he got his ass kicked with a chuckle and planted a lingering kiss to your temple. You kept quietly repeating to yourself that everything was fine, *there’s nothing to worry about*, but it’s been two hours now and it’s come to the point where your stomach isn’t knotted anymore; it *is* the knot.

You’re so damn anxious it makes your hands shake and it feels as though you could throw up at any given moment- As a matter of fact, you’ve had a few close calls in the last thirty minute or so but never quite got there.

Changed into a fresh, simple, grey shirt, you finally cave and give into the urge to go check on Randall. You need to see him because staying sat on your bed overthinking everything isn’t getting you anywhere, at least not anywhere you want to be.

You make sure your butterfly knife is in your jeans and grab your handgun to tuck it into the waistband of your pants at your back, the large tee-shirt you're wearing finishing to cover it properly.

After a month spent with Randall outside, a month of him repeating that he never wants you to be in danger and that he’d feel better if you had a gun on you though you detest guns and firearms in general, you’ve decided to comply, for him, and started to carry a small handgun around. Though, you never used it- Well, you've tried once, when the two of you got attacked and split up, but it didn't really do a whole lot since you'd already been shot by the time you'd recalled having the gun on you.

You shrug the memory of that day off and slip out of your room like it’s burning in flames and you’re about to suffocate.

Your first stop is Randall’s room. You knock on the door but, when no one answers, you decide to open it and carefully peek inside only to find that it's completely empty. No Randall in sight and none of his weapons nor personal belongings are on the table where he usually leaves them.

Looking down the hallway to make sure the coast is clear, you carefully step inside and to the usually locked chest where he keeps some of his old personal belongings such as photos, his tattooing kit and drawings in, which is wide open. It’s full so you try and take some comfort in that at least.

Heaving a loaded sigh, you slowly, almost reluctantly, leave the room even more upset than you were when you came in. A big part of you had hoped that he’d be right here, on his bed, reading or drawing on his desk, when you opened that door. You just wanted it to be easy for once, that’s all.

*he’s working, that’s all. you know he’s working a full day today.*

Absently, you make your way through the corridors of the compound and eventually end up at the
opened warehouse where everyone is going about their day of work and, just as you're about to push through the crowd to get outside, a conversation between two men that you recall being some of the ‘high rank’ guys catches your attention, so much so that it stops you dead in your tracks.

“Yeah, man, the kid's fucked,” one says, and you can hear the smile on his face as he speaks.

“He's pushing through though, ain't he? Stupid fuckin' kid, he should've known better than to go for Negan's precious *wittle* princess,” the other mockingly coos.

“Nah, I get it, y'know? I mean, she’s a fine piece of ass. I’ll definitely get some if Negan ever puts her on the market, give me a fuckin’ reason to work for once.”

*um, yes, excuse me... what?*

You stay plastered against the wall hiding you from them even when your belly jumps with a silent threat of imminent throwing-up.

“I hear that, brother,” the other joins and the two men share a laugh that makes your blood both grow cold and sizzle beneath your skin.

“Hey, you think he's gon’ kill him or what?”

“Nah, I don’t think so. I mean, he did let him out a little today, I think he really just wants the kid to fly right is all. Randall's a good one but he's fucking reckless, ‘specially since Connor died- He’ll come ‘round.”

*what the hell is going on?*

“Well he’s gon’ have to. He’ll get tired of gettin’ his ass beat to shit eventually. But I mean, I ain’t complaining, beatin’ on people is the next best thing when you ain’t got a woman to fuck.”

“Your'e fucked, man.” Again, they chuckle, the sound mixing with their words making your stomach churn.

It takes you a minute to compose yourself, your brain racing to make sense of what you’ve heard before it clicks together and it’s like you’ve been punched in the gut with a sledgehammer. **That son of a bitch fucking lied to you.**

“The cells. Oh my God,” you frantically whisper to yourself before sneaking away and running off to try and look for Randall in the basement where Negan keeps his prisoners A.K.A the people who dare breathe the wrong way.
Sounds of heavy, almost threatening, footsteps echo through Negan's quarters as he makes his way to the rec room but stops in his tracks when he spots Laihla’s bedroom door slightly ajar and decides to go and have a little chat with her before he blows a fuse so violently the whole damn state of Georgia is gonna feel it.

He lightly knocks on the door but doesn't wait for an answer to walk straight into the room, closing the door behind him before letting a heavy sigh out.

“Sure, come in, why the fuck not,” Laihla greets him, sarcasm and annoyance oozing out of her, but it only makes the man in front of her grin like a damn kid.

“How polite of you, doll,” he teases, getting a rise out of the normally so well-composed woman is always amusing to him.

“Damn it, Negan, what do you want?” She sighs, aggravated by his behavior, before throwing the book she was happily reading on her nightstand.

“So,” he starts, pulling a chair from Laihla's desk and dragging it right in front of her bed before sitting down on it with his nonchalant attitude, “you doin' good?”

“As good as it gets, I guess. What you do want?” Laihla asks again, clearly not up for a conversation right now.

“Just, wanted to know if you still loved that husband of yours and whatnot.” Okay, yes, he most definitely could, and should, have formulated that otherwise BUT it wouldn’t have gifted him with the most absolute bitchface Laihla is currently giving him.

“Of course I fucking do. How da-” the former therapist takes a deep breath and looks up at Negan only to narrow her apple-green eyes at him. “Are you- Why are you smiling like that? Okay, what d'you do now?”

“Damn, girly, that's cold even for you,” he chuckles, clearly enjoying seeing her so confused and clueless.

“Y/n’s back, figured I should tell ya know,” he ventures, looking at her with raised eyebrows. “Wha- How-”

“Oh, c'mon, I'm not fucking stupid, darling. And, let's be honest, you're the only chick with a brain on this floor so... Yeah, t'was easy to put two and two together."

“Are you mad at me?” Laihla asks. “Is that why you’re asking about Amid? Negan, I-”

“Relax, no one’s getting hurt. We’re cool. She's back, she's safe. We're cool,” the seasoned leader reassures her. “Okay… Okay. Is she? Okay, I mean.”

“She's, how’d you put it? As good as it gets, dolly.”

“So, no,” she breathes out. “She's getting’ by. I don't know, she ain't the easiest book to fucking read, Laihla, at all, and it doesn't really fucking help that there's a bunch of missing pages in that
damn book. Hell, you're lucky if you even find a way to open the fucking thing."

“You’ve literally said ‘fucking’ three times in under four seconds, Negan. Nothing in life is that serious,” she points out, making the man chuckle and allowing herself to relax a little as well.

“C’mon, spill it, what's going on with you? You're creeping me out, man,” she asks, her eyes scanning Negan’s face and the grin parting her lips is enough to let Negan know that she knows. “I mean, I love to say it so I'm just gonna go ahead and say it; I told you so.”

“Laihla-”

“You want her all to yourself don't ya?” She can’t help but tease him. “You wanna go back to your husband or not?” His words cut her off, almost making her choke on her own tongue.

“What?” She dumbly asks. “If you want to go back to your hubby, get your shit and go see Simon, he'll get you to him and you'll get to pick a job, alright?” Negan explains with no context whatsoever, furthermore confusing the young woman.

“Are you serious? Negan, if this is some sick joke I'm not-”

“Pack your shit, Laihla,” he simply instructs as he gets up off the chair and drags it back to its desk. “If anyone asks, just tell ‘em I got tired of you not pullin’ out or some shit.”

“Sure, yeah- Thank you,” Laihla absently answers, her voice barely above a whisper and shaking with emotion. She can't seem to focus on one thing, her eyes frantically scanning the room as she speaks.

“You got it,” Negan says before opening and closing the door behind him to make his way to the lounge he knows he’ll at least find Sherry in at this hour of the day.

Sure enough, she’s sitting at the little bar, Amber is here too, quietly reading curled into a little ball in one of the armchairs.

“Amber,” Sherry eyes the petite blonde and, like there’s some kind of weird hierarchy Negan isn’t aware of, she closes her book and retreats to her room with it tugged under her arm and not a single word.

“And when exactly did you become Queen-bee,” Negan asks with an amused smirk and a quirked-up eyebrow, the brunette shrugging with a smile.

“What can I say?” She purrs, putting a hand on his chest. He can’t lie, two months ago? That look would’ve gotten him. “You've got your men to look after, I figured I’d relieve you of some responsibility.”

“You’re my responsibility though,” Negan corrects. “Yea? Then you might want to take better care of us because you haven’t been there a whole lot recently.”

“You’re right,” he admits. “Guess I’ve been busy elsewhere and you’re having a hard time with it, huh?”
“What's with her anyway? She needs ya to change her diapers or something?” Sherry asks, clearly picking up on the direction Negan is steering this in.

Now, he's used to Simon and Faith taking jabs at him for being attracted to such a young girl but it doesn't matter to him. After all, you're legal and consenting. And, frustrated as he is, he's not in the mood to let it roll of his back, especially when he knows it's not innocent teasing but malicious mockery.

“What can I say, I love havin’ her laid out for me,” he responds, clearly trying to get to her but also shamelessly meaning his words.

“I'm sure Randall does too,” she bites back, and, God, Negan hates the way his blood reacted to that.

He takes a minute to compose himself, letting a cold chuckle slip as he looks Sherry up and down though not in the same manner he usually would. “What do you think this is, high school or some shit?” He asks through gritted teeth.

“Hey- What the hell's going on?” Faith’s voice suddenly breaks through the heavy tension in the air as she walks into the room with a frown and her head held high.

“Y/n got jumped,” Negan bitterly spits out, his eyes not once leaving Sherry’s. “And what does that have to do with me?” She asks though the tone of her voice lets him know she's well aware and not a single bit regretful.

“Alright, I don’t know what the hell happened here, but let’s be civil and talk about it before you do something stupid, yea?” Faith once again cuts in, her voice gentle though she's throwing daggers at the woman standing in front of Negan.

“Just- Get the hell out of here,” he orders Sherry, the woman scoffing at him. “Are you kidding me-” The glare she receives is enough to shut her up and then she’s stomping out of the room, roughly bumping into Faith’s right shoulder on her way out.

It takes everything for the trained Savior not to grab a handful of the brunette’s hair and wipe the floor with her, but she restrains knowing damn well how Negan feels about harming ‘the girls’.

With a sigh, Faith walks over to the bar where her old friend has settled and takes a seat next to him. “Laihla's settled,” she lets him know, shaking her head when he tilts a bottle of whiskey her way. “I'm good, thanks.”

“That was quick,” his eyebrows shoot up in surprise as he takes a swing of the amber liquid. “Good. I'm not in the fucking mood for things to take four fucking hours.”

“It's really cool, y'know, to let her stay with her husband? That's a cool move,” Faith praises with a small smile, watching Negan's features soften. “Yeah, s'cause I'm a cool guy like that,” he teases with a cheeky smirk, making the woman laugh.

“You're ever gonna bring me and the guys up to speed or…?” She asks, clearly referring to what’s
Negan sighs and nods. “Yea, we’ll talk. I just gotta go make sure everythin’ going good, check on y/n, make sure she eats something, and I’ll come up to your quarters to talk.”

The pair exchange a quiet nod and then the Saviors’ leader slides out of his stool with one last sip from the bottle before heading out. He can’t shake the thought of you off and he needs to see you, make sure you’re okay.

People always like to theorize what the worst thing that could possibly happen to them could be, how they would ‘totally die’ if such and such was to happen to them, what it would mean for them, for the people around them. They try to conjure how bad their heart would hurt; how lost they'd feel because of it or how much damages it might cause. You've never been one of those people but it's simply because you'd already had a lot of sorrow to deal with; you didn't really feel the need to anticipate just how it could possibly get any worse.

Thing is; you were born a bright girl, always smiling, laughing and finding awe in the smallest things. A bright, shining, light used to keep you company. The day your father passed; you felt it flicker for the first time, then again when your mom started to turn into the monster you've made the acquaintance of, then again when you got beat up for the first time in school. From then on, the flickering became more regular, almost like it'd found a pace, a steady, fucked up, pace. Like a sickening heartbeat of some sorts.

You've never thought about it, not in depth at least. You've never thought of the kind of damages it could do to you if that light ever came to stop lighting your way, even for a short second. You've never minded the flickering because, at least, the light remained with you, keeping you grounded and reminding you of the bright little girl you used to be.

That light eventually started to seriously freak the hell out when Luna died, leaving you all on your own, you're thankful that Merle and Daryl were there for you back then, that Daryl still somewhat is.

Nothing ever broke that light. It got damaged, seriously freaked out at some point, but it never, ever, went off. Never.

But you felt it, you're feeling it right now. That damn light? It just broke, exploded into a million meanly sharpened pieces, cutting you so deep you can taste blood on your tongue. It just burst, turned into sharp, toxic dust, invading your lungs and suffocating you. Your brain can’t think properly, your heart has lost its steady beat, and your hands are shaking something mean as you fight to aim the barrel of your gun at Randall, your best friend, the man your heart loves like a soulmate.
Arat’s screams are white noise, a background buzz to you. The only thing you can hear clearly is the sound of Randall’s jaw snapping dangerously close to her face as she tries to reach out for her gun laying on the floor a few feet away from her.

You don't feel anything, not a damn fucking thing. Not even as your finger softly presses down on your gun's trigger, the sound of the bullet leaving the barrel making your ears ring and your heart jump. You don't break down when you hear Randall's body fall heavily on the ground next to Arat, there’s nothing when you open your eyes again and watch blood leave his head.

There's no pain, no sadness, no anger. It's just you, standing there, shaking as tears silently and steadily roll down your cheeks. You're completely numb.

Robot-like, you tuck your gun back into your jeans and walk towards Randall’s corpse, paying no attention to Arat who's now back up on her feet, her gun in hands but no words leaving her mouth and you're thankful for that because you're afraid of the things you'll do to her if she was to speak to you right now.

As you stand there, looking down at your companion’s face, you can hear yourself scream and cry in agony, desperately clawing at the walls in your head, but nothing shows your distress on the surface.

His eyes are closed, and he’d almost look peaceful if it wasn’t for the fresh bruises and wounds marking his face, one in particular catches your attention. There's a clear mark of the butt of an AK on the right side of his head, right next to his eye and you know. You know that's what killed him.

He must have been knocked out, maybe he fell, and the impact killed him; you're not sure, nothing makes sense at this point. All you know is that not enough damages were done to his brain to keep him from turning and you find yourself wishing that it did. You didn't want to see him as one of them and he never wanted to become one. You failed him on that, and you’ll carry that guilt with you.

Gently, you slip your hands under his armpits, wrap your arms around his shoulders and start dragging him along with you, his body leaving a fresh trail of blood behind, making the corridor look like a damn horror movie scene.

There’re no words leaving your mouth, not the slightest sign of emotion on your face but silent tears. Your body is tense and shaking but still carrying you somehow. There's nothing, nothing at all. Right now, you're just a bag of flesh, blood and guts with a less than half-functioning mind, nothing more but something less. You broke your light.

You lift your head up to blankly stare into space when you spot Arat’s hands reaching for Randall's ankles to try and help you carry him but, somehow, it sets you off and you find yourself taking your gun out to point it straight to her head, your finger already on the trigger. You have no say whatsoever on what's happening to you. Your mind has gone vacant.

“Alright, y/n- Alright. I'm sorry,” the woman carefully apologizes as she slowly backs away with her hands up to show you that she got the message and won't go against it.
Like some kind of animal protecting her child, you still stare in her general direction for a bit longer, something primal in your brain needing to make sure the threat it has identify her as can truly be dismissed.

Everything is a blur after that as you mindlessly drag Randall’s body up the stairs and through the whole compound. You're on auto-pilot when you pass through the dorms' hall and stop at your room to grab your backpack and leave Randall's body there as you go through his room to shove the content of his chest in your bag before resuming your route with no regard whatsoever for the cautious, terrified stares you get along the way.

You can feel them staring but the only concrete thing to you is the weight of your best friend’s corpse in your arms. The rest of the world is just blurry silhouettes and drowned-out sounds.

Your pupils shrink when you step outside, but your eyes don’t squint against the sunlight. The walkers guarding the gates get agitated by the smell of fresh blood Randall is leaving all over the place but you're so out of it that you don't even hear them.

As a matter of fact, you’re so out of it that you don't even register that Negan, Faith, Dwight and Simon are standing right there, previously chatting, their conversation cut short when you showed up, and they're all looking at you though none of them makes a move. They all know better and two of them are shocked to see Randall dead.

They warily watch as you get to a rusty car and open the trunk to lay Randall in it, covering him up with an old blanket but, before you can close to trunk, Simon's hand grabs your forearm and, even though his grip isn't violent, it's enough to push you over the edge. Before he can even blink, he ends up with the barrel of your gun pointed rat his head, your finger dangerously resting on the trigger, your teary eyes fixed on his.

You don’t say anything to him, just jut your chin out towards the gate in a silent but clear order. You may not be vocalizing it, but your body language screams your distress and, as he realizes that you're in no condition to be talked down, Simon slowly backs away from you.

With a single look to Negan, trying to get some kind of green light from his boss before opening the gate for you, Simon gets a sharp nod, Negan not moving an inch as though you might break into pieces if he so much as speaks.

This isn’t what he wanted for the damn kid and he’ll be sure to look into it but, right now, he can’t lie; that’s not his top priority, not when you look the way you do. The way you’re carrying yourself and behaving is almost feral, for lack of better words. He can already tell that something’s changed about you, he doesn't need to talk to you, he just knows. It's in your eyes. It’s not just the shock of the loss, it's deeper than that, more violent and raw, he can see unfiltered hatred in your eyes which he never has before. No matter how many times you’ve told him those three words; you never really felt it, now he can tell.

Over his shoulder, he can see and hear Faith softly crying and finds her eyes screwed shut, her right
hand covering her mouth. Randall was like a kid to her, much like you became, and Negan can tell this is breaking her heart.

His attention snaps back to you when he hears the trunk of the car creak as you reach up to close it ever so softly and he watches as you take a minute to stand there, tears still steadily falling from your swollen, red-rimmed eyes, clearly struggling to take your bloody hand off the grey steel.

He feels his jaw clench when you lean down, forehead against the trunk, your belly jumping with a swallowed sob, before taking a deep breath and rounding the car to get behind the wheel.

You don’t even look his way, don’t acknowledge Simon standing by the now opened gate, as you drive out of the Sanctuary, but Negan catches the cry you let out and sees you struggle to keep straight in your seat before you’re completely out of sight.

He barely had you back and, though somewhere deep down he knows you’ll be back; he now has to question if there’s any coming back from that mentally because he’s never seen you like this before. Granted, he’s only had you around for a month and spoke to you from afar for two, but he’s never seen you so broken-down, even after the whole ordeal with Jason.

“What the hell did you do?” He hears Faith faintly ask behind his back. “What d’you do, Negan?”

His shoulders slump as he runs a hand down his face. He fucked up is what he did, but he’d never intended for the kid to get killed and there’s no fixing that with a wink and a cocky remark- There’s no fixing you with that bullshit either.

“I could try ‘n’ trail her if ya want,” Simon hesitantly proposes over his shoulder and he finds Faith leaning into Dwight as she tries to compose herself when he turns to his three best people.

“Nah, leave her be. She needs to do whatever the Hell she’s out there doin’.” His eyes land on the trail of blood Randall’s body has left behind on the concrete and sees it continue through the warehouse. “And get someone to clean this shit up,” Negan orders with a grimace, his voice blasé.

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You have no idea how much time has passed when you finally get to that damned spot where Connor’s lies and feel your stomach eating itself up at the sight of the wooden cross sticking out of the ground. It hurts like a bitch, but you still manage to park though you have to take a moment before you get out of the car.

You're used to this; burying people, you know how it works, why it happens but still; you never get used to it. It never gets any easier, at least not for you. It seems to have become such a casualty for most people, but it doesn't sit right with you. Burying someone shouldn't be disregarded as 'just another thing we do'. Someone's death should not be considered a casualty and you refuse to let it
When you get out of the driver’s seat and your legs shakily carry you to the trunk of the car, part of you is waiting for Randall to just pop-up and scream ‘got’cha! Stop crying you pussy.’ But reality is an ugly thing sometimes and there’s not a single sign of life from him when you gather enough courage to open the trunk.

There’s a big patch of blood where his head is on the blanket you’ve thrown over him and the sight almost brings you to your knees right there and then. It feels like you’re breaking from the inside-out.

Randall is your best friend, your heart loves his and you can feel it ache for his friend’s steady beat, like a damn lost kid helplessly calling out for his parent. There’s just something so awful about the way it feels. You love this man, love him differently than you love Daryl, feel differently about than you feel about Negan, care differently about than you do for Jesus.

Randall is different from everything you’ve ever known and losing him hurts like very little ever has. The last time your heart has ached in such a way was when you’d lost Luna; someone your heart had also clung to. Mourning her was hell because of that connection, because it’s something that runs deep and is firmly rooted. You know for a fine fact that you don’t have the energy to go through that again but the painful ache in your chest is letting you know it isn't optional.

You’ve shed tears the whole way there and, yet, they’re somehow still going even though your eyes sting with dehydration. What you haven’t done though is actually cry. One sob escaped you just as you were leaving The Sanctuary but then it all went radio-silent… Until now.

After hours of feeling barely human, of everything feeling numb and fake, the dam finally breaks and your tear-streaked face scrunches-up in your effort to brace yourself for the sobs you feel bubbling up your throat.

Your heart feels as though it could beat out of your chest as you finally allow it to let go of all the anger, that sadness, and that pain. Your lungs burn with the sudden change in pace of your breathing and it feels like someone is pushing down on your throat. The pressure keeps on strengthening until you finally explode with a scream that echoes throughout the entire woods.

In the middle of the clearing you’ve stopped at, you finally fall to your knees and let your head rest on the grassy ground, digging your nails into the dirt in a desperate attempt to keep yourself grounded.

Everything hurts so bad; you wish it could just fucking stop. You’re not asking for much, just for things to stop hurting like hell constantly. You need a fucking break. At this point, you’re past waiting for ‘the other shoe’ to drop- You're at the point where it’s fucking pianos filled with cement that are being dropped on your goddamn head.

You let yourself cry, let yourself feel that fucking awful burning, white-hot pain coursing through
your entire being for a few before rolling to your back and sitting up, puffy eyes scanning the small clearing for any sign that your outburst may have attracted some very-much-unwanted attention.

Your vision is clouded, and your ears are clogged, but nothing makes your hairs stand so you quietly get back up, though not without a little wince for your aching shoulder that you’d completely forgotten about ‘til now, and, though reluctantly, get back to the task at hand.

Your trembling hands try and get a firm grip on Randall but, the second the blanket covering him slips to reveal his lifeless, bruised face; you can feel yourself recoil even further into the very back of your own mind with a cry that carries through into the real world.

Your hands rest delicately on his covered chest as you screw your eyes shut, trying your hardest to fight through the very real and imminent heartbreak. You can't find the strength to lift him up and out of that damn trunk. You can't. Your legs are locked in place, refusing to let you move, and your arms are too shaky for you to get a real, secure hold on Randall, let alone lift him up and carry him out.

You can’t believe tears are still coming at this point. It's painful and it doesn't fucking stop, it's so violent that crying hurts you more than anything at this point.

“I’m so sorry, Randall,” you whisper down at blanket. “I don’t- I don’t know wh-what t-to do. It’s too hard. It hurts so bad. M’not strong e-enough for this. I can’t” You swallow around the lump in your throat.

“I should’ve seen it- I did. I knew something was wrong and I- I didn’t- God, I should have made you stay this morning. I should have made you stay,” you keep on repeating the same words over and over, your guilt eating you alive.

The only thing able to bring you back to that harsh reality of yours are a few noises coming from the woods surrounding the area and all you can really do is grab your bow and pointlessly aim it at one random spot, waiting for someone to come out or for a bunch of walkers to show up but there's nothing. The noises remain but you're so tired and lost that you can't possibly identify where they're coming from and who or what's causing them.

You decide to go back to the task at hand and take Randall out of the trunk, somehow managing not to drop him on the ground though you let his legs fall because you're too weak to carry his whole weight at the moment.

Having him in your arms like that; unresponsive, gone, covered in a bloody blanket you know is hiding nasty bruises and wounds, makes you sick to your stomach. You've never thought anything could hurt so bad after everything you’ve been through.

Grabbing a shovel to dig his grave hurts something mean and it’s unbearable being helpless to this feeling that’s akin to poison.

Burying Randall is burying your best friend, your soulmate. Your heart aches for him like you two have been happy together in another life a long time ago. He never walked on eggshells around you, never outcasted you for your difficult past; he loved you for you and you loved him for him.
Nothing could have been prepared you for this moment, no matter how much he’d talked about it. He’d told you what he wanted, to be buried with his best friend; which is why you’re here right now. Without much surprise, constantly having Connor’s grave in your peripheral isn’t helping soothe your heartache.

Everything feels fake, nothing makes logical sense as you dig Randall’s grave right next to your other fallen friend, just like he wanted. Like you promised you would.

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You've been standing there for hours. Hours of just standing in front of Randall's still opened grave as he lays in the grass right next to it, looking almost peaceful, and you can't help but wonder if he's with Connor right now, making stupid, corny, jokes that you hate to love so much. If anything, you hope he found his mom.

After taking a deep breath, you decide now’s the time to say goodbye and get down on your knees.

"I suck at this,” you quietly admit with a sad little laugh before clearing your throat. “And I really don't want to say goodbye ‘cause then... then it’s real, you know?” You heave out a sad, shaky sigh. “I don’t want you to be gone.”

“I don’t want you to be gone but, if- if you have to go th-then I wanna say goodbye, okay?” Your throat clicks as you swallow. “I wish we hadn’t gone out that day, no one would’ve found us, you wouldn’t-t” You pause to focus on fighting off a very imminent sob. “You'd still be here,” you finish with a nod, looking in the distance to try and blink the sting in your eyes away.

“You be good up there, alright? You be good and- and you rest. You deserve it. S-So- So don't you worry about li’l ol’ me, I’l’l be... I don't know. But, it's like you always said, we'll just have t-to make due, r-right?” You quote him, trying like Hell to convince yourself that you’re not on the verge of completely breaking apart, tears dripping down your face like there's a cloud above your head raining down on you.

It takes you a bit, but you eventually manage to lean over to press a lingering kiss to Randall’s cold forehead, your shaking hands framing his paling face. “I love you, okay? Don’t you dare forget about me up there. You and Conny be good wherever you are, don’t you make me come up there,” your tiny little laugh turns into a sob that you stifle by pressing your head into Randall’s neck.

Thoughts of his last hours being nothing but pain only make your stomach twist into a tighter knot and your throat constrict further. “I'm gonna burn that place to the fucking ground,” you speak against clammy skin. “I'm gonna light the entire fucking place on fire and watch them all burn with it, Randall, I swear.” You take a shaky breath and push yourself back on your haunches, your eyes glued to your best friend’s face, your hands delicately resting on his chest.

“Here,” you speak as you retrieve an old but clean hankie from your backpack’s front pocket, “let’s clean you up.”

With that, you crack open your last bottle of water and wet the tissue to gently wipe the blood and muck from Randall’s face. You take a little more time with him once he’s cleaned up, trying to let
your mind process that he’s not sleeping; he’s gone and it’s real.

You’re gentle when you put him down into the crave you’ve dug him right next to Connor’s and push through the urge to just ball-up and cry some more to carefully place belongings of his you’ve managed to snatch before leaving The Sanctuary. That includes his tattooing kit, some of his drawings and the few pictures you knew he kept in his bedside drawer.

Cover him up with dirt is the hardest part of it all go figure, your mind screaming at you to stop ‘what if he wakes up’, ‘what if he’s okay’, ‘I want to see him, stop covering him!’

The knot in your stomach tightens progressively the more his body disappears, and you have to process the fact that you've heard his voice and felt his embrace for the last time this very morning and that today was the last time you’ll ever see his face again.

“I love you, Randall. I love you; I love you; I love you,” you repeat as if it somehow will make all of this go away as you discard your shovel and curl-up in-between his and Connor's grave with tears silently rolling down your cheeks to fall on the ground below and get soaked into the dirt of Randall's grave.

You're not sure how you feel, you know it's bad; it's awful. It hurts and it's not just a psychological pain, it's so violent that it's also a physical one, a really fucking painful one, but you can't find words to describe it.

“Y/n? Sweetheart? Hey, c'mon, wake up.” Your eyes flutter open when a somewhat familiar voice echoes in your ears and you find yourself patting the ground, looking for your knife but a hand comes down on your wrist to keep it still.

“Hey, s’okay, y/n. S’meh, Daryl.” You hear the archer speak and the soft tone in his voice almost breaks you.

“Leave me alone, Dixon,” you give him the cold shoulder, your back still turned to him as you lay your head on Randall's grave. You’ve cried enough today; now you just want to rest a little.

“Yeah, right, as if you're just gonna get rid of me so easily. Try again, sunshine.”

“I'm not in the fucking mood, Daryl. Just leave!” You snarl, trying your hardest to starve off the tears, but the fact that you love this man with all your heart doesn't really play in your favor right at this instant.

“C'mon, darlin', cut the crap,” the hunter gently coos and that's all it takes for you to turn around and hide away against his chest, crying until his shirt is completely soaked with your tears.

“I'm sorry, sunshine,” he whispers against the top of your head as he inspects the grave you were
sleeping on and assumes it to be the root of your chagrin.

“It's all my fault, Daryl,” you cry into his chest, still unable to calm yourself down. “Hey, stop-” “I should have made him stay. I c-could have helped him! Why didn’t I make him stay? It's my fault, it's all my fault, Daryl,” you let out through heart-wrenching sobs.

“Staying at Alexandria was selfish of me. I was- I was just so happy to have you back, I... I abandoned him. I thought that- that I still had a chance to get a small piece of a somewhat normal life back. Just- How s-stupid am I?” You ask, looking at him as if you're genuinely waiting for an answer.

His expression softens. “That doesn't make ya stupid, y/n. Stop hurtin’ yourself like that, please-”

“Negan lied to me,” you whisper more so to yourself than directly addressing the archer. “He said- He promised Randall was safe, he... I was selfish not to look into it, I just- I just w-wanted to believe him so bad.”

“You can't blame yourself like that, [y/n]. C'mon, please-”

“Tell me that you didn't feel guilty for what happened to Merle, that you didn't f-feel like y-you could have done s-something sooner,” you cut him off, pulling away to look at him as words leave your mouth completely unfiltered.

“Stop,” Daryl warns, clearly not liking the way things are headed. “Tell me, come on! If that's so easy, tell me you couldn't have done something sooner for him, tell me that you don't feel that guilt every time you remember him!” You snap, your hands clinging to his vest.

“Please- Please, tell me,” you plead, sobs leaving your mouth as guilt and regret wash over you after unfairly bringing Merle up.

The two sit of you sit there, kneeling in front of one another and you look down, pulling at your fingers, waiting for him to either leave you there or to blow a fuse but, instead, he pushes you back into his arms and holds you to his chest like he’s afraid you might leave.

“I can’t ‘cause I do feel guilty sometimes, but Merle made his own decision and went out tryin’ to be better. Whatever happened with your friend, it ain’t your fault ‘less you’re the one who sent him in his early crave, y’hear me?” The hunter coos as he rocks you back and forth in his arms, letting you cry into the crook of his neck.

“But he's g-gone,” you protest. “He's gone and I- I don't w-want him t-to be gone. I want him b-back, Daryl. Please.”

“I can't do that, sunshine. Y'know I can't,” Daryl feels his heart clench in his chest at the sob you let out at his words. “M'sorry. I'm so sorry, darlin’.”

“I have to head back,” you whisper as you pull away from him, bringing a bloody hand up to wipe a few tears away, smearing some more blood on your face in the process.

“Lemme bring you back to Alexandria,” Daryl tries. “I don’t know what happened and I’d say it
ain’t my business, but you got hurt ‘cause of it so it is my fucking business- Whatever it is, you said it yourself; that asshole lied to ya-”

“And I need to go back and figure things out, D’,” you quietly tell him, your expression soft but giving your exhaustion away. The hunter’s eyes almost flutter shut when you reach up to frame his face in your bloody, shaking hands. **Trust me, I want nothing more than to watch that place and all the fuckers in it burn to ashes, but I have to try and be rational.**

“I’d say s’up for debate,” the archer shrugs, getting a little laugh out of you. **Of course you would.**

“S’your car right there, yea?” Daryl asks, motioning to the parked car behind him with a tilt of his head and you silently nod. “Lemme drive ya back, I’ll drop ya off where they can’t see me, I promise, just-”

“Alright,” you gently cut him off. “Alright, D’. You can drive me back if you want.”

Daryl is surprised by your easiness; he honestly was ready to fight you to get you into the damn car, but he can tell that you’re completely drained. He fucking hates it.

**Here,** he speaks, clearing his throat as he reaches back before handing you a walkie-talkie. **‘S’Michonne’s but she went back home, she doesn’t need it,” he shrugs. ‘Plus, we’ve got plenty back at Alexandria since… y’know, you got that asshole off of our back... And, look, if things ain't good-”**

“Thank you, Daryl,” you siftly cut him off before clearing your throat. **We’ll have this conversation later, I'm not- I can't right now, alright?”** You whisper, eyeing Randall and Connor's graves. **“I don't have the energy for it.”**

**But you got the energy to get back there and talk to that asshole? I don’t have that even on a good day.”**

“Yeah, s'called priorities, Dixon,” you try and keep your tone light and teasing but can't hide your exhaustion from him. He knows you like his back pocket.

“Smartass,” he mumbles, playfully pushing your shoulder and, for a moment, you almost forget where you are and why you're there but the moment you turn around and your eyes fall on Randall's grave, it's like a huge wound tears wide open and now you have to deal with the sting of it.

“Hey, take your time to say goodbye, darlin’,” Daryl softly speaks, the fun little moment gone.

“I-I'm okay... I'm okay,” you assure but can't resist the urge to kiss your hand and push it against the dirt covering Randall's body before grabbing your backpack and taking the hand Daryl is giving you, his thumb reassuringly stroking the skin of the back of your hand, trying to comfort you as best as he can.

“Alright, let's go,” you whisper with a tight throat, leading Daryl to the car and stopping by the trunk to dump the shovel in it.
The archer takes pity and helps you close the damned thing when he realizes that you’re having a hard time before guiding you to the passenger side with a gently hand at the middle of your back.

With one last look back at the two graves, Daryl sighs and gives a quick two-fingered salute their way before joining in the car.

During the ride, the two of you don’t really talk. Daryl can clearly sense that you're heavy with pain, mourning your friend, missing him and beating yourself up for what happened to him. He also sees you stroking the black rose burned into the side of your left thumb. Something he has to remind himself to ask you about one of these days. Today isn’t the one though.

“**Remember when Merle almost got us killed by that crazy drug dealing crackhead?**” He asks out of the blue, desperate to get you out of that awful headspace he knows you’re slowly but surely slipping into.

He’s so relieved he could shit himself when you turn in your seat to look at him with a little laugh. “Yeah, good times with the Dixons. Gooooood times,” you say with a small giggle, Daryl chuckling along and shaking his head.

“**We couldn’t stop laughin’ afterwards though I honestly felt like I was about to shit myself the whole time.**”

“And Merle was so calm, that was so scary to me. The dude himself wasn't scaring me, Merle's behavior was. What an ass, I swear,” you recall with a tired smile. “Yeah, you can say that again,” Daryl chuckles.

“I’m sorry ’bout your friend, sweetheart,” he carefully says. “I know he meant- **means** a lot to ya and I can't imagine what you're going through, s'not fair and I'd make it all go away if I could.”

“I know you would, Daryl,” you tell him barely above a whisper, trying not to cry again but feeling the tears coming regardless. “I love you for that,” you inform him, nodding when he looks over at you.

“C’mere,” he softly invites, his right hand leaving the wheel so that he can extend his arm. You’re quick to take the invite and undo your seatbelt to nestle yourself into his side.

Two hours later, Daryl stops the car on the side of the road and gently wakes you up after you’ve fallen asleep on him twenty minutes into the car ride. He looks at you, unsure of what to say or do. “**You radio me anytime you need anythin’, alright?**”

“Promise, I will,” you assure him. “Thank you, D’, I needed a friend tonight and I'm glad you've magically appeared like that.”

“Well,” he starts with a small chuckle, “actually, I was headin’ back to Alexandria when I saw you- Well, **someone**, just layin’ there and I wanted to check if… y’know, f’it was a dead body that might have something…”

“Were you about to rob me, Dixon?” You ask with a quirked up eyebrow but a small smile on your
“Shame on you.”

“I hate you,” he says with a shake of his head and a smile. “Me too, with a burning passion,” you chuckle, the hunter echoing it.

“Hey, If you want to call that whole thing off? With Negan? We're all here-”

“Daryl,” you cut him off with an exhausted, sad laugh, “right now? I want everything to stop, alright? I don't even- I don't even feel like breathing anymore so, just... I- I'm gonna get going before I change my mind and get the bright idea to run off again. Keep the car, get home safe,” you say, quickly kissing his cheek and getting out of the car, not giving him the chance to say anything, but he understands. He always does.

You watch as Daryl drives away in one of Negan's cars and can't help but feel cocky about it. Karma's a bitch.

With heavy feet, you head back to the Sanctuary, knowing damn well that he's waiting for you and, yeah, maybe he understands that you needed space or maybe he'll stay true to himself and give you shit about going away for the day- Either way, you're more than willing to shoot him in the dick at the moment.

As you walk down the road, you find peace in the sound of the crickets singing loud in the night, the cold air, the light the moon is casting and the sound of the trees' branches moving around in the wind. For a moment, you remember why being alive might actually be worth something even with all the terrible things you're forced to go through day after day.

You're exhausted. You're hurt and you can already feel the empty space Randall has left behind and it's tearing you apart. That's what caring does, doesn't it? Eventually, it fucking destroys you and leaves you completely hollow. There's nothing, absolutely nothing; it's just you and you hate you; you don't want you. You can't stand being left alone with yourself; it fucking terrifies you.

________________________________________________________________________

FLASHBACK / A MONTH AND SIX DAYS AGO //

Sunday 5th March 2017 ;

1:15 AM //

“I wanna be buried next to Connor,” are the words that make you choke on your hot chocolate, Randall scrambling over to rub a hand up and down your back to sooth you. “What?”

You ask him with wet, wide eyes, your voice croaked from coughing.

He quietly settles on his haunches next to you on the mattress once he’s satisfied that you’re okay
and heaves a deep sigh. “I’ve been thinking, y’know, if something ever happens to me-”

“We’re not having this conversation,” you abolish, your heart hurting at the mere thought of Randall being gone. He gives a soft, humorless chuckle at your hard-headed nature. “I’m not sayin’ we should have that conversation; I’m just telling you that this is what I want ‘cause I know you’ll respect it when it’ll come down to it.”

You soften at that, closing the old Batman you were reading and carefully putting it aside to face Randall cross-legged. “Of course I would,” you affirm, taking his hands in yours, “but don’t talk like I’m gonna have to.”

You see him eye the rose burned into the thin skin of the right side of your left thumb and realize he’s been lost in his head for a little bit now.

“Hey, what’s going on?” You quietly ask him, almost afraid that he’ll walk away from you even though he never has.

“It’s just… I’ve been thinking a lot lately, probably a little too much,” he shrugs. “I don’t know, I think I’m just too deep in my head is all.”

“I think you know what’s in there,” you point at his head, “but you don’t want to tell me about it because you feel like you’ll burden me. We already talked about this, Randall. It goes both ways. I’m here for you, and you’re here for me.”

Silently, Randall slips his hands out of yours and reaches over to slid you onto his lap. You let him because you know that’s something he does when things get a little hard for him to talk about.

“I just wish things could just, you know, stay like that and stop going to shit for once. It’s just so fucking exhausting, makes me envy them sometimes,” he explains, referring to the walkers roaming outside. “I’m scared shitless at the idea of getting gutted and turning into one of them though, I don’t fucking want that.”

“I’ll never let anything happen to you,” you promise in a whisper. “I don’t want to have to bury you, Randall- I don’t think I’ll be able to come back from that.”

“You’re upset,” he points out with a sad frown and you give a tiny little laugh. “Of course I’m upset, but that’s not on you. I just hate when we get all serious like that,” you tell him, and it gets a little smile from the tattooed man.

“But, sometimes, we need that. Those things suck but they are important, and I’d hate to rob you of having a proper rest,” you tell him and melt a little when Randall leaves a lingering kiss on your lips that make your toes curl and your hands cling to him.

“I’ll make sure you find your way to Connor, you don’t ever have to worry about that,” you promise him, extending a shaky pinkie finger out for him to take in his and seal the deal.

Afterwards, you stay wrapped in each other’s embrace for a bit, just trying to ground and collect yourselves again, Randall softly rocking back and forth before carefully laying you both down on the bed and under the covers.
You’re half laying on him, your left leg draped over his hip and your left hand resting between his
chest and your cheek. He’s holding to him like you might slip away and you’re holding a fistful of
his shirt like you’re afraid of the same thing.

“We’ll be alright, sweetheart,” Randall quietly reassures, and you can feel yourself relaxing a little.
You needed to hear those words right now. “We’re a hell of a team, I’ve got your back and you’ve
got mine.”

“Always,” you quickly confirm, leaving a kiss on the snake tattooed on his throat. “We’re gonna
be okay, I know that, I just hate that we can’t promise it’ll stay that way,” you quietly confess.

“Yea, I’m sorry I can give that to you, but I can promise you is that I’ll always be there even when
I can’t be. I need you to know that.”

“Just… Promise me you’ll talk to me, please,” you quietly plead, feeling him gently squeeze your
waist to comfort you. “I promise.”

For the second time that night, your pinkies meet though, this time around, they don’t break apart
when you put your hands back down. You just let them rest laced on Randall’s torso. “You’ve been
doing great expressing yourself those past few weeks, I think you should know that,” he praises
and you smile a little. “I’m really proud of you, sweetheart.”

“Thank you, Randall,” you whisper, completely fluttered. “Course.”

“You’re easy to talk to,” you tell him. “You feel safe, like home… I love you, Randall,” is the last
thing you remember saying to him that night after he kissed your forehead and made sure you were
covered and comfortable enough.

“Yeah, I know. I love you too, y/n,” he whispered to you tough you were already asleep.
Broken Trust

Chapter Notes

[UPDATED OCTOBER 1, 2019]

THIS IS SORT OF A LONG ONE BUT P L E A S E READ THE TRIGGER WARNING, ANGELS!

TRIGGER WARNINGS: MENTIONS OF PAST CHILD ABUSE / NEGLECT, HEAVY SELF-HATRED, SUICIDAL THOUGHTS AND MENTIONS OF INFERTILITY. MOSTLY; THIS CHAPTER DEALS WITH SEXUAL ASSAULT. THERE'S NO RAPE BUT IT STAYS DISTURBING CONTENT. I WROTE THIS CHAPTER WHEN MY TRAUMA WAS HITTING ME R E A L H A R D AND I N E E D E D TO VENT SOME SHIT OUT I GUESS AND ENDED UP POURING IT INTO THIS STORY.

IF YOU'RE SENSITIVE TO THIS KIND OF THINGS (which is totally fucking understandable, victim of it or not) THEN PLEASE DO NOT READ THE SCENE THAT I'VE MARKED (there's multiple trigger warnings indicating sensitive topics placed throughout the entire chapter in BOLD LETTERS). THEY MARK THE BEGINNING AND THE END OF IT. YOU'LL UNDERSTAND WHAT HAPPENED WITHOUT HAVING TO READ THROUGH THE DAMN THING SO, PLEASE, ABSTAIN IF YOU KNOW IT'S GOING TO TRIGGER YOU. IT'S. ABSOLUTELY.NOT.WORTH.IT.

PLEASE STAY SAFE, REMEMBER THAT YOU ARE NOT ALONE AND I'M NOT JUST SAYING IT TO SAY IT: I'M HERE, I'VE BEEN THROUGH THIS SHIT, I'M FIGHTING THAT MONSTER. SO, EVEN THOUGH YOU DON'T KNOW ME AND I DON'T KNOW YOU, I'M LETTING YOU KNOW THAT I'M HERE IF YOU NEED TO TALK. DON'T STAY ALONE.

PS; FOR MY A.D.(H).D FOLKS OUT THERE, THIS CHAPTER IS LOONG -which is also why it took me three fucking years to finish even the second time around) SO TAKE IT EASY AND DON'T FRUSTRATE YOURSELF IF YOU CAN'T FINISH IT.

'K! BYE FOR REAL NOW! UP Y'ALL ENJOY THIS CHAPTER -you won't, it's awful and i hate myself- AGAIN: PLEASE BE SAFE.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

12th April:

00:15 AM //

You’re unsure of exactly how long you’ve just been laying there, in the middle of the road, un-bothered by the hungry growls coming from the walkers guarding the Sanctuary, just looking up at the stars-littered-night-sky. With the ghost of a smile, you remember your father explaining to you that a night-sky filled with stars usually means that the next day will be bright and sunny.
Honestly, at this point, you can only hope that it's actually a thing because the last couple of weeks have been cloudy and cold for April, and you don't really have the luxury of synthetic warmth nowadays.

well, negan does... fucker and his stupid fucking chimney, making the rest of his stupid fucking people get warm with a fucking stupid kitchen stove or a fucking stupid iron to their stupid fucking face.

With a disgruntled grunt, you sit up, your body protesting the movement with a deep ache that almost makes you want to let yourself slump back on the road and call it a day.

It just feels nice to be outside- Well, at least for you it does. You like being alone. The moment you’d grown enough to properly use all your limbs, you’ve made an habit out of climbing on rooftops and just lay there to look up at the sky at night, it's the one thing that could ever kill all the bad things going on inside your mind and all around you. It worked better than any pills ever could and no drugs you’ve been on was ever able to keep you this calm and appeased.

It’s insane when you think about it but, truth be told, you’ve only started to truly and wholly enjoy your own company when the world got turned upside-down.

You were used to being alone before, and you’d always try to convince yourself that that's what you wanted, that you preferred it that way; but you didn't. You hated it. You hated how alone you were but, after the whole world came crashing down, the feeling changed. You didn't feel lonely anymore, you were just a girl who’d come to enjoy her own company, who knew what she wanted, what she was about; you loved that feeling.

It kept you safe for so long but never kept you from getting close to people. You’ve been with a few groups here and there but, though it didn't work out, you've never felt like your whole world had been crushed and turned to dust when it eventually came to the point where the people around you would either die, get lost, or just run off; you just kept going.

You were able to keep the good memories though you never forgot the awful ones, and kept rolling with them, taking comfort in the good ones and toughening yourself up with the bad ones. Your brain had finally found a way to properly function through the deep depression that was making it so dysfunctional at times, and still does right now, and it was good. You even believed you were happy at some point.

Then, maybe you ended up all alone for too long, you're not sure what caused it really; but things changed. A switch was flipped and, from then on, your brain decided that you were better off on your own after all, that there was no point whatsoever in joining groups because they were all bound to die or leave you alone again anyway and, at the time? It made so much sense to you.

You’d remember Jordan, the girl you’d met when you were fourteen. You both were really close, thick as thieves, the world was yours- no one and nothing could stand in your way. You’d remember Sam; a man you looked up to as a father-figure. And you’d remember Ashley, Miss Watts, Josh, Kendall- All those people you’ve seen disappear in a blink of an eye and it just made sense.
Being alone is something you’ve learned to appreciate and protect with every fiber of your being. You’ll always fight, teeth and claws, for your freedom.

So many people tried to take advantage of you, mostly men looking for sexual favors you were less than willing to give out, and, though you hate to even think about it, these scumbags left marks on you. They crushed you and forced you to let your mask fall to reveal that you were, and still are to this day, a naive, vulnerable and shy girl, only trying to do good and get by. They loved that part; you know they did. They never made a point of hiding it.

From this point on, it just became easier and easier for people to push themselves upon you and you hated it. You hated being alive, having to go through this kind of things. You’d always find a way to get away from those pigs, only for you to end up into another's arms.

The whole ordeal with Jason was nothing compared to the kind of nightmare-ish treatments you’ve been put through before you've met Negan. Nothing at all. You still remember the terrible things your mother's multiple and creepy boyfriends pulled on you when you were just a little girl, missing her deceased father and struggling to understand why her own mother suddenly didn't love her anymore.

“Don't,” you whisper into the air, begging yourself not to open the Pandora box.

You’ve been standing in front of the Sanctuary for what feels like hours though it's only been a few minutes. You’re cold and your eyes are heavy with fatigue, but you can’t bring yourself to push the gate open- which has been left unlocked and you damn well why, as if you coming back was a given or something.

With a deep, shaky breath, you to let yourself in, one of the walkers guarding the place almost making you pee yourself when it pushes angrily against the fence. You’d almost forgot about them.

For some stupid reason; you decide to lock the gates behind you even though the angry little ball hidden deep inside is screaming for you to just leave them wide open and let the fuckers inside get gutted in their sleep.

“Alright, relax there, edgelord,” you whisper to yourself as you get inside the compound, ignoring the looks you’re getting from the men working the night-shift though you can't deny your urge to shove a baseball bat down their throats.

you need to stop hanging out with Negan is what you need to do.
Inside the warehouse, you sniffle as you subconsciously bring yours arms up and wrap them around yourself as you just stand there, looking up at the deck perched above. The deck that leads directly to Negan’s quarters, and you hate yourself for it, but you start feeling the need to get up there and go talk to him. You don’t want to fight, you want him to hold you for a bit and tell you that you’ll be okay, and that infuriates you. He lied to you, he got Randall killed, you should want to smother him in his sleep, not snuggle with him.

“This is so dumb,” you whisper as you walk to the staircase leading up the deck all whilst nervously pulling at your bloody fingers, completely forgetting that you are, in fact, still covered in Randall’s blood which doesn't really help calm you down. If anything, it makes it all much, much worse, sending your anxiety to an all-time high.

You finally reach the big doors leading to Negan's parts of the compound and push them open before sneaking in. You immediately hear voices coming from the open ‘rec-room’ slash ‘living room’ slash ‘lunge’ and decide to eavesdrop on the conversation Negan seems to be having with no other than Sherry.

They're at the bar, she's sitting on one of the stools and he's behind the counter, making himself a drink. “…It ain’t me you’re pissed off at, s’her, and I get feelin’ jealous, I’m flattered, really, but you’re gonna have to fuckin’ calm down is what I’m tellin’ you, doll.”

‘doll’… nothing but toys, and you fall in the same damn category...

“You think you’re slick, huh?” Sherry inquires and, though you can’t see her, you catch the clear smile in her voice. “You know I am, doll,” Negan coos with a smirk and a chuckle that makes you want to punch his face off and send it to the fucking moon.

A few beats pass and you’re helpless to do anything but feel your heart grow that much heavier as you watch Negan walk around the little bar to Sherry and plant a kiss on her lips which she instantly gives back, her hands gripping his hair.

Your eyes sting and your face is sadly scrunched-up. He’s kissing someone else; he's actually putting his mouth on someone else's and it fucking hurts, way more than you would have ever imagined it could.

“We were happy before she showed up,” Sherry speaks. “So, yea, excuse me for not appreciating being put on the sidelines.”

Negan scoffs; “Sherry, doll, you’re talkin’ like we were goin’ steady or somethin’. You’re a good fuck, sure, but so ‘s Amber and the others. Y/n ain’t got nothin’ to do with what’s happening here.”

“Like Hell she doesn’t. She appears and you’re suddenly unavailable twenty-four-seven – And I know she sleeps in your room- which you never allow us to do. The only attention you’ve given me ever since that brat arrived was when you fucked me the night she ran off with Randall. A month, Negan. I had you back for a month of pent-up, angry sex and then you disappeared again.”
Your hands and legs start to shake violently as the tears in your eyes now completely block your view, threatening to spill, and it feels as though you’re about to throw up.

“You’re sayin’ that like it ain’t what I’ve always done. Fuck, s’far as I’m concern, I made ya cum every single time, didn’t I?” He reminds her and you almost break right then. You wish you could fucking move, but your legs are locked in place.

“You're a piece of shit.”

“I know. And you left the love of your life without even thinking twice to come crawling to me.”

The air in the room shifts then and even you can feel it from the outside of it and in the distressed state you’re in. “Now, I want ya to listen and understand what I’m tellin’ you; Y/n's all fucking mine, down to the air she fucking breathes, and if I ever catch you tryin’ to hurt her again – If I ever catch you just fuckin’ thinkin’ about it, I’ll kick your ass out.”

“You can’t do that-” “Like Hell I can’t, girl,” he cuts her off with a quirked-up eyebrow.

The echoing sound of a slap makes you flinch and screw your eyes shut, like you’re the one who’s just smacked Negan in the face. “You just wanna fuck the chubby little virgin ‘cause she’s something new, but we both know you’ll be crawling back in my bed in a week ‘cause she doesn’t have what it takes to be with a man like you, Negan. But I do. I understand and you know it!”

“Clearly, you fucking don’t,” Negan’s voice comes out cold and low. It gives you the bad goosebumps and it’s not even directed at you. “I'll fuckin' bash whoever touches her or even breathes too fucking close to her. James might have been the one on the receiving end of the iron, doesn’t mean you’re in the clear, so I’d suggest you quit actin’ like a spoiled bitch because it ain’t gonna take much for me to kick you to the curb. I’m done playin’ these games.”

“You’re saying all that, yet; we’re still here,” Sherry points with a smirk that you can hear behind the wall. “Y/n’s mine, blah, blah, blah.” You see her drop from her stool and stand tall in her heels in front of Negan. “Get rid of us then. If you’re so into her, why would you need us around? Is it because she’s not putting out? Or is it that you’re just not the man you’re trying soo hard to be for her and one girl just isn’t enough?”

She’s peaking to Negan, yet it feels like she’s addressing every single one of your own insecurities when it comes to him right on the head and it hurts like Hell. “I can share, Negan. You know I’m good to you, and we were great until the little brat came about.”

Seconds tick by and there’s no words from Negan. It’s past midnight so, technically, it’s a new day and your heartache is only getting stronger by the minute.

With unshed tears in your eyes, you turn your back to them in an attempt to walk away but your movements are clumsy and catch their attention. “Oh for fuck’s sake,” Sherry huffs.

*rip her fucking head off with your teeth!*

“Hey there, angel,” Negan carefully greets you.

*do not act like this shit didn’t just happen. i swear to fucking god, do not-*

“Hey, I-I was just- I was just... I-I'm s-sorry,” you clumsily mutter, a single tear daring to
escape your eyes right before you take off the other way.

Not five seconds pass before you hear Negan walking behind you. “Go a-away, Negan,” you speak as you speed up your walk, trying to sound as cold as possible but it all comes out as a messy cry for help.

You don't get to take another step towards the exit when one of Negan’s hands gets a hold of your right arm and drags you with him into his office. “Let go! Let go of me!” You protest, once again failing to hide just how scared and vulnerable you’re feeling, your feet trying pushing against the floor to try and get away from his grip but the man is stronger than you are and you end up in his office, letting a sob out the second you hear to door click shut as he locks it.

You don't even get the chance to try and protest some more before he gets his hands right back on you and drags you to his bedroom, your heart beating out of your chest, panic and fear starting to really get to you now. You two stand there as your brain tries to process the fact that you're in Negan's bedroom with the man himself and got nowhere to go, your emotions a tangled mess and tears ready to burst out of your eyes any second now.

“Y/n-” Negan starts and the dam breaks. “You lied to me, you son of a bitch!” You accuse as you shove him back away from you. “You told me he was safe! You fucking lied to me!”

“I didn't lie to you, sweetheart. He was out but I had to put him back in there-” ‘Like Hell you did!’ You cut him off. “He was bein' reckless as shit, he needed some fuckin' time off,” Negan explains, trying to keep his cool in the face of your wrath.

“He got beat to death! How could you let this happen!?” “I didn't give the fuckin' order!” The tall man barks back. “IT DOESN'T MATTER! HE'S DEAD!” You shout like you haven't in years, your voice echoing through the entire apartment.

“I trusted you,” quietly confess, your eyes briefly finding his through your wet lashes. “He hadn't done anything.” You slump then, your throat suddenly tight.

“I’m done,” you whisper more so to yourself than to Negan directly. Your eyes barely meet his as you shrug. “From now on, I'm off limits to you, no more games, no more pet names, you don't touch me, and you don't kiss me anymore. I'm only staying around because I love Daryl and his family, and that's all there is and ever will be. I'm out.”

“Look, I get your upset about Sherry-”

“It's not about her,” you cut him off with an aggravated sigh. “It's about all the others, too. And, I mean, we both know she's right.” Negan watches you deflate a little as you slowly but surely run out of energy to hold this conversation. “You don't want me, you just like the chase and the idea of having a brand new doll on your shelf.”

The sheer insecurity in your eyes is so obvious as you speak that it takes Negan aback for a bit before he finally is able to shrug it off and finally speak up. “She doesn’t speak for me, and you don’t either, sweetheart,” he speaks as he steps closer to you, not missing the way your eyes flee
around the room as if you’re trying to find an escape route.

“Negan, please-” You plead, exhausted and upset, your shaky hands finding his chest the second he’s close enough to you. He can feel you try to push against him, and if your exhaustion wasn’t obvious before; it is now. You’re barely putting any pressure down on his torso and he can tell you’re trying.

“S’okay, baby girl,” he coos freakishly softly, bringing his right hand up to cup your left cheek and you can’t help but nuzzle into it. You hate yourself for it, but you can’t help it; you love when he touches you, that’s nothing new.

“I’m so tired,” you quietly confess, your lids feeling too heavy for you to open your eyes. “I know, pretty girl. I know,” Negan whispers back, intently watching as the fight completely drains out of you.

“Promise I’ll let ya sleep after you’ve showered. We’ll talk tomorrow, baby girl,” he explains. “N- Negan, pl-please, I-I can’t- I wanna go to bed,” you whine, pushing yourself back against his chest and burying your head into the dip between his neck and shoulder. Your fatigue letting you forget that you’re meant to be angry.

“F’course you can, baby, and you will,” he counters before kissing your forehead and gently pulling you away to head into the bathroom.

You stand there frozen, your ears perked-up as you listen to the noises Negan is making - Is he brushing his teeth? This man is so goddamn confusing and you're too exhausted to let him know.

“You know,” he speaks from the bathroom, pausing to spit out the toothpaste and rinse his mouth before spitting again and quickly washing the sink. As he steps out of the room, his sentence dies on his tongue when he finds you in the exact same spot he’s left you, your belly jumping with every sob you stifle.

With a sigh, Negan walks to his dresser and pull a fresh pair of boxers, an old t-shirt and socks out to lay them on the bed. Your soul damn-near leaves your body when he envelopes you in his arms and nestles your head below his chin with a gentle hand at the back of your neck to keep you from withdrawing.

Your fight or flight instincts die in a heartbeat and, in the blink of an eye, you’re reduced to heart-wrenching sobs and shake in the man’s embrace. Your trembling hands find and ball-up into his t-shirt, clinging to the fabric to keep yourself grounded the bare minimum.

“I knew you’d be trouble when you looked up at me that night,” Negan quietly speaks from above, his chin resting atop your head. “You had that fire in your eyes and I knew you wouldn’t take my shit- I don’t want you on a shelf, I want you by my side, baby girl.”

You reluctantly let him step back a little and lift your head up to meet his eyes. “I don’t know what the fuck happened to Randall.” He gives a brief little squeeze where he's holding your jaw to keep your attention on him when he feels you tense at the mention of your late friend. “I swear it to you,” Negan insists and you take a moment to really look into his hazel orbs as if they'd tell you something he won't.
“I'll look into it and we'll take about it, calmly, tomorrow. But, for now,” he carefully reaches over and slips your backpack from your shoulders, “you need a shower and some sleep, pretty girl.”

You silently nod, wearily looking down at your bloody fingers. “Yea,” you whisper with a sniffle. “I'll be right back, alright? Just gonna let Dwight and Faith know you're back before the woman comes lookin' to rip my guts out.” You give the tiniest of smiles at that and nod again, a sigh leaving you when Negan leans down to place a kiss on your lips.

You almost shove him off when the fresh memory of him with Sherry briefly but effectively flashes through your mind. You know he can probably feel your hesitance and you definitely know when he pulls away to scrutinize you.

“I didn't screw any of 'em ever since you came back, sweetheart. S'only you, y'know that,” he tells you like it's the most obvious thing in the world. “Well- I mean, you clearly don't. But I guess that's on me, huh? Haven't exactly done an amazing job with you so far, have I?”

“It'll get better. It'll be okay,” you quietly tell him, but he can tell that you need him to confirm it. “You'll be okay, sweetheart. I'll make it better, you just gotta trust me.” Again, you nod, this time much more eagerly. He can tell that you're in no capacity to think for yourself right now and you really did need him to tell you that you'll be okay, and that's a role he'll gladly take on every single time you need him to.

“There's a radio in my nightstand, call if I'm not back up here by the time you're out the shower, alright, sweetheart? Can you do that?” Negan questions, his eyes searching your tired face. “Y-Yea. Yes, I-I can d-do that,” you let him know, absently nodding as you speak.

“Alright, good girl,” he praises, your eyes fluttering shut when he plants a lingering kiss to your forehead. “I'm gonna lock the front door, the one leading out to the hallway, but I'm coming right back. You focus on showering and you can wait for me on the couch if you want after, or just get to bed.”

He looks at you when he feels your breathing has picked-up and finds you looking a little panicked, your eyes glassy with tears and frantically scanning the room. “Hey, it's alright, sweetheart. I'm locking the door to keep you safe, and I promise I'll be back in ten, fifteen minutes tops. I need you to trust me.”

The way your face scrunches-up the slightest bit as though you've never heard of the term before makes Negan realize just how far back this whole situation has set the progress you'd been making with learning to trust him. Once again, he's shot himself in the foot and you're the one hurting for it.

“When I say 'jump', you say 'how high', remember? It's an order, you don't have to think about it; you just have to integrate it, darlin'.” You absently nod, your eyes still locked on the door leading out of the apartment.

Knowing he won't get anything more out of you tonight, Negan sighs and leaves one last, lingering kiss on your temple and asks you to be careful in the shower before walking out of the room, grabbing Lucille from behind his desk on his way out and locking the door behind him.
With a pained sigh, you clumsily strip out of your clothes, letting them fall to the floor, and try not to think about the locked. Needless to say; you're not doing too good of a job so far. Your claustrophobia is alive and well and, if you weren't so damn hurt and tired, you'd be banging on the door begging for someone to open it.

Instead, you silently drag yourself to Negan's bathroom and use the remaining energy you have left to take a shower, needing to get rid of all the blood that has dried and is pulling at your skin. A constant reminder of your loss.

The shower you take is long and somewhat relieving, you let yourself cry all the tears you have left and stop yourself just at the line where you start to really think about what's hurting you and new tears start to come up.

Wrapped-up in a big, fluffy, peach colored towel, you open the door of the big bathroom and, out of habit, take a quick peek outside to check if the coast is clear for you to come out, letting out a startled gasp when your eyes fall on Negan in the middle of pulling his grey sweatpants up.

"I'm sorry," you squeal, your cheeks burning with embarrassment. How long did you stay under that spray for?

"S'alright, sweetheart. Water was still running when I came back up, figured I'd let ya relax for a bit. You feelin' better?" He asks, an amused brow raising when your eyes roam over his chest and up to his eyes just to immediately find the floor when you find him looking back.

"Yea," you squeak out, your fingers clawing at your towel.

Negan isn't making things any better as he leans against his dresser with a smirk, a stupid eyebrow still stupidly raised at you. "C'mon out, baby girl. I won't bite," he smugly invites with a chuckle, his eyes eagerly taking you in when you crack the bathroom door open just enough for him to see your towel-clad body.

You swear you see those hazelnut orbs grow darker when they find the spot the towel stops covering you mid-thigh, making you shift uncomfortably, trying to somehow escape his intense glance without frantically closing the door on him. 'Cause that'd be rude or something.

"Never fuckin' mind, then," he breathes out, his eyes finally landing on yours and you're quick to look down, making him chuckle.

"Wh-What are you do-doing?" You ask, genuinely curious as you nervously shift on your legs. "Just needed to change, s'all," he explains before getting back to his dresser. "Here," he exclaims, dropping what you assume to be one of his shirts on the bed, his eyes glued on you. "Put it on, y/n, before you end up catchin' what you don't fucking have."

"Is-Is that yours?" You shyly ask as you take a hesitant step towards the bed and shakily grab the red and black flannel shirt he's put out for you to wear. "Yeah, why d'you ask? Ya think I only wear white shirts?" He asks with a smirk tugging at the corner of his mouth.

"W-Well, y-yeah? K kinda?" You confess, your cheeks burning when you hear him chuckle at
your timidity, loving just how flustered and shy you get. “M's-sorry.”

“It's alright, kitten,” he says, pausing just to take you in some more. “Hell, I'll wear it if you want.”

“Yes, please,” you quickly say, looking up at him, unable to hide your excitement but you're quick to blush, embarrassed that you've just go so excited over such a small, stupid thing. You can't help it though. The fact that Negan is actually willing to do something, no matter how small, just for you, is making you feel a little giddy. It's making you feel a whole bunch of things actually.

“Alright then, princess, you've got yourself a deal,” he proclaims with an amused grin. “Now, put the damn thing on before you get sick. I'm not repeatin' myself again.”

You tighten your grip on the shirt, nervously looking at Negan, hoping that he'll get the message and turn around or even leave the room to let you change, but he only makes himself comfortable by resting his lower back against his dresser, a challenging smirk on his lips that doesn't help the burn spreading on your cheeks.

After an intense starring contest between you and the damn floor, Negan's eyes burning your skin from the other side of the room, you decide to turn your back to him and carefully push your towel down, exposing your upper body, to let it slide down on your waist where you create a knot to secure it into place.

Sure, you could go back inside the bathroom and get dressed there, in peace, but your stubborn streak will not allow you to retreat and let Negan win.

Clumsily, you unbutton the flannel shirt, a wince of pain escaping you the second you try and slip your right arm into a sleeve, your shoulder throbbing in protest. You know that you haven't been treating it like you should have. Hell, you can't even remember the last time you took a single day off to just rest and let your body catch a fucking break, give it a chance to heal in peace.

“You need some help with that, princess?” Negan asks, his breath hitting the back of your bare neck making you jump. How is such an obnoxious asshole capable of being so damn silent is beyond you.

“Y-Yes, please,” you timidly admit, your hands coming up to cover your breasts as he walks around your back to face you, letting an amused huff out when he spots your hands on your chest.

“Hands off, kitten, y'can put the damn thing on otherwise,” he points out with a small smirk while you look at him like he's talking in some kind of alien language. “C'mon, y/n. Lemme see you, pretty girl.”

You know he’s talking to you, but your eyes have found his chest again and you’re completely enthralled by what you’re looking at. The man is somewhere in his forties and in damn near impeccable shape. He’s lean, but there’s no questioning his strength with the way his muscles ripple and show with every move he makes. There’re a few scars and tattoos here and there that you'd love to know the stories of.

“Mmh?” You mumble, your cheeks about ready to burst into flames once you realize that you've been doing absolutely nothing but stare at the man’s bare chest- You’d even stopped breathing.
“Your hands, baby,” he reminds you, not even bothering to hide his amusement.

The only sound in the room comes from you thickly swallowing your spit as you hesitantly let your shaky hands slip away from your chest, completely exposing your bare upper body to the man in front of you, and all you can do to keep yourself from crying out of embarrassment is keep yourself busy so you glue your eyes to the tattoo on his left pectoral.

“I didn’t know y-you were t-tattooed,” you shakily let out as Negan proceeds to bring your right arm into the shirt's sleeve, trying to be as careful as he possibly can manage to be.

He’s been shirtless around you before but the circumstances always made it so you've never had the chance to actually stop and take the time to take a good, long look at him, to actually stop and appreciate what's in front of you. “I-I mean, th-that you had some o-on your chest too,” you clarify, you’ve seen a few traces of ink here and there on his arms though, again, you never took the chance to have a look.

“Yeah? Well, can't fuckin' blame ya for not payin’ attention now, can I, baby?” He teases as he adjust your right arm into the sleeve of the flannel before reaching back to grab the empty, hanging left one. “Last time I was shirtless with you, you were focused on another part of my body, kitten,” he smugly adds just to get you flustered, that awfully annoying smirk of his marking his lips.

Clearing your throat, you shakily reach out to grab the empty left sleeve of the shirt from Negan’s hand to slip it on by yourself.

“Th-Thank you,” is all you manage to whisper, thanking him for helping your right arm into the shirt.

You clumsily shove your left arm into its respective sleeve, trying really hard to button the damn shirt up but your shaky fingers are in no way cooperating with you, not tonight.

“You're very fucking welcome, baby girl,” he smiles as he watches you. “Let me get that for ya, yeah?” He says more than he asks for your permission, swatting your hands away from the shirt to let his get to work.

The feeling of his fingers barely grazing your skin is covering your arms and stomach in goosebumps that you can't hide from him. It's insane just how sensitive you are, you know that that's just how your body works and how your skin processes touch, but his touch is definitely something else.

His touch burns in the most delicious way there is, it’s something you crave and need; something you find yourself missing more than you care to admit. This man is slowly killing you and you're getting a strong liking for it. Nothing makes sense anymore; your sanity has been dropped somewhere along the way.

“N-Negan?” You ask, looking down at his hands after you've felt them stop dead in their tracks right below the swell of your bare breasts, your eyes now glued to them like they might burn you.

“You're shakin', kitten,” he points, looking down at your shaking hands and legs that seem to be completely frozen by either fear, embarrassment or purely by shyness. He's unsure but he hates to think that you might actually be scared of him, that you might be so damn scared that it makes your
body freeze and shake like that.

“I… M’so-sorry,” you whisper, almost afraid to actually speak to him now that you're in such a vulnerable state.

“You came home bloody, went lookin’ for me either for a hug or to cut my dick off ‘n’ make me eat it… And you found me with Sherry, that right?” He asks, his hands making contact with your skin and you swear you can feel them burning you.

You give a silent, short nod, unable to speak with your breath stuck in your throat. "You're hurtin’ like Hell and no one can take it away, that it, sweetheart? You feel alone? You hate my guts but you're too damn tired to do anything about it, am I still on track?” He pushes, his eyes fixed on your face as his hands slowly slide up each side of your ribcage, the soft flesh giving under his thumbs as they trace the length of your stomach.

Needless to say, no words actually come out of your mouth, just shaky, small breaths. You're lost, exhausted and in complete panic without mentioning that your chest is still completely exposed to him and, though there's the towel covering it, your lower body is completely bare as well, but it doesn't seem to be enough to make Negan go easy on you. Because of course.

There’s something about holding you so fragile in the palms of his hands- It’s not that he gets a kick out of it, not when you're like this, so damn vulnerable and trying your hardest not to fall apart. He couldn’t pin-point it exactly, but there’s something about you letting him witness what you always do the most to hide from other people.

He’ll admit it, Negan definitely has a thing for power-plays and whatnot, but this shit belongs to a specific context. You being pliant and submissive behind closed doors is one things, pushing you around when you're pissed to get you to explode is another; but he’ll never hurt you when you’re in such a bad headspace, on the verge of shattering to pieces he won’t be able to pick up and put back together.

“C’mon, give me something, darlin’. One word and I’ll let ya hide away in the little corner of your mind you like so much,” he presses you, giving a little squeeze at your sides to keep you grounded here with him.

“I-I don't- I don't- M's-s-sorry,” you hastily whisper, trying really hard to regain a little bit of composure but the fact that he's looking straight into your eyes, and that his hands are pressing into your flesh isn’t helping. He’s keeping you here when your mind wants nothing but to flee and hide away for a bit.

You flinch, startled when Negan envelops you in his arms and brings you flush with his chest, but you’re quick to dig your fingers into the solid flesh of his back, clinging to him like a life-vest as he holds you.

“You’re gonna be okay, darlin’. I promise I’ll make it better, you just gotta let me show ya. I know you’re way too fuckin’ tired to take in what I’m telling ya but, trust me; it’ll stick. You’ll feel it in the morning, sweetheart.” He chuckles; “See that’s a good fuckin’ line in a whole other context.”
You’re so damn exhausted and stressed that simply hearing Negan chuckle makes you softly chuckle along through your tears even though you didn’t even get the joke.

Though you'd love to actually be able to blame it on the fact that you're exhausted, emotionally drained, feeling terribly vulnerable and upset, you know that's not why you don't say a world nor try to fight it when his hands snake down and around your bare thighs to hoist you up, your legs quick to find his waist though their hold is weak.

"Relax, kitten," he whispers against the side of your head and you don't say anything, just hide your face in the crook of his neck and tighten your grip around his neck and waist, seeking comfort but more specifically reassurance from him.

“I want Daryl,” you sob against his skin, only realizing that you've actually said those words out loud, to Negan you might add, when all you receive in return is a dry chuckle.

“Let's get ya to bed,” he bypasses your words and carries you to the foot of his bed to sit you down on the mattress.

Your first reflex as he puts you down is to try and put distance between the two of you but he knows you too damn well and already has his hands ready to grab your legs to bring you right back to him, his force launching you into his chest.

There's a crushing silence floating in the room as Negan wait for you to relax a little, feeling you shake against him and hearing you give little gasps for air every now and then. Ok, so, maybe he shouldn’t have reacted like a dumbass, jealous, frat-boy boyfriend, but he himself can’t explain the sudden shift when you spoke those words. He wants you to need him so bad, and he knows he can’t blame you for not feeling safe with him like that after all the shit he’s pulled, yesterday to top it all off, but hearing you ask for someone else when you’re so broken-down and vulnerable got to him.

He hates knowing that you might actually be afraid of him, but he doesn't really mind you hating his guts as long as he doesn't spot the same fear he spots into the eyes of someone he's about to kill or even the fear that resides in the eyes of every single person working for him in yours, not while you're looking at him. He knows he couldn't handle it. He gets off on you being pliant and obedient, not genuinely terrified.

Thing is, with you? It's not about power, he doesn't want you to fear him like he expects other people to. He doesn't want nor feel like he needs that from you, at all. He likes the dynamic between the two of you because it works; it makes sense.

You need reassuring and he's more than willing to praise and comfort you. You're grown, he knows that, but you're off balance and you've been left to deal with serious struggles for too long; you need structure and he's more than willing to give you one. Hence why he's so persistent with your meals, why he insisted on you taking a shower before bed tonight even though you're barely standing on your own two feet, why he tells you that now is time to rest- You're not a child, you're grown and independent, he damn well knows it and he's not seeking to strip you of that, but the way you look at him and so easily do as told are dead giveaways of just how badly you've been needing someone to just take the damn wheel you've been put in front of at a much too young age.
With that comes punishments. He's not gonna lie and say he doesn't enjoy having you laid out in his lap, whining and writhing, thanking him for each spank he delivers, and the way your skin is a shade deeper by the end of it, but it's not something he takes lightly.

He punishes when you've done something that has been established as bad, something you're aware you're not meant to do. He can't imagine ever punishing you just for the sake of it. Sure he loves a good spanking session, but he loves praising you and letting you know how good you did just as much, because he gets to see you blush and glow with sheer happiness whenever he does.

Negan fucking cares, he just shows it in his own way. A little broken and fucked-up but never meaning to actually hurt even when he bites.

“N-Negan?” You whisper against his bare chest, making him snap out of his thoughts. “Negan, I'm-I'm sorry.”

“So, okay, darlin’,” he reassures, grabbing your jaw to make you look up at him before leaning towards you to plant an oddly gentle kiss on your lips which you can't even find the strength to give back, refusing him yet another kiss tonight. “You ain't his. You weren't Randall's, you ain't Rick's- You're mine, baby girl, and I don't know 'bout you but I'm about sick 'n' tired of always runnin' in circles with this shit.”

“I love Daryl. Rick and his family t-took care o-of me- I loved Randall,” you quickly confess, feeling the man in front of you tense at the L word that isn't for him. “I loved him, and he loved me but... we knew- I couldn't.” You struggle with your words, exhausted and heartbroken from your very fresh loss. “I'm yours,” you finally push out, Negan moving as close to you as he can, his eyes fixed on your face as you speak. “I couldn't- I couldn't be his 'cause I'm already yours and I wish- I wish it wasn't like that.”

“Y/n, sweetheart-”

“I'm yours and you'll never be mine, Negan. You- You kissed the woman who-” you give up with a sad chuckle, letting tears silently roll down your face. “You lied to me- I thought I could trust you, we were good, and you just- You betrayed that.”

“I didn't kill him, baby. I could've, really fuckin' wanted to, but I didn't,” he gently explains, tightening his grip on your jaw to get your attention back, your teary eyes falling back on his. “I didn't 'cause I wanted you happy. I wanted you to have a friend, 'cause I knew how much the damn kid meant to you. I wanted you to have someone to trust and turn to whenever I'm a huge dickhead.”

He seems so sincere, his eyes shining as they try like hell to find yours. After all the pain he's caused you, you'd think you'd want to see him hurt too; but you don't. It's a subtle thing, no frantic breaths and tears, but you can tell that he's afraid, and you hate it but don't have it in you to tell him a pretty lie that goes 'it's okay, i forgive you.' It's not that simple. There's no fixing this with a kiss and those pretty, empty words you love to hear.

“C-Can I have a-a pair o-of undies, pl-please?” You difficultly ask, your eyes actively avoiding his.

With a sigh, Negan turns and walks to his dresser to retrieve a pair of boxers. “I didn't slip my
fuckin' tongue in there, baby, y'know? That shit was far from a fuckin' kiss, need ya to understand that,” he explains as he hands the undergarment to you which you take with a shaky hand.

“I d-don't- O-Okay. S'alright,” you whisper, grabbing the boxers and retracting your hands, trying not to cry at the thought of his lips touching someone else's but your body betrays you and a sob breaks its way through anyways. Worst part? You try to stifle it into Negan’s underwear.

i'm leaving...

“You're a terrible fuckin' liar, baby girl,” he whispers, his voice rough but soft.

You fight the urge to turn yourself into a ball as sobs rip through you one after the other, but you don't have to fight it all for too long because Negan's arms lift you up and off his bed, the towel covering your lower body taking its chance to bail, adding up to your list of things to cry about, but he doesn't say anything about it.

Gently, Negan brings his hands on your bare butt to keep you safely against him, your legs snaking around his waist, your head hiding away into the dip between his shoulder and neck for the second time tonight, tears falling from your eyes to roll down his skin.

“Baby, calm down, s'okay. I got'cha,” he hushes you, rocking you in his arms, his lips right against your temple. His presence makes you feel so safe, it’s hard to believe he's the same man who pushed you into the state you're in at this very moment.

You're confused and lost, but you're not willing to question it right now.

After a few minutes of him trying to calm you down, Negan gently sits you back down on his bed and takes the boxers from your trembling hands to carefully slip them up your legs. “Here, darlin’,” he warns before lifting you up on your knees to slip the material underneath your butt, finally covering you up. His actions are so gentle and his attentions nothing but good, and it only serves to confuse you even further. This man is fucking with your head.

You can't help yourself when your hands snake around the back of his neck to pull him down towards you, a needy whine slipping past your lips. Though tears are still steadily rolling down your tired face, you finally give into him, letting him get what he so badly wanted and needed, and giving into your own cravings to you kiss him like it's the last thing you’ll ever do. Your hands messing his hair up, the gel keeping them in place not standing a chance. He quickly responds to your kiss, deepening it and gripping handfuls of your butt cheeks, making you yelp into his grinning mouth, a single word repeating inside your heads; mine.

4:30 AM //

Your nose scrunches up in a displeased grimace when your eyes flutter open, your legs stretching themselves out under the satin sheets covering your body. You let out a quiet grunt, not too happy about your body waking up on its own like that, before letting your eyes fall on Negan who's deeply asleep right next to you, his head turned towards you as if he fell asleep watching you.
Anxiety is the first thing you feel. Your mind is already freaking the hell out, your stomach turning into a huge knot yet again- You’ve had a nightmare. That’s what woke you up.

You carefully slip out from underneath the sheets of the big bed, quietly walking around Negan’s bedroom to grab the dirty clothes you’ve left on the floor the night before, gathering them all up and pushing them against your chest not to drop any before carefully exiting the room, the door creaking a little, making you stop dead in your tracks to turn around and take a quick peak at Negan to make sure he's still asleep. When it doesn't seem like the small noise has even slightly disturbed the man’s sleep, you take advantage of his deep slumber to run off, carefully closing the door behind you.

Going through his apartment, you spot Lucille laid on top of the mahogany desk in his office, the barbwire covering the bat lathered in blood and bits of flesh. You shrug off the shudder that goes through your spine at the thought of the poor bastard that blood and bits of flesh belong to, what might have happened to him, what he could possibly have done to piss Negan off enough to kill him, wondering if that's even human's blood- might be a walker's for all you know.

Exiting his quarters, you finally get to the corridor leading to the dorms and communal shower-room. The knot on your stomach is still bothering you though you try not to pay it too much attention. You've learned that paying attention to it only makes it grow bigger- Not that ignoring it works either, but you get the gist.

5:26 AM //

You don't ever want to leave that shower. Ever. The warm water rolling on your skin is the best damn feeling in the world and you can't seem to find the will to let it go this morning. Tired isn't even the world for you. You’re exhausted, mentally drained, completely and utterly worn-out.

There's too many things going through your head at the moment, too many emotions begging to be felt at the same damn time, so much so that it's giving you a painful migraine. You're angry, sad, disgusting and lost, but, mostly; you feel betrayed. You feel useless, unimportant.

By the time you finally gather the willpower to get out of the shower, people are slowly waking up, some coming in the showers with grumpy grunts as greetings, but you pay them no mind as you head out, a heavy sigh slipping past your lips when you finally close the door of the room. The mere thought of having to find clothes and put them on makes you want to sob.

A smell in the room catches your attention, tears invading your eyes when you turn to realize that you went into Randall's room, not yours. His smell is all over the damn place, he's everywhere though there's nothing left of him in the room. It's just a blend, empty room again, it doesn't belong to anyone, to **him**, anymore. It's just a stupid, ugly room; nothing more.

You silently sit down on the mattress of the now empty bed, nothing covering it, no covers, nothing. The only thing on the mattress is a pillow and you can't fight the urge to bring it up to
your face, letting it fall into the soft, plush material to inhale his scent, your heart swelling at the familiar smell, like a beacon in the storm happening in your head.

When you straighten yourself back up, you look around the empty room, secretly hoping for your eyes to find Randall standing there, a smile on his face, but there's nothing. He's gone and there's no getting him back. But he was there just yesterday, and your mind can’t comprehend his sudden disappearance.

Something catches your attention though, there’re two scrambled pieces of paper in the bin in the corner of the room and you almost fall flat on your face when you rush over to it though you hesitate when you finally get there.

You take a shaky breath and let your trembling hands clumsily grab one of the pieces of paper out of the bin, your heart skipping a beat when you unfold it, tears rolling down your eyes and a sob breaking through your mouth as your glossy eyes take in the drawing in front of them.

It’s a drawing of Connor holding a little girl who you assume to be his little niece. They’re wearing the prettiest wings, a bright smile on their face as Connor is tightly holding onto the little girl, messing with her hair as she laughs, soft crinkles drawn underneath her eyes.

“She looks so happy,” you whisper to yourself. You know very little about the kid, just what Randall has told you, but you know how much Connor was hurting over her loss. You can’t fault him for that, it’s breaking your heart just thinking about it.

You neatly fold the drawing and carefully put it down on the mattress behind you before reaching for the other piece of paper. Wiping your previous tears away to get a clear view back, your heart stops beating the second you unfold the piece of paper, your breath gets caught in your throat and tears start to roll back down on your face.

It’s another drawing, a drawing of you. It's all in soft colors, you're sitting on a wall, a smile on your face, a genuine one, with flowers in your hair, your bow and backpack sitting right next to you, your hands playing with your fingers but, right next to that version of you is another one; an accurately heartbreaking one. It's you, yes, but this one is all in black and white.

You're wearing white, broken wings, tears are rolling down your face, there's a slight frown wrinkling your forehead but a smile on your lips still, blood streaming down both of your forearms and wrists, and bruises are staining your skin. The only thing colored in the drawing is the halo floating above your head as you're looking straight ahead. It almost feels like this paper version of yourself is blaming you for all the pain it's feeling.

You force yourself to take a deep breath and shakily fold the drawing in your hands. You grab the other one and Randall’s pillow off the mattress, shove the two pieces of paper underneath the towel covering your now dry, bare body, and walk out of the room to lock yourself up in yours.

Honestly, you don't believe that you've ever felt so damn relieved to be in your bedroom.

6:30 AM //
You almost made it to the cafeteria, almost walked in to try and have a quick breakfast, to try and eat the very least you could manage but your guts didn’t let you.

The moment your eyes fell on Faith, Dwight and Arat having breakfast together, the moment their eyes found yours and the small, sympathetic smiles appeared; you felt it. Anger came running back to you, the memory of Randall snapping his jaw at Arat, trying to steal a piece of her flesh, the look in her eyes when you put him down, silent apologies spilling out of them.

You’re angry, angry at her, maybe not rightfully so, maybe it’s just because she was the one who opened that damned door cell, but, to you, it’s like she forced you to put your best friend down by doing so. That’s how little you think of her at the moment.

You hate her, just looking at her gives you the urge to hurt her just as bad as yesterday has hurt you and you hate it. You hate that feeling, it scares you. It scares you because that’s not who you want to be. You’re not a brute, you know better- You’re not your mother, you’re not her boyfriends… You’re not Negan and you won’t let this place make it so.

The fact that you can’t help but picture her choking on her own blood just by looking at her is what makes you walk away, completely ignoring your friends who clearly are concerned about the potentially dark place your mind might be in right now. They don’t believe you realized just how dark your expression got when you saw them, it’s the kind of glare that covers your whole body in goosebumps.

Your anger is still alive and well no matter how much you hate having to feel it, and the fresh cut yesterday carved into you is far from even beginning to heal. You’re not in a good place, not at all, and even you realize it. You don’t need a fucking therapy session to know that, you know your mind pretty damn well, of course you know. You don’t need an intervention or anyone’s sympathy for that matter.

Your footsteps are heavy, the braces on your combat boots clinking along with each step you take as you walk through the crowd of people running around the compound, trying to look good in case Negan suddenly decides to spawn out of fucking nowhere.

*meh, don’t fucking jinx it. fucker seems to show up every time you think about him.*

In your black, ripped jeans, the ones Randall gave you, and an old grey tank top messily tugged into them, the messy mop of short hair on your head falling on your forehead that you keep running a shaky hand through to push back every two minutes, you decide to head outside to try and find something to do around the damn place to occupy your mind as much as possible.

You head into the big garage where Negan keeps his trucks, stopping in your tracks when you spot some dude throwing what looks like meat at the walkers guarding the place, shooting him a disgusted glare that actually makes him turn around to look at you.

“Mornin’ sugar,” he greets with a sly smile like he's all that and you almost puke into your mouth.

“What’cha feeding those freaks with exactly?” You ask, your voice completely emotionless.

“Dunno, it ain't my job to ask question, sugar. Ain't yours either,” he informs you with slightly
narrowed eyes like you’ve just asked him for a nuclear code or some shit.

stop.calling.me.sugar.... ya cock.

“You’re a good little soldier, huh. I’d be impressed if it wasn't so pathetic,” you let him know before walking off, the man cursing at you and shouting at you not to walk away from him.

“You’ll live, asshole,” you whisper to yourself though your words are directed to him before walking into the garage to get working on one of the trucks Simon was complaining about a few days back.

“S’gonna be one long fucking day,” you whisper, yet again talking to yourself, before heaving a sigh and getting to work on the damn truck.

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3:00 PM //

You haven't eaten anything today, didn't take so much as a simple break, didn't even stop to drink some water, nothing. You just focused on the task at hands and, surely enough, you ended the day with a working truck that’ll make Simon happy- Well, he’ll be happy about your work if he knows what's good for him.

You slip out from underneath the vehicle, grease covering your hands and face. You feel sticky with sweat and motor oil, you're just gross all around, but you don't mind because it means you've done something with your day, something productive.

You wash the grease off your hands and splash some water on your face, cold water doing wonders for you after a day of hard work, before reaching next to the sink for something to dry your skin with.

“Heya, pumpkin, where the hell've ya been all day?” Simon’s voice echoes through the big space and you turn around still drying your hands in an old, clearly over-used handkerchief, a small smile on your face when you spot him leaning against the entrance of the garage.

“I've been fixing that truck you've been whining about for days,” you inform him, going up to lean against the wall next to him. He’s looking at you with a mix of both what seems to be pride and cockiness in his eyes.

“Oh, ya did?” He asks with a smirk. “How'd that pend out for ya, pumpkin?” He keeps on teasingly mocking you, his smirk dropping when you throw the keys of the truck at him with a smile on your face.

“What don't you just see for yourself, old man? Or does everyone in this place needs someone holding their hands at all times?” Now it's your turn to mock him.
You walk out of the garage at the same time as Simon closes the door of the driver's side of the truck, a giddy smile appearing on your lips when you hear the motor start within seconds.

“Thatta girl!” Simon yells over the loud sound of the truck's ignited engine loudly echoing in the enclosed space, making you giggle and wave at him to silently tell him he's welcome.

As you're heading back inside of the compound, you can't help but stop to look at the walkers guarding the gates as they hungrily tear bits of flesh away from what look terrifyingly similar to human bones.

are they- are they feeding those things with human beings? What in the holy hell?

“This is sick,” you whisper, your eyes never leaving the re-animated corpses, some of them getting irritated and agitated by your proximity, by the fact that they can't get to you no matter how hard they want and try to.

“Believe me, baby, it gets a shit load sicker when daddy's really mad and decides to let 'em have their way with whoever pissed him off,” Negan’s voice sounds right behind you, his breath hitting the shell of your ear, making you both shudder and jump out of your boots.

can you fucking not? how 'bout fucking no??

“Negan! What the hell?! You scared me, don't do that!” You scold him, turning around with a hand resting at the root of your throat, still shaking from the scare the asshole just gave you.

“Hey now, kitten,” he starts with a chuckle, “watch your fuckin' mouth when you talk to me, yeah?”

ooooh, you can soooo go fuck yourself... fucking asshole...

“Funny coming from you, don'tcha think?” You ask with a quirked up eyebrow, surprisingly talking back to him, for once not stuttering on every word.

“Damn, princess, someone's all wind up today, huh? S'okay, daddy’s fucking angry too,” his voice suddenly drops an octave lower and you feel your bravado melt straight off of you.

oh lord no.

“Wh-Why?” You ask though you already damn well know.

so much for not st-stu-stuttering, huh? jesus fucking christ...

“Maybe because you fucking sneaked out of my room in the middle of the fucking night and left me to wake up alone like a fucking idiot. Again.”

yeea... you figured.
“I couldn’t- I cou-couldn’t stay,” you quietly tell him. “Why the fuck not?” He asks, his voice getting lower as he gets a grip on your waist and pushes you flush against him, his lips grazing yours. He’s so damn close you could cry.

“I’m just so tired, Negan.” you quietly say, your head dropping, to focus your attention on your boots. “I don’t w-want this anymore.”

“You don’t mean that,” he counters, keeping his voice low and tilting his head to try and find your evading eyes. “Yes I do,” you insist though it sound like a nasty lie even to you. “This isn’t good f-for me, it never was.”

There’s a small silence between the two of you but it’s quickly broken by Negan’s low chuckle. You watch through your lashes as he leans back, Lucille hanging loosely in his right, gloved hand and you just want to run off and hide under your bed until the floor decides to have mercy and swallow you whole.

“Sweetheart, I told you-” “You say a lot of things, but you don’t ever do anything, Negan,” you point out, tired of this constant back and worth that always leads you both right back where you are right now.

A short, nervous sounding chuckle slips past Negan’s lips as he run his free left hand through his hair. “What do you want from me, girl? We were supposed to talk today, weren’t we? But you bailed in the middle of the fucking night-” He steps closer to you, his eyes a little narrowed. “You don’t get to act all high and mighty when you’re the one takin’ ten fuckin’ steps back every single time I try and take one towards you, princess.”

“You’re saying that like you’ve made some grand gesture to show me you actually care but, really, in the grand scheme of things? We’ve only really had one good day, that night we watched TV in your bed- The only period of time we were good is when we were apart.” you exclaim with tears you refuse to let go of stinging your eyes.

“And it’s not just you, okay? I know I was better through that damn radio too, but the me you got is the same one I’m showing you every day, she just spoke more. You though? You keep showing me just how good you can be, and then you take it all away like you’re scared I’ll think less of you if you don’t turn out of be the big bad wolf- I don’t care if that’s who you have to be out-there,” you frantically point at the fence, “and with those single-brain-celled morons in there,” you point at the warehouse, “but don’t you insult me like that.”

“You realize that’s the most you’ve spoken to me ever since we’ve met?” Negan points out and you sigh and nod, a little out of breath. “I may not as much of a cold-blooded man as I need them to believe, but I ain’t no angel either. I sleep perfectly fine at night knowing what I’ve done- You bring out that side of me, nobody else gets it. I fucked up with you, I’m damn well aware of it, but, darlin’, you gotta fuckin’ tell me what to do ‘cause I’m at a loss here.”

“Just- Be honest with me… Will you ever be a one-girl man?” You ask, anxiously swallow around the lump in your throat. You helplessly watch as Negan opens and closes his mouth, clearly struggling with something, and that’s enough to make you bail.

“I don’t have the right to ask you to change for me, and I won’t, but you don’t get to have me and them. If Sherry is so fine and willing to share, good for her, but I’m not. I might not be the most-
the most experience with this stuff, and I’m younger than them, but that doesn’t mean I don’t know what I don’t want.”

“Y/n, sweetheart-” Negan calls after you the second the try to walk past him, his hand grabbing your forearm. “Hey, c’mon, listen to me-”

“You know, I’d love it if you could stop acting like you’re the one struggling with all this,” you snap at him, ripping your arm from his grip.

“What, you think this is fuckin’ easy for me?” He bites back, clearly getting aggravated at this point. “Oh, right, sorry, my bad, it must be really difficult for you to drag me around like a toy and jump on the nearest vagina the second I disagree with something you do!”

“I already told you; I haven’t fucked anyone since you came back from your little trip outside! And don’t act all innocent when you were out there gettin’ with Randall!”

“He never touched me like you have and I never touched him! You jump in bed with those women the night we left after you’d beat the kid to the point where he couldn’t walk for weeks because his ribs were hurting him! I had to pick him off the ground-” You pause with a shaky exhale, trying your hardest to calm down. “But I guess you deserve a cookie for not having sex for two days, right? ‘Cause you said it stopped when I came back- I came back two days ago, and I’m guessing you were getting busy even when we started talking on the walkies, right?”

“Just the first month,” he admits, and you suddenly regret asking even though you’d heard Sherry loud and clear last night. “Y/n-”

“Give me- Give me a-a week,” you cut him off. “Just- Just a week to- to mourn my friend in peace. Please, Negan, that’s all I’m asking right now.”

You hear him scoff but you’re too tired to get angry about it, plus, you’ve already blown your fuse and you’re now hyper-aware of the fact that you’re outside where any passersby can hear you.

“I give you a week, then what? Are we finally gonna have a proper fucking conversation? Are ya gonna run off? Or ask me for some more time? ‘Cause it seems to be like you’re fuckin’ terrified to just sit down with me and fuckin’ talk when I’m sure we’d be much better off by now if we would’ve gotten this shit done already. Randall would most likely still be alive-” A sharp slap to the face cuts Negan off, the sound echoing around you.

Your breathing is erratic and the palm of your right hand burns from the impact. “You have no right, Negan. Don’t you think I already feel guilty enough for what happened to him?” You huff out a sad, dry chuckle. “I mean, I trusted you- How stupid am I? I should have known better and I got there to late but I’m not the one who’s put him in this cage, that’s on you, so keep. His name. Out of your mouth.”

“You think you’re a big girl, huh? Think you can make your own decisions?” He asks, shaking the aftermath of your hit off, a little snarl showing on his mouth. “I’ll give you your week, princess- Give some time, right? Get your shit together,” he tells you, his jaw clenched tight.

“But, let me make this real fuckin' clear, baby; if I catch you slipping once? If I don’t find you out
of bed before six, if I catch you giving me ‘em puppy eyes, if I hear you’ve skipped a single meal. It’s off and we’ll have a real long fuckin’ talk about where and to whom you fucking belong to. Conversation that might or might not end with a fuckin’ spankin’ that’ll leave your bubbly li’l ass sore for fucking days and there’ll be no kissin’ it better, we clear?”

“What if it turns out I’m not completely useless without you?” You ask him, unable to hide the bitterness in your voice. You hate that he seems to think you’re nothing without him.

Negan chuckles but it’s not a warm, amused one. “Don’t put words in my fuckin’ mouth, doll.” His words would have soothed you a little if it wasn’t for him coming back with the D word. You did not miss that. “This ain’t me sayin’ you’re useless without me, this is me lettin’ experience somethin’ for yourself. Something I know you’re fightin’ real hard not to let show but can’t hide from me.”

“What do I get if I finish the week?” You put the conversation back on track, silently processing his words without acknowledging them out loud.

“A calm conversation without your ass getting beat cherry-red,” he casually tells you. “It starts at midnight, so, if you need anything for free, you better come see before then ‘cause that shit won’t stand after, darlin’,” he informs you before walking off with a wink, leading on his shoulder as he walks into the compound with a whistle.

well then…

6:00 PM //

You’re sitting on your bed, appreciating the calming silence filling your room, your hair soaked from the shower you’ve got out of minutes ago, the baby pink silk pajama set Negan brought you when you'd first arrived at the Sanctuary slightly sticking to your still damp skin, your feet and calves covered in your favorite white high-knee socks. Randall’s pillow is nestled tight between your legs that are bent at the knees and your chest, your chin resting on the soft lump as you go over his drawing of you, the one he's made of Connor and his niece safe in your supply-chest, locked away with your personal belongings and your bow. As usually, your knife is still on you, tugged away between the soft waistband of your silk short and your skin. You'd feel naked without it, you're too used to having it on you.

You know that most workers are having drinks together at this hour, trying to take the pressure of the day off, but you don’t feel like joining in. Apart from Faith, Dwight, Laihla and, by now, Simon, you don't care for anyone in this place, you still have that urge to watch them all burn just so they can hurt as much as you’re hurting.

The only highlight of your day was to spot Laihla laughing with her husband. When she saw you, she was hesitant at first but, when you give her a smile, she ran up to you and gave you a hug with a giddy little laugh that more than made up for the shit-storm of an encounter you’ve just had with Negan.

You two caught up which is when she told you that Negan has let her go back to her husband and shrugged with a ‘you let me know when you figure this man out’ when you curiously asked her how that happened. Honestly, her statement was almost comforting in a way that, even her, a former therapist, can not figure the man out to save her life. It’s just reassuring in a way to no that you’re
not completely alone with that struggle 'cause you were seriously starting to believe it might just
come from you.

“*Men should come with a freaking instructional manual, s'not fair,*” you grumpily whisper to
yourself as you carefully fold the drawing back to put it away, almost falling off your bed when a
knock on your door makes you jump.

“*Good God!*” You squeak out with a hand to your chest before clearing your throat. “*Yes?*”

The door creaks open and Simon’s head pops in through the doorframe, making you chuckle, the
sound making him smile. “*Heya, pumpkin,*” he greets before pushing the door open and stepping
in.

“*Say, the commissary's open so, if ya need anythin’, y'better go and check shit out 'cause the good
stuff goes real quick.*”

*wait…*

“He- He told you?” You quietly ask him, a little taken aback by the proposition. Simon’s never
treated you like an ‘employee’ before, he never came to you for this stuff, so you don’t feel too
stupid in assuming that Negan must have told him about your ‘deal’.

“Eh, he told me something ‘long the lines of makin’ sure you’re comfy but not to let ya know he
told me that, so, y’know, I’m not gonna.” Okay, so, that makes you smile a little. Simon isn’t so
bad.

“Well uh, I’m good. Thanks though,” you let him know, looking down at the folding piece of
paper in your trembling hands.

“D’ya eat anythin' today, pumpkin?” He asks with a frown. “*You're shakin' like a fucking fish out
of the water.*”

*wait- what?*

You snort out a laugh. “*Pretty sure that's not a thing,*” you point out with a small smile, making
him chuckle. “*It's a ‘thing’ if I want it to be, pumpkin.*”

“Oh, right, the power of a man's ego, almost forgot. My bad,” you sass with a roll of your eyes,
only making him laugh some more.

“Alright, alright. Damn, girl,” he chuckles, his hands up in surrender. “*Go to the kitchen, tell Mike
I sent ya and get yourself some’ t'eat, yeah?*”

“Why? Are you keeping tabs for Negan?” You ask him, maybe a little coldly. Simon scoffs and
smirks at you. “*No, darlin’- I mean, the man will definitely kill me if I let ya starve on my watch,
but this ain’t what this is about.*”

He’s careful as he walks over to sit on the right side of the mattress. “*You look like Hell and you’re
shakin’ like you’ve been there, you look exhausted and… Look, I know losin’ Randall was hard on
ya, and I ain’t one to tell ya how to mourn, but I do know one thing; wherever the kid is right now,
we both damn well know that he’ll kick your ass straight back into your body if he sees you.”

You sniffle and let out a small chuckle. If Simon and Abraham had a shit-talking competition, you’re pretty sure the world would implode. “I’m sorry for pulling a gun on you,” you quietly apologize, memories from the day before slowly coming back to you. You’re pretty sure you were completely dissociated through most of it.

“Meh, no worries. I get it, like I said; things are hard for ya right now, kiddo. Though, don’t do it again or, at least, keep your finger off the trigger next time- Almost had me shittin’ myself.” He chuckles when you push him off the bed telling him to hush.

“Go get some’ in your belly, pumpkin,” Simon insists as he straightens up.

“I’m okay, really. M’not hungry anyways,” you try but your body is quick to call bullshit, your stomach growling loudly at the mere mention of eating, making you blush furiously.

Simon doesn't look too amused though he gives you a friendly smirk. “I don’t think your stomach agrees with you there, kid. Get whatever you want, s’on me, don’t worry about it,” he pushes one last time before stepping out of the room and leaving your door open.

You almost yell at him to close the damn thing but realize that he kept it open because he wants you to get out of your room. With a long and heavy sigh, you push yourself off your bed and walk out, closing the door behind you with a huff.

*he said anything; orange juice counts.*

Walking through the cold looking corridors, you can't help but think that the look of this whole place suits Negan perfectly. It's cold and looks hostile when you're not in the good parts of it.

You get to the cafeteria and, though there's a bunch of eyes following your every move, you head straight for the kitchen in the back, letting out a sigh a relief when you get there. You quickly find that Simon is also in here, having a conversation with the God-knows-who.

*turns out he’s insane and he’s just talking to a fork.*

“... So, yeah, she should be coming through pretty damn soon, let me know if she hasn’t come around before nine,” you hear Negan’s right-hand man order.

“Um, I mean, sure, but-” The man you presume to be the cook, the man *-so, not a fork-* Simon is speaking to, mumbles as he looks at you, unsure if he should alert his superior of your presence or not.

“But what? You got a problem with-”

“Pretty sure he got it, Simon. You can put your fangs away, old man,” you interrupt with an amused smile on your lips, making the man turn around with a smirk on his.

“Well, I'll be damned. I thought I was gonna have to drag you here myself, pumpkin.” He steps towards you to exit the room and stops right by you to lean against you. “Y’eat somethin’ then you
can go to bed if ya want, alright?” You silently nod at his words, waiting for him to move on but he
doesn't move an inch.

“Don't worry, I'll let Negan know you've been good, pumpkin,” he informs you before stepping
away, shouting ‘sleep tight, pumpkin,’ as he walks off into the cafeteria, leaving you standing there,
awkwardly looking at the cook who seems to be pretty amused by the whole thing.

at least he seems sweet.

“Hi, I uh- I'm y/n,” you timidly introduce yourself, focusing on keeping your voice as you face
this stranger all by yourself.

“Hey there, the name's Mike,” he introduces himself, saluting you with his index and middle
finger. “Feel free to go see what you'd like to eat, there's a bunch of shit in the pantry or you have
what I've made.”

“Wh-What did y-you make?” You shyly ask, pulling nervously at your fingers. Thank God the
man is soft-spoken.

“Some deer meat, sauce and some pasta, you want some?” Mike eagerly points to a plate with a
smile

A little hesitant, you get closer to him and the counter the food is resting on and the smell alone
makes you stomach growl in hunger, making both you and Mike laugh quietly.

“Sorry,” you whisper. “It smells amazing.”

“Well, thank you. Not gonna lie, it would have hurt my feelings if you threw up all over me
because of the smell of my food,” he jokes, making you smile a little. “S'nice to finally meet ya, by
the way,” he adds, making you frown a little.

what's that supposed to mean?

“Wh- I- What d'you mean?” You cautiously ask him. “Oh, uh, y'know, just that-” He starts,
scratching the back of his neck, afraid that he might have been rude without realizing it. “Everyone
keeps talking about you, I hear your name all the time but, I never got to meet you so, I'm just
sayin’ it's really nice to, s'all. Didn't mean to be rude or anythin'.”

“N-No. No, no, you didn't u-upset me o-or anything, I was just curious,” you quickly assure him
and watch the cook relax a little before suddenly straightening up with a bright white that’s almost
contagious.

“Alright, you hungry?”

A few minutes fly by, the cafeteria fills up a little then it's completely empty the next hour, as if
everyone in this damned place is programmed to start eating at a specific hour and finish at
another. It a little creepy. Though, something caught your eyes when you were looking at all the
people in the room, eating their meal.

“I didn't know Negan's... Y'know, whatever you call them, ate at the cafeteria. I thought they
stayed in their tower made out of gold and nail polish,” you say, bitterness shining through, but it makes Mike laugh and you can help the small smile on your lips.

“Well, technically, they don’t; they just come down to get their trays and go back up to their rooms or whatever- But, hey, it used to be that I or one of the gals working with me had to go up there to give them those damn trays so I ain’t complaining. I don’t fuckin’ know what the hell’s happenin’ upstairs and I don’t really care to be honest, I got my own shit goin’ own without trying to figure out what the Hell Negan’s doing.”

“Yea. I hear that,” you whisper, sadness weighting heavy on your words and Mike doesn't miss it.

“Hey, maybe he’s gettin’ tired of being a manwhore. Who knows?” You don't want to laugh but you can't help it, it just feels right to laugh at the situation for once.

10:00 PM //

You and Mike finally finish your meal after spending more time talking and laughing at each other's misfortunes and some really stupid puns than you've spent actually eating but, in the end, you've successfully finished your plate which truly is a really huge victory for you. It's been so long since you've had an entire meal and actually enjoyed eating it. You feel good.

“Alright, I think we need to call it a night, hon,” Mike says just as he gets done doing the dishes which he refused to let you help him with.

“Y-Yeah, I’m out,” a squeaky yawn follows your words, making the cook chuckle.

He's about to follow you out of the room when he stops in front of a tray on one of the counters before looking at you. “Negan’s,” he says, pointing at the tray, a covered plate is on it as well as an empty glass, a fork and a knife.

You tilt your head at him, confused as to what he’s getting at. “One of his girls usually comes down to pick it up and bring it to him but he's been coming down to get it himself as of late.”

“Wh-Why are you te-telling me that?” You ask him with slightly narrowed eyes. You're honestly too tired for any of this to make any sort of sense.

“You got them sparks in your eyes when you talk about the man, hon. I told ya, I heard about you. I've seen him change ever since you came around, still think he's an asshole; but he’s been less dickish one lately.”

“You want me to bring him his plate?” You ask with a quirked-up eyebrow, most definitely too tired for this shit. “I don’t want you to do anything, y/n. But if you want to, I’m sure he’ll be more than happy to open his door to ya.”

You give a soft scoff at that. “I doubt it, he’ll be all smug about it if anything.”

“Maybe, but one thing I do know though is that you're the gal he keeps bringing chocolate and sweets for every time he goes out and threatens to cut my balls off if one of 'em goes missing.”

You remember having a similar conversation with Simon months ago, sitting at the big industrial
island in the middle of the kitchen.

You don’t break the silence in the room as you walk back in, grab the tray with a look to Mike that screams ‘please don’t judge me,’ and silently head to Negan's quarters as the chef turns the kitchen's lights off and closes the room with a sly smile on his face.

He's happy to have finally met you and he feels a little giddy that he got to play Cupid for a bit. Even if the man he’s sent you to is Negan. The look in your eyes let him know you wouldn’t mind though.

He’s heading back to his room, ready to call it a night when his radio starts to act up, the smile on his face growing bigger when he hears the voice of his boyfriend coming through, “Don't ignore me, Mike. I'm needy and I crave attention! Mike!” Tyler playfully screams on the other side of the channel.

“Good God, do ya ever shut up?” The cook answers with a laugh. “Nah, and when I'll die, I'll put a tape of me screaming my lungs out on repeat inside my coffin.”

“I love you, you stupid fucking idiot.”

“I love you too, you bitch.”

“Aren't you supposed to be working the night shift, Tyler?”

“I am- Well, I'm trying at least... I'm horny.” Mike chuckles at that. “Okay, I'm gonna stop talking to you now.”

“You wouldn't dare,” Tyler dramatically gasp on the other end. “Get back to work, I love you.”

“I love you too, but don't you fucking dare-”

“Byyyyye. Goodnight, baby. I love you.”

“I will destroy you for your betrayal- But I love you too. Sleep tight, handsome,” is the last thing Mike hears his boyfriend say through the radio before he turns it off and strips out of his clothes to finally get to bed, a heavy but happy sigh slipping past his lips.

This place might be hellish and crappy but, at least, he's not going through it all alone.

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You’ve been standing in front of Negan’s door for at least twenty minutes now. Why you’re doing this is beyond you- Okay, you got jealous. Maybe. You’re not sure. All you know is that you saw
an opportunity for an excuse to interact with him before midnight and ran with it. And now you feel super dumb about it.

What if you can’t spend the whole week as ‘one of the guys’? And what is it Negan wanted you to ‘experience for yourself’? What if he thinks you’re too clingy and needy? Oh my God, what if you’re just super annoying and he wants you to see it? Because you’re seeing it right now and-

Your frantic thoughts are cut short when the door in front of you opens, the startled flinch you give almost has the tray full of food slipping from your hands, but you somehow manage to save it even though it’s with the grace of a newborn giraffe.

“Well hey there, darlin’,” Negan smugly greets you, an amused smirk crooking his mouth as he stands tall in front of you while you’re starriny down at his boots, slowly dying from embarrassment on the inside.

is if you bringing him his food wasn’t already embarrassing enough.

“I huh- I- I didn't--”

words, woman!

“Baby, look at me,” he orders and your head snaps up, your breath catching in your throat when you spot glasses sitting on the bridge of his nose.

jesus fucking christ on a popsicle.

Okay, so… He looks disgustingly good, so, there’s that. Since when does Negan wear glasses? Fuck- He looks like some hot dad or something- Jesus Christ, your mind is fucking gone. Maybe you should wear yours more, maybe that’ll help stop the constant migraines… Right- No- Okay! Negan. You’re talking to Negan right now.

“You look good,” you quietly mutter, your eyes a little wide as you look at him. Negan chuckles as he leans against the door-frame. “Why thank you, sweetheart. You look damn good yourself,” he gives back the compliment, his eyes roaming over you.

“That for me?” He juts his chin out at the tray you’re carrying, his smirk turning into a grin when you frantically nod. “Y-Yes. I just- I just thought that you might w-want to eat s-something and- and I… Uhm--”

“That's real fuckin' nice of ya, honey,” he says as he takes the tray away from your shaky hands to bring it to his desk which you can see is messy from here. There’s a bunch of papers littered everywhere; you wonder what he’s working on.

“Wanna come in, have a li’l chat?” Negan asks as he walks back to you since you haven’t moved an inch, your nerves freezing you on the spot.

yes- no! wait- definitely no… maybe? oh my god! just fucking run! run and never look back!
“I uh-Th-Thanks b-but I have t-to go-” You difficultly articulate. “Go where, kitten? I didn’t put you on the night-shift as far as I know, did I?” He asks with a smirk, enjoying watching you trip over your own feet all because you're hardheaded and don’t want to so much as risk giving him some kind of leverage when, really, he just wants to talk.

“T-To sl-sleep,” you frantically nod to affirm your own statement. “M’going to sleep. M’tired.”

“Alright then, sweetheart. You go on, I'll come say goodnight when I'll be done here.”

You deflate a little at that. “O-Oh but- It's not n-necessary, really. I-”

“Get your sweet li'l ass to bed, y/n. I’ll be right there,” he insists, making it clear that he will come say goodnight if he damn well pleases, before kissing your forehead, letting his lips linger on your skin for a while.

You almost stumble in your rush to walk away the second his lips leave your skin, a smirk plastered on his lips as he watches you go with a shake of his head.

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You rush to your room with dark, burning cheeks, your entire body feeling way too hot for comfort. You’re so flustered you swear you could scream. Why did you ever think this was a good idea?

In the comfort of your room, you let your silky shorts fall down your legs and pool at your feet, stepping out of them to go and fetch a pair of undies to put on for the night. You slip a simple pair of white cotton panties on ad decide to call it a day.

As you go to crawl in bed, you stop in your steps when your eyes find the unlit fairy lights on your left wall. You stand there for a minute, fidgeting with your fingers before quickly walking up to them and plugging them in, the soft yellow-y glow they give calming your nerves in a heartbeat.

A little calmer now, you crawl underneath your blankets and let your head rest on your plushy pillow, anticipating for Negan to burst through the door.

The familiar smell of Randall is quick to fill your nostrils and, in a matter of a second, you’re crying and slipping his pillow from beneath your head to hug it tight to your chest, your face buried in it.

You breathe into the soft lump of feather like it’s your only source of oxygen, your tears soaking the white linen covering it. You haven’t really thought of him today, too busy keeping busy, but now that there’s nothing left to do; you’re left to deal with his very real absence. It’s so weird not hugging him goodnight and you know not seeing him first thing in the morning when you’ll walk
You curse out loud and sob into the pillow when you hear the door of your room. Your mattress dips with the weight of someone sitting down right next to your legs.

“Y/n,” Faith gently calls out, one of her hand gently slipping through your hair. It takes you a minute or two but you eventually manage to peel your face out of the pillow and peek up at her. She greets you with a soft, sympathetic smile. “Hey, honey.”

“Hey,” you very faintly whisper. It’s been a minute since you’ve last seen Faith and, despite your silence, you’re happy to have her around again.

“I miss him too, sweetie,” she tells you with a sad little smile, eyeing the pillow you’re holding so tight. Of course she does, Randall and her were close like mother and son.

“I’m sorry- I should’ve ch-checked o-on you, I should’ve- I should’ve let you come with me t-to bury him-”

“Hey, stop that,” Faith gently scolds with a frown. “Randall was like a son to me, I’ll always love him with all my heart, but I know how much he meant to you, too, honey.”

In a flash, you’re in her arms, quite literally crying on her shoulder as she hushes and gently rocks you back and forth, one of her hand soothingly rubbing at your back while the other hold your head to her.

“Oh, sweetheart, I’m so, so sorry. I wish you wouldn’t have had to see him like that. You should’ve to bury the people you love- I know, darling, I know,” she coos when she feels your grip on her tightening at her words, clearly showing your distress, and she can feel her stomach turning into a huge knot as she listens to you cry into her neck.

“I don’t know wh-what to do. Faith- I’m sc-scared.” At this point, you're holding on to her like a scared child would. You're exhausted. “I know, darling, but you’ll be okay. Things are gonna be hard for a bit but I’m not going to let you go through it alone, you hear me?”

“Things are going to suck for a while, but, eventually, you’ll be okay; I’ll make sure of it. In the meantime, you’re gonna have to let yourself mourn and accept that things don’t always work out the way we thought they would no matter how bad that hurts and how scary it is.”

After a few minutes of hushing and comforting you, Faith slowly calms you down and makes you feel better. She takes her time talking to you and even succeeds to make you laugh. Surely enough, a full hour passes without either of you realizing, too caught up in the conversation, when the door of your room opens and Negan appears, a smirk already drawn on his lips.

“Ladies,” he greets, his eyes going back and forth between you and Faith. “I hate to interrupt but lights out's at eleven so, Faith, get your ass back to your quarters and lemme have some time with my girl.”

Faith rolls her eyes at him but kisses your cheek and wishes you goodnight nonetheless, before
walking past Negan, biding him ‘good night, asshole.’

With a chuckle, the rugged leader steps fully inside the room to closes the door behind him, and you suddenly feel very small and vulnerable again. You're not scared but the vibe is different all of the sudden and you're unsure of how you feel about that.

You watch as Negan’s eyes find the lit fairy lights on the walls and a small smile appears on his lips. before he’s drawing his attention back to you.

“Look at ya, you're fuckin' exhausted, aren't ya, darlin’?” He remarks, walking towards you and letting his hands grip your waist to lift you up.

You don't overthink it, hell, you don't think at all, and just reach up to wrap your arms around his neck. As if you've done this a million time; Negan lets his hands go beneath your butt to secure you and your legs find his waist. You let out a sigh of contentment as you let your head rest on his shoulder, your breath hitting his neck.

“Yeah. I am,” you whisper and then there's small silence but, for once, you're the one to break it. “I ate a w-whole meal, tonight,” you quietly share your small victory, feeling the urge to let him know.

“Thatta girl, baby,” he says with way more enthusiasm than you though he'd show and start to wonder if he's making fun of you. “Simon told me you've been really good.” He leans his head down to kiss your forehead. “M'real proud of ya, y/n.”

“Yeah. You are?” You timidly question, your heart about ready to burst out of your chest.

“Hell yes I am.” He kisses your temple, keeping his lips against your skin as he whispers; “my good li'l girl,” and you feel your throat and mouth go completely dry at the praise, your lower-belly feeling tight and uncomfortable. You nuzzle your face further into his neck to hide your burning cheeks.

Though he doesn't say a word, Negan knows exactly what's happening to you.

“I- I've been thinking and... Since you'll get t-to... to p-punish me if I can't last the week, c-could I get something m-more than a conversation, t-too?” You decide to change the subject, trying to push aside what's happening to your body at the moment.

“Well, what do you want, kitten?” He asks and you take a minute to think but quickly come up with something. “If I can last the wh-whole week without you, I get to go see my friends m-more than twice a week. Whenever I want, for however long I want, alone.”

“You fuckin' suck, baby, y'know that?” He sighs and leans back slightly to look at you and you follow his lead, relaying on his hands to keep you balanced. “I'll think about it,” he breathes out before kissing the tip of your nose and you let your head drop down, upset about his answer. After all, he didn't ask how you felt about his terms. Why can't he just give you this one thing?

“You're a real fuckin' piece of work, y'know that?” Negan chuckles, taking in your disappointment and sly anger towards him. “You're one to talk,” you whisper, your eyes getting watery.
“Princess...” You hum, letting him know that he has your attention but he's not happy with that, so he decides to do it his way and brings one of his hands to your jaw to make you look up at him. “Did what happened with Sherry last night hurt you that bad?” He asks though he already knows the answer.

“N-No,” you lie very quietly, not really wanting to talk about it. “You're a terrible fuckin' liar, baby girl.”

“You're a terrible fuckin' liar, baby girl.”

“C-Can I go t-to bed now, pl-please?” You plead, exhausted and wanting nothing more than to get some well-deserved rest and forget about how shitty those last two days have been for you. Just a few hours of peace and quiet, that's all you're asking for.

He doesn't say anything, just sighs as he carefully drops you back on your mattress. Your eyes are glued to him as he waits for you to lie down to cover you up with your blankets.

When he’s satisfied that you’re settled, he crouches down, his face directly in front of yours. “I'm a prideful man, a dickhead if you will,” he starts, your eyes shifting to avoid making eye contact with him. “I get high off the power those women give me.” His right hand comes up to your face and you almost flinch, but you relax when it comes to rest on your left cheek.

“Last night, I was fuckin' worried about you not bein' back and it pissed me off. The goddamn look in your eyes when you left with Randall, how fuckin' broken you were- I felt fuckin' powerless and I hate it. I get fuckin' wasted on power, that shit's stronger than any alcohol, baby girl,” he clears his throat then, clearly struggling a little.

“Pardon my language, sweetheart, but these women are an outlet for me. A supply run went to shit? I go to them. We lost someone? I go to them. The girl half my fuckin' age runs off with one of my men? I go to them. When I feel powerless; I fuck. It doesn't mean anything, it just makes me forget for a bit, reminds me that I at least have control over some things in my life.” Negan hears your throat click as you swallow, your eyes searching his face. There's no judgement there and, that's the most surprising to him; there's no disgust either. You're a little uncomfortable, that much is clear, but it's not because you're disgusted.

“Last night, I needed some type of control back on the situation and Sherry was there, I'm sorry. I know she hurt you and I have Faith dealing with that, but I want you to know that I believed you when you told me about it and last night wasn't me rewarding her behavior though I get how it might have seem that way...” He trails off when he sees your eyes shine in the soft light of the fairy lights at his back. Fuck, you look drained.

“Sleep tight, darlin’,” Negan ends the conversation with a sigh. “I'll see ya tomorrow, give you somethin' to do.”

He's about to get up and walk out of the room when your hand shoots out from underneath the blankets and hastily grabs onto his shirt, keeping him from straightening back up.

“Th-Thank you... for talking to me,” you whisper really quietly though you mean it. Him being open and honest with you is something you need.
“I think we both need to let some weight off of our damn shoulders, sweetheart. Y'know I really fucking care about you, princess, y'know that. I know you do.” You see him eye your lips as he finishes his sentence, so you carefully wiggle on your mattress to get closer to the edge and reach out to give him a kiss.

Everything about it is much more innocent than what he's used to, but it feels so damn right. He hasn't felt that need to be so intimate with another woman ever since Lucille passed.

13th April:

7:00 AM //

You've been awake for two hours now, took your shower when the rest of the compound was still dead to the world, skipped breakfast and immediately got to work, finding little things do to around the place, things to fix or clean, basically whatever you could get your hands on and would keep your mind occupied.

Everyone's awake now which means that the peaceful silence you've been working in for practically two hours is completely gone and has been replaced with barks from Negan's men and insults being thrown around all willy-nilly.

You can get past the really irritating and unnecessary yelling, you're calm and patient enough for that, but if there's one thing you cannot stand it's men belittling you and telling you what you should or should not be doing simply because, to them, you're nothing but a fragile little creature.

You’ve been chopping logs of woods for a little while now with no problem whatsoever, it actually relaxes you because it gives you some kind of outlet for your anger, yet it doesn't stop one of Negan's men from walking up to you to express his opinion on the whole thing, as if you've asked for it which, as far as you're concerned, you fucking did not.

“Hey now, you shouldn't be doin' none of that, sweet pie,” the man says, coming up to you to take the axe right from your hand. “There're some clothes to wash and iron if you want, but you don't do that. It's a man's job, sweet cheeks.”

who in the holy fucking fuck... he did not... oOOooh no you do not.

There's no way around it, it's not anger, it's not because you're upset nor because you're tired- Oh no, you're about to tear this moron a new one and it's all because you cannot stand his attitude and you're not about to repress it; not this time.

“Alright,” you start, wiping away the sweat off your forehead with your forearm, “listen here, shithead. While you were drooling into your pillow, I was already working my ass off, doing something we both know you're in no shape to do.” You look at the man's scrawny body.

“A man's job, huh? How about you go ahead and clean the shit-stains you and your buddies have left in your underwear?”

“D'y know who you're talking to? You better watch your damn mouth, sweet cheeks-”
“Or what? You're gonna hit me?” You challenge with a quirked-up eyebrow, part of you itching for an excuse to swing.

As expected, the man takes you for your words and raises a hand to backhand you, a gasp leaving his mouth when you stop the limb dead on its way down only to completely twist his arm around, a loud pop echoing through the garden, a noise so clear and loud that even the birds singing can’t cover it up and it’s quickly followed by the man howling in pain.

You hit the back of his knee to bring him down and your hands close into tight fists as you straddle him, not able to control yourself anymore. Your anger finally found a way out and it’s consuming you wholly. You can't stop bringing your clenched fists down on the man's face, busting your knuckles wide open in the process, but you don't mind taking damages if it means he gets it worse.

Your ears are ringing because of the adrenaline rush you're getting a huge high on but you can still hear the door leading to the garden getting slammed open and then Simon's voice yelling something but you have no fucking clue what he's saying and, in all honesty; you don't care, at all.

“Y/n! I said enough!” Simon's voice finally gets through to you, but it doesn't do much to calm you down.

Eventually, you’re lifted off the man whom you’ve made a bloody mess of, his face swollen to the point where his eyes can barely open but he's still breathing, he's still moving.

“Let go of me!” You protest, kicking your legs around to try and wiggle your way out of Simon's grip but he's firmly holding you against him, your back against his chest. “You pull that shit on me again and I swear to God I’ll shove your head so far up your ass, you won't even know what the fuck just happened to you!” You yell at the man laying on the ground as he frantically pushes himself away from you on his hands, not taking any chances even though Simon is holding you.

“Y/n, for fuck's sake- That's enough,” the seasoned Savior scolds as he carries you away from the garden, literally dragging you somewhere else, all while you keep struggling in his arms, frustrated, angry and upset. “Calm down, kid. It's okay, s'over.”

You try to calm yourself, to listen to Simon and take comfort in his words but, when you realize where he’s taking; all signs of potential relaxation completely vanish. “Simon- P-Please, don't.”

“Sorry, girl, but I gotta report what happened and we gotta take care of your wounds so-”

“You can't d-do that! Put me down! Simon!” You actually try to keep him from walking into Negan's quarters by pushing against the door frame with your feet but he just has to get a grip on your knees for your legs to completely give in and, the first thing you're greeted with as you enter the other part of the compound is a gravelly chuckle.

not sure if you hate or love that laugh... kinda hate everything and everyone at the moment but... yeah.
“Really, kitten?” Negan spits out, still chuckling away. “The day's not even fuckin' started yet.”

“She uh- She got into a fight with one of the guys,” Simon starts, trying his hardest to keep your extremely wiggly self in his hold without hurting you. “You got a name?” Negan asks, suddenly much less amused.

“Skinny Joe,” his right-hand is quick to report. “Alright, thanks. You can go back to it, I'll take care of the little one here,” he Negan dismisses him, watching you intently as Simon carefully puts you down and leaves, the sound of the heavy door closing behind you almost making you jump.

You're not in Negan's apartment, you're just in a hall, standing there, blood pouring out of your hands and forming puddles on the squeaky-clean floor.

Your skin is shining with sweat and covered in small splatters of blood here and there, your hands shaking from the pain and the adrenaline still running high through your veins. You don't like being violent, you really, genuinely, hate it, but this guy just set you off.

Between the anger you carry because of Randall’s death, your mind-fuck of a relationship with Negan, your loneliness eating you alive and your depression not letting you catch a damn break, that altercation was just too much for you and you snapped.

“What in the holy fucking hell happened? Y’mind tellin’ me?” Negan asks with a frown, his voice sharp but not cold. “One of your men- One of your men was being a grade A asshole and I snapped,” you simply explain.

“Did he touch ya, baby?” He asks, his voice lower, and you look up at him, slightly shaking your head no. “So what did the poor sonuvabitch do, princess?” He presses, his eyes examining your bloody hands and your busted knuckles.

“I just- I was working, alright? I was working and he comes up to me, and shits out some 'I am man and you are woman, man do this and woman do that' bullshit and I-” You stop when you hear Negan laughing at your little reenactment and you find yourself smiling a little despite yourself. “S'not funny, you asshole.”

“Goddamn yes it fucking is, baby girl,” he corrects you before settling down and steps closer to you, taking your bleeding hands into his when he's close enough. “Look at you, shoving your lady balls down my guys’ throat.”

You let out a sad sigh, Negan's eyes going from your injured hands to your glossy eyes. “I didn't- I don't like when I get l-like that, it scares me,” you quietly confess.

“I already told ya to leave that shit to me, angel. You got a problem? You come to me and I'll take care of it.” He looks back down at your hands and lets one of his thumbs glide over the ripped skin on your knuckles making you wince in pain, your hand twitching as your body tries to take it away from him but he keeps a firm grip on it.

“Fuck’s sake, kitten,” Negan breathes out, looking at his now bloody thumb, your blood staining the pad of the digit. “Fuckin' hell, I can't leave you alone for one fuckin' day, can I?” A dry chuckle follows that sentence but you're not sure how to answer that question if you're being
honest. You don't even know if you're *supposed* to.

“*I*’m not the p-problem, Negan, we both know that.”

“*Yeah, I know, y/n. S’why I fuckin’ hate the idea of you being around those shitheads twenty-four-seven.”*

“It’s you they look up to, why wouldn’t they act like misogynistic dickheads when their leader runs a harem and uses women as a reward system.”

“Watch your mouth, princess-” “Or what?” You take a step closer to him, his eyes never leaving yours as you lean in closer to his face, your breath hitting his lips. “You’re gonna hit me?” You repeat the words that got you here in the first place.

The silence that falls over you is heavy, the tension between the two of you so thick you could cut it with a butter knife. The grip you have on this man is insane, he can feel himself chubbing in his damn pants as he waits to see if you’ll dare to make the first move or if you'll back down. He sure as shit didn't expect you to laugh at his face, your lips so close to him he can feel them and shift to kiss his cheek before walking off. The sound of the door closing is what brings him back down to reality.

11:15 AM //

After hours of working your ass off, Simon finally got you to take a break and, though you hate to admit it, he was right; you did need a time off.

You're standing in front of the wall covered in polaroids of Negan's victims in the warehouse. There's not a whole lot left of their heads, it's just blood and crushed bones. In the middle of them all is a clear space where the picture of the man Negan has forced you to kill months ago was before you took it off. It’s still hidden in your bedside drawer. You don't want what you've done to be admired, glorified nor used to terrorize people no matter how much you despite them all.

Your hair stand on ends as the loud warehouse suddenly goes eerily quiet and you turn to find Negan walking past the people kneeling in front of him, Lucille on his shoulder, a smirk appearing on his lips when he spots you from across the room.

*don’t you fucking dare.*

Subconsciously, you straighten your back as he makes his way to you, stopping only a few centimeters from you. The first thing you do is shake your head at him, silently letting know know that you will *not* kneel for him.

“*Over my dead body,”* you quietly spit out.

The thing with Negan is that he isn't really a predictable person- Some might even say he’s quite fucking unstable. Your attitude could piss him off, anger him, or maybe even amuse him. In this case; amusement is what he shows.
He laughs your words off, his tall frame crushing your confidence though you try your best not to let it show too much. “I’m not gonna ask again, princes,” he clarifies.

“You didn’t ask at all,” you inform him with a glare, and he barks out a laugh, leaning back like he does when he laughs before straightening back up.

Maybe pissing him off when he’s carrying Lucille on his shoulder isn’t the brightest idea but, for some reason, you’re not afraid of him potentially swinging that thing at you.

You watch as he lets his hand slide on his bat, eyeing you to silently warn you that this is your last chance to comply. “Get fucked, Negan,” you whisper only for him to hear.

In a blink of an eye, he swiftly taps the back of your right knee with the bat. Your joint gives out and you’re forced to drop to your dam knee in front of him, your cheeks burning with embarrassment.

Your jeans protected you for the barbwire covering the bat put he’s put enough pressure down on the right nerves to make your knee shake and give away. Quite the literal knee-jerk reaction.

“There she goes,” Negan smirks down at you. “You know,” he pauses to crouch down in front of you, his smirk turning into a wolfish grin when you push your head further down to avoid his stare. “You can still go back, y/n. S’only been a few hours so I’ll go real easy on ya if you just apologize like a good girl,” he offers, bringing his free hand down to cup your jaw and make you look up at him.

You hate hate yourself for it, but you can't help the needy whine that vibrates through your throat, when the rest of his hand comes to rest on the column of it. “Yeah, you just love pushin’ my buttons, don't ya, baby? You love workin’ me up just so that I can beat you at your own damn games. I know y'do. Look at ya, all hot and bothered for me, princess.”

He pauses to take in your flushed cheeks and your slightly dilated pupils, your eyes shining with lust in the sunlight. A lust he knows you don't even realize you're feeling.

“So, you wanna apologize and get this dumb shit over with or you still wanna go through with this bullshit? Think about it, kitten, we both know you're a good little girl no matter how hard you try to break the damn mold, s'just who you are. Get comfortable with it and just let me take care of the rest, yeah?” God, you want to punch him in the face just as much as you want to cry.

You know he's right; you've never been one to act up, but something about him just makes you want to do bad things just to get to him. Not that your anger towards him isn’t justified at times, it’s just that you’ve quickly learned that letting him see just how angry you are and threatening to murder him is a sure way to get him to fucking talk to you.

“I already told you; get fucked, sir,” you whisper through gritted teeth.

“You’ll be knocking on my door in two days tops and, darlin’, when you do? You damn better believe I’ll let ya right back in, take you in my lap and tear the fuckin’ flesh of your ass.”

Okay, so, maybe you should have left the ‘get fucked’ in your pocket and just say ‘no thank you, sir, have a good day, sir.’
TWO DAYS LATER // 15th April;

5:00 PM //

Fuck… The fucker was right. It's now been three days since you've started your deal with Negan and you're doing as well as you’d hoped you would. You've had no idea just how poorly you would deal with keeping your distance from him. Not having him around you and not being allowed to run to him without it being considered you giving up on your newly found freedom fucking sucks and you really wish it didn’t.

You like that you get to work, you love being fully reliant on yourself, but God damn are you happy. And you’re exhausted. As much as you love being independent and making your own decisions even when they’re hard to make- You’re sick of always having to think of everything.

You've spend the last two days locked away in your room, skipping meals, hiding away beneath your blankets, sometimes crying yourself to sleep. You can't stand the mere thought of simply seeing him, you know you're gonna break if you do.

You want him to touch you, you're always craving him, and you hate him for that. He did that to you. It's all his fault. You’ve never needed anyone before he showed up.

Your mind keeps creating scenarios that make you see red, make your blood boil with jealousy. You can't help but think about how Negan's probably having fun with the women he keeps around while you're forced to stay all on your own. It hurts to even think about it. God knows that it's the last thing you want to think about, but your mind keeps on forcing you to believe what it throws at you.

For all you know, he might feel just as lonely as you do, he might just be as frustrated as you are. **He is.** He's all those things and he sure as shit isn't having fun on the side like your anxiety keeps on trying to convince you he is. You don't know that, but he's not enjoying this whole thing either.

What you also don't know is that Negan came to check on you, but you were deeply asleep. You slept so damn much that he had the time to leave the Sanctuary and then come back without you even knowing that he was gone at some point. He just came back today after spending a day and a half outside looking for a way to keep his mind occupied whilst you found safety beneath the sheets of your bed, sleeping the days away.

He's all over the goddamn place, all you can think about is him. He's all over you without even touching or being near you, and you hate it. You need him so badly and he's **right here**, living under the same roof as you, constantly looking at you, yet he's completely out of reach and it frustrates the hell out of you.

*only four days left.*
Four days left to show Negan that you can assume your position as one of his workers, that you don't need him to take care of you, and you felt so damn confident about it three days ago...

It's not that you can't handle yourself, far from it. You can handle yourself better than Negan could ever handle himself, you know that and so does he, but there's something about him taking care of you and keeping an eye out that just appeases you.

You've always been the one in charge. Ever since you were a little girl, you were forced into adulthood and became independent at such a young age, you were way too young to handle things the way you did. Don't get it twisted, your maturity and independence are things you're proud of, things you love about yourself but, sometimes, it just wears you out.

Sometimes you need to let go of everything and put the wheel into someone else's hands. As crazy at it might sound, you don't trust anyone like you trust Negan when it comes to taking care of you whenever you need someone to do so and it seems to be become more and more frequent nowadays.

You've never realized just how much weight you’d been carrying around until he's started to take control away from you.

You trust Negan with that because he’s not forceful about it. Deep down, you know that he’ll never make you or ask you do to something you don’t want to do. Him ‘taking control from you’ sounds almost abusive even in your own ears, but you need someone to force your hand sometimes, especially when it comes to eating your meals. Negan is flexible about the portions but he’s not about you eating at least a damn bite and you need that because you can’t fight this thing all on your own, especially when your head plays against you.

No lie, ever since you’ve met him, you’ve gotten more comfortable with your voice and speaking your mind and while, yes, it is partly because the man sometimes enrages you to the point where you snap; it’s also because he’s always the one pushing for you to not be afraid to speak up and talk back, even to him.

He always lets you talk to him and let him know how you feel about something, even if it’s just him telling you to take a shower.

09:00 PM //

The compound is completely silent as you walk through the long corridors, your stomach in knots as you get closer and closer to the staircase leading to Negan's quarters.

These past few days have been so hard for you, Randall is always on your mind, you’re always anxious and on the verge of tears, and it's all starting to seriously get to you. You might have not picked the best time to force yourself to stay away from Negan, your need for him is getting out of hands and you're not comfortable with it. There’s nothing you can do to appease those cravings, only him can to that and, right now, you can't let him and it's killing you.

Tonight, the dickhead has put you in charge of bringing him his meal and you suspect that he might know exactly what he's doing. Of course he knows, that's why he does everything he ever does.
Your hands are shaking like crazy and it feels as though you're about to drop the tray filled with food all over the damn floor but somehow manage to get to Negan's door, shyly knocking on it. You hit it so lightly that he wouldn't have heard it if he wasn't actively waiting for you.

“C'mon in, princess,” he gives you permission to come in from the other side of the door. 

*how 'bout you c'mon out. that'd be nice.*

You start to freak out at the idea of stepping into that room because you know that you'll get overwhelmed if you do. You can't be *around* him, and you sure as shit can't afford being in the same closed-off space as him. You're gonna blow a fuse.

You're about to drop the tray of food on the floor and run for dear life when Negan opens the door right in front of you as if he could hear your internal screams of panic, and you completely freeze into place.

His eyes run all over you, taking in your appearance, and an almost scary growl vibrates through his throat when he sees that you're only wearing one of his old white t-shirts and the pair of white hipsters he bought back for you while you were out with Randall, your legs covered up to your knees with your white knee-high socks.

While he's busy taking you in, something catches your attention. His grey shirt is covered in fresh blood and he even has some splattered on his face and, since you have no idea that he's been outside for almost two days now, it worries the hell out of you.

“Negan, wh-” He doesn't let you finish as he grabs your forearm and drags you into his office, slamming the door shut behind you before taking the tray of food out of your hands to carelessly drop it on his desk.

Your body is pressed flush against his in an instant and you can hear your heart beating in your ears as you get overwhelmed by his presence.

*uuuugh, he smells so good.*

“This is so fuckin' stupid,” he snarls, his voice low and angry, before letting his lips crash into yours, stealing your breath away.

Your damn toes *curl* and you push yourself up on the balls of your feet to get closer to him, his hands digging into the full flesh of your waist. This is wrong. You shouldn't be doing this. You shouldn't let it continue but you don't want it to end. You can't let it. You need this man in ways you don't understand and, quite frankly, it scares you.

“Don't do that. S'not fair,” you whisper against his lips when you two finally force yourselves to break the kiss to catch your breath.

“You get it, don't ya? You feel it? What I've been trying to show you?” He questions and it suddenly becomes clear what Negan wanted you to ‘experience for yourself’ during this trying week.
He wanted you to feel just how bad you needed someone to alleviate your pain. He wanted you to feel the difference of having him around to do that for you and be completely deprived of it.

Like you’ve been burned, you step away from him and push at his chest to create even more distance between the two of you, your eyes slowly start to fill with angry tears.

“I miss you, okay?! There; you happy?!” From this point on, there's no turning back. “I miss you so damn much, I don't know what's wrong with me! You- You make me feel things that I don't understand, and it scares me but- but then you come around and you make it all better and- and now I can't- I'm a fucking mess and it's all your fault!” You deflate a little, panting as you speak with tears rolling down your face. “I just wanted you to see that I could do it on my own but- I can’t even convince myself.”

“Y/n, sweetheart, don’t say shit like that,” Negan tries, his hands up as he goes to take a step your way, but then you’re bolting out of his room like a tornado.

You hear him call after you as you run off, slamming the heavy doors leading outside behind you with tears blurring your vision. You can’t believe you told him that. God, you feel so fucking stupid.

The cold air of the night cuts into you, stinging your eyes as it hits your tear-soaked face, your nose stuffy and running from both the current temperature and your crying. You need to get out of here, away from him.

\textit{no offense but- m'pretty sure you just kinda told negan you love him... dumbass.}

\textbf{MIDNIGHT //}

You're out, happily breathing the air of the night in, enjoying the sounds of the owls and the leaves of the trees surrendering you blowing in the wind. It feels right, being out here feels right and you needed that. You needed to be with yourself for a little while.

Of course you'll go back, you wouldn't have left a note to Negan if you didn't plan on coming back and, yeah, he's probably gonna be pissed but that’s nothing you haven’t dealt with before.

The heavy reality of what the words you’ve shouted at Negan earlier tonight is weighting a tone on your shoulders, but it also gave you relief to have finally let those things out, whatever they are and whatever they mean.

There are so many things to be worried about nowadays, if someone would have told you that you someday would be standing there, stressing over a man, especially in this kind of environment? You would have told them that pigs flying is much more likely. Yet, here you are; doing the one thing you've promised yourself not to do.

Luna comes to mind then, and you can almost \textit{feel} the ass-whooping you would have gotten from her if she knew about your relationship with Negan.

You stop walking for a second to look up at the clear night sky, not a star or a cloud to be seen; just the moon. “\textbf{Don’t judge me, okay?}”
You know it sounds bad but, it's in those instants that you stop and feel ever-so-slightly better knowing you won't be able to conceive a child. No one can blame you for feeling like you're better off, not after all the shit you've been forced through.

You can't stand the idea of a little innocent and vulnerable version of you getting hurt like you've been hurt when you were just a little girl, enjoying life and finding awe in everything. People took so much from you, they hurt you so bad, you can't possibly have a calm nor positive view on what childhood truly is, not after you were unfairly robbed of yours.

**** brief mention of child neglect / attempted sexual assault ****

You’ll never forget the monsters you came across, the monsters your own mother allowed into your house, into your very own bedroom, the one place you're supposed to feel safe in.

And, no matter how hard you try, you can never erase the memory of your mom closing the door of your bedroom with tears in her eyes, telling you to be good, that it'll gonna be okay, as you cried and begged for her to get the grown man on top of you away. She made it seems so normal, so harmless, but you knew. You knew it was anything but, and you fought through it.

You remember finally getting your small fingers around the lamp on your nightstand and bringing it down on the man's head, making him roll off of you.

**** it’s clear chief ****

You remember running downstairs, looking at your mother with tears in your eyes, your face soaking in the salty water, and opening the door of the house before bolting out and running down the streets as your mom called after you but quickly gave up.

You remember running for so long the sun had set, you remember your small hands balled into tight little fists coming down on the door of the Dixon’s house belonging. You remember a drunken Merle quickly putting himself together to take you in his arms, showing the concern, worry and love he rarely showed, as he tried to understand what’d happened.

You remember staying up really late that night with him, watching a bunch of Disney movies, Merle making comments here and there to try and successfully make you laugh. You remember explaining him what happened to you, unsure of what it was exactly. You'd told him that all you knew was that it was felt really wrong and you were scared.

He’d listen with a tight jaw, trying to come up with an explanation to try and make you understand the situation, but he just didn't have it in him. Instead, he settled on letting you talk and answered your questions as properly as he could.

You let out a small giggle at the memory of the day Merle accidentally swore around your two years old self. You’ll never forget how wide his eyes got when you’ve started repeating the bad word over and over again, giggling as you did. He tried so hard to with bargain you, promising you such and such just to get you to stop saying that damned word, but seeing him freaking out only amused you further and you eventually started to clap your hands as you chanted the word.
Daryl walked into the room and burst out laughing at the scene, earning a death glare from his older brother when he wiped out the camera. They eventually got you to stop you from saying the forbidden word- Until your father came back from his hunt with the boys' father and you ran into his arms, asking him what the beautiful word Merle had taught you meant. Luckily for him, your dad laughed it off and told you it was an ugly word or whatever you say to get a two-year-old to stop saying ‘fuck’ left and right.

Your mind is brought back to reality when you spot a light piercing through the trees a few meters away from you, you narrow your eyes to try and identify who the person holding it is, but your eyes aren't the ones to give you an answer; your ears are.

“Y/n?!” You hear an all too familiar voice call-out for you. It's Negan's. He’s whispering but you can hear him even from this distance because the anger in his voice make his words extremely clear, as if he was standing right beside you.

ooh, wonder if he found the note?

Before you've left to take a walk by yourself, you've made sure to leave a note in your bedroom basically saying that you will be back in the morning and you meant it. You did not run away, you just sneaked out to get some fresh air. You’re literally right next to The Sanctuary.

You didn't really count on him to find it, but you still decided to leave something there so that he wouldn't freak out or think that you ran off again if he came looking.

Your hands start to shake as the rest of you freeze on the spot. He actually came to check on you after you've snapped at him and now, he’s here looking for you.

You want nothing more than to run straight back into his arms, take in his scent and apologize even if you don't have a damn thing to apologize for. You just want things to be okay, you want to stop hurting so bad. All you’ve ever wanted was to put some order back into your mind, to break the emotional storm taking over your head.

The last thing you felt was a sharp pinch in your neck and a damp piece of cloth covering both your mouth and nose and then nothing. It's all darkness, there's nothing to be found, no pieces of the puzzle to put back together because you don't remember a damn thing.

You know that your eyes fluttered open a few times, but you don't remember what they saw, you also remember not being able to move a damn muscle- that you remember really fucking clearly because it terrified you. You remember crying and then it's black again.

Honestly? The only clear thing in your mind as of right now is Negan's voice calling your name, that's all but, at least, there's something. Something good, something familiar.
Your head rolls on your shoulders as you slowly emerge from unconsciousness with a pained grimace. Your vision is blurry and the first thing you feel is a sting in your neck- Then a sudden smarting pain shoots through your entire right arm, springing tears to your eyes.

With a gasp, you look down to found your right hand sticky with thick, coagulated blood. The skin of your palm is swollen and tight, so much so that you can barely move your fingers. Whatever wound lays beneath all that blood hurts like Hell.

Your heartbeat dangerously picks-up when your blink up and find a wall filled with pictures of a very unconscious you in your underwear- You’re not wearing any clothes. Why aren’t you wearing clothes?

Your breath catches in your throat and then you’re lurching forwards to throw up. Most of it hits the wooden flooring but some splash into your shirt and bare thighs.

You don't remember how the hell you ended up wherever it is you are right now, but you know for a fact that you did not take off your clothes. Your pants, socks, shoes and bra are all pilled-up a few taunting meters away from you.

You look around and, though your vision is blurry from the tears in them, you're pretty sure that you're in an attic. “H-How the- How the hell-“ You try to move but you can’t feel your fucking legs and there’s loud rattling sounds coming straight from behind your back.

“Wha-” You look down and spot cuffs on both of your wrists and ankles, the chains they’re linked to rolled around a big wooden pillar behind you, keeping you from going anywhere. You see them but you can’t feel their weight- You can’t feel anything but the constant throbbing in your right palm.

*this isn't right. what the hell is this shit?

“Hey, look who's awake,” a man greets as he walks into your field of vision, making you jump, your head snapping up to meet him. With a smile, he crouches a few feet away from you, the anger in your eyes clear though it's softened by the tears and panic drowning them.

“You don't remember me, do ya?” He softly asks like his existence is supposed to make sense to you.
“Where- Who- I… N-No,” you truthfully tell him, your mind trying to process all the information it's been given but, so far, it seems to be failing. “Hey, it's okay, I'm not here to hurt you, alright?”

uhm? doubt?

“Wh-Why can't I feel a-anything? I ca-can't feel my legs-” “It's okay, honey, just gave you a little something to help with your stress. It's alright, trust me and just relax.”

it's okay? really? trust me?! fucking really?! relax?!

You put your head down when a tear escapes you, not wanting to give whoever this psycho is the satisfaction of seeing you cry because of him. “A-Are you- Are you alone?”

“Well, not really,” he chuckles. “You're here, aren't ya?” You keep on looking down until the man slips one of the pictures he took of you while you were unconscious right in front of your face, coaxing a sob out of you. “What's your name, princess?”

“N-Negan,” it comes out as a faint whisper, as if saying his name will make him magically appear in the room or give you super-human strength to destroy the monster in front of you.

“Negan, huh?” He repeats with a scoff. “It's okay if you don't want to give your name, you'll get there. I'm-”

“I don't care,” you let him know, not needing his name. You refuse to humanize him.

You watch as he gets up and walks to a desk, your eyes growing wide and your breathing growing erratic when he comes back with a mean-looking syringe filled with clear liquid.

Your brain gives the order, but your hand can't move to stop him, all you can do is cry out when the sharp tip of the medical tool pierces through the flesh right below your jaw, the man's thumb pushing the liquid in.

“Here, it'll help ya calm down a little.”

“W-” you try, you really do, but you can't form the rest of your sentence, you just pass out again.

*** t.w; really graphic description of a wound (it will be marked in italic) ***

XX :XX //

You don't know how long you've been out for, you're just glad to be able to feel and move your legs when you finally wake up. Your arms are still really weak, your knuckles bruised but slowly healing from the beating you gave skinny Joe- How long have you been here for?

Slowly and clumsily, you climb up to your knees, your vision slowly clearing, and you spot new photos of you on the wall, your eyes glistening with vulnerability and sorrow at the sight of them.
Feeling it burn, you curiously look down at your right hand and freeze in horror when you find a huge, bloody X marking the palm of your hand. Your limb shakes as you bring it closer to look at it with tears rolling down your face.

The wound is seeping blood and it’s so deep and wide your eyes almost roll back when you see the inside of your flesh and a peek of what looks like bone. The skin all around it is red-raw, swollen and pulled taut, so much so that you can barely move your fingers and can’t close your hand into a fist.

With renewed panic fulling you, you start to frantically pull on the chains linked to the cuffs on your ankles and wrists but it’s useless, it’s just more of your energy wasted on something futile.

With a strangled gasp, you collapse back on your haunches, your hands helplessly resting on the top of your thighs, your bum sitting on your cuffed feet as you let tears roll out of your eyes and down your face, letting them hit the wooden floor beneath you, a few sob pushing their way out of your sore and raw throat.

Your body is aching, and your flesh is sticky with sweat as your system tries to flush whatever drugs this stranger forced into you out. Eventually, you feel your stomach violently turn and clench-up, and you’re hurling your guts out on the floor and on your t-shirt yet again. Your throat is on fire from the gastric acid that was just pushed out of your stomach, nothing else could have come out of there since you haven't eaten for however long you’ve been here.

You don't know why the most fucked up people somehow always seem to find their way to you, but you don't appreciate it. That’s why you always say that people ‘made [you] sick’, because this shit seems to have happened one too many times ever since it first happened. It’s like they know. They gave you a sickness that’s sticking to your skin and they smell it wherever you go.

Three went to shit so, so fast, you didn't even get the chance to get a grip on the situation. Last thing you knew, he, whoever he may be, was standing right in front of you, and then proceeded to take your panties away from you though you fought like Hell to keep your legs screwed shut. Then there was the sound of the metallic loop of his belt hitting the floor made you sob in fear and panic.

It just went to shit so quickly; you don't understand it. You thought you'd be ready for it, between him drugging you, stripping you off most of your clothes to take pictures of you whilst you’re lying there unconscious and the way he spoke to you- You knew. Of course you knew, you're not stupid.
You've been there before and history just keeps on repeating itself, it's always you and it always hurts.

In your head, you were supposed to kick his ass the second he'd get too close to you but, now that's it's happening, now that he's right there, holding you up, the most private part of your body completely bare for him to see and touch, his nails digging into the flesh on your waist and his face so damn close to yours; you can't. Fight or flight is gone and has been replace by freeze and repress.

You can't bring yourself to be brave, you can't find strength anywhere, it's hiding in a corner of your mind and it's too scared to come out. Right now, you can’t fucking move and you’ll conveniently forget that when you’ll blame yourself for not fighting back like you 'should have' when this is all said and done.

You're not too sure how things got so damn out of hands, all you know is that; one minute he was standing there, looking at you like a predator looks at his prey, he stepped closer to you, crushed you against his body and you tried really hard to push him off of you. You bit him, ripping some flesh off of one of his hands which resulted in him hitting you over and over, not cutting you a break until you'd stopped moving.

Once again, you're brought back to the helpless little girl you used to be and there's nothing you can do about it. Not a damn fucking thing. God- You should’ve stayed with Negan- You should’ve just went to bed.

“C'mon, honey, you know you need that shit too,” the man insists, pushing himself further upon your shaking frame.

*this is not happening, it's not real, it's not real, it's not real.*

You keep repeating the same thing as if it somehow will make this pig go away, as if it will make what he's trying to do come to an end, but it doesn’t, and you can feel your body and mind caving in.

There's tears rolling uncontrollably down your face and cries of protest coming out of your mouth as you fight to try and keep that thing away from you, but you have a hard time doing so because you refuse to look down at him, to even take the risk to catch a glimpse of it. You can't.

Unfortunately, you eventually start to run out of stamina to fight and can feel your body begging for it to stop. Your mind is in complete chaos and all you can think about is Negan. He was right, this whole thing was fucking stupid. You had nothing to prove to him. You should’ve stayed and just fucking talked to him.

You choke on a hiccoped-sob when you feel this man trying to push into you, a series of others follow through. You're breaking and everything hurts.
You're obviously not aroused right now and, instead of lubricating itself anyway to protect you, your body is clamping down so tight it'd hurt if you were focused on it, showing resistance to the man trying to violate your privacy in such a disgusting, cowardly way.

"Shh, relax, sweetheart-" He doesn't get to finish his sentence when something clicks inside your head and you bite down on your throat just like Rick taught you, before pushing your head back and taking some flesh with you.

*** the badness has past ***

The man stumbles back, holding his hand to his bleeding throat, and, with a cry, you take advantage of the space he’s freed to twist your arms around, hearing and feeling both of your shoulders pop out their sockets in the process, but you push through the sharp pain to wrap the chain the fucker has you locked-in around his neck and instantly start to pull on it, your eyes never leaving him as he gasps for air.

Eventually, he ends up heavily falling at your feet, lifeless, and all you can do is pull some more on the chain, crying your heart out, until you hear his neck break under the pressure you’re putting down on it and that’s when you finally stop and let yourself fall to the floor as well.

Sitting there, the only thing hiding your body being the tee-shirt you've had on the night this man took you though it's now covered in a mixture of your vomit and sweat, but you don't care, at all. All you care about is that it's hiding you, it's protecting you. He drugged you, degraded you, left a fucking branding in your flesh, tried to violate you, but he did not take that away from you.

You shakily reach over to grab your undies and slip them back on before slowly getting up, tears still pouring out of your eyes. Your throat hurts from screaming and crying, your heart is beating insanely fast, your legs and hands shaking with left-over adrenaline, fear and shock and your entire body aches but you’re still here.  You win.

You run your intact, left, shaky hand through your messy hair and try to catch your breath but it's no use, neither your lungs nor your heart seem to be ready to calm down any time soon. You can’t say you blame them.

You pull at your chains but you're, for one; too weak to break out of them and, two; too shocked to be rational about how you could properly get out of them. That being said, you do what your primal instinct pushes you do to, and you start kicking at the thick wooden pillar the chains are rolled around.

As expected, you run out of energy in a matter of seconds and start crying some more, frustrated and angry. You feel like pulling your hair out, your mind isn't working properly, and neither is your body, but you try and take a small second to think this through and, eventually, it clicks.

You crawl on the floor, pushing the chains holding you as far as they go to reach for the now dead man's pants and start to search the pockets for the keys of your restrains which you quickly find but your shaking hands make it really hard for you to unlock the cuffs locked around your ankles and
You get there eventually, grimacing when you pull the cuffs off and blood clings to it in thick strings. You skin has been ripped off during your struggles and blood is pouring out of the torn flesh. You yourself are littered in bruises and the ones you can see are mean-looking. As for your face; you can’t see the damages but, goddamn, do you feel them. You know your bottom lip has ripped open because you can taste the blood pouring on your tongue every time it seeks the little wound out. The crimson liquid is also steadily dripping down your right lid and lashes to then roll down your face like a tear would, so you assume there’s a cut somewhere up there too.

6:15 PM //

A quick glance down at the watch snaked around your bloody, wounded wrist is the only reason that you know it’s a quarter past six and today is the eighteen of April. You’ve been gone two days.

As you look down at the ticking watch, you wonder why you even bothered to put this thing back on your wrist when the skin there is all ripped off and blood is still dripping off of it, the leather band of the piece of jewelry not soaking the liquid up.

It might seem stupid, but you just couldn't leave it behind, you just couldn't. Whoever that man was already took so much from you, you refuse to let him keep something else of yours, no matter how superficial the item might seem, it isn't to you.

You've been walking for hours, you're exhausted, your mind is still racing and in a complete blind panic still. Your heart now is beating really slow, trying to recover from all the adrenaline it just received, your lungs as well as your throat and stomach are all slowly opening-up again, but the process is really slow and it's painful and uncomfortable.

You've been wandering around in nothing but your panties and dirty t-shirt, no socks, bra or shoes on. It just felt so pointless to you, the thought of covering yourself up didn't even cross your mind because you feel so bare and vulnerable already, clothes won't change that.

With your backpack tightly pressed against your chest, now heavy with the weight of your combat boots in it, you're pointlessly wandering around, tears still drowning your eyes and blurring your vision, so much so that you find it to be a miracle that you didn't run into a walker or even a freaking tree yet.

“**When was the last time you were really happy, y/n?**” Your hands start to shake as your mind starts to play tricks on you, but you're just so damn vulnerable at the moment that you can't help but fall into it.

“You-You sh-shouldn't be here,” you whisper, keeping your legs moving as you do. **“This isn’t what I wanted for you,”** it ignores you.

“Le-leave me alone.”

“You know I’m not here, honey. This is all you,” it points out. **“I know,”** you sternly answer to the
version of your dad your mind is projecting right next to you, as if he was right here, walking right by your side.

It's rare when this happens to you but, when it does, it's for a reason. You don't like it though. You don't like it because you know damn well that your dad isn't actually here, talking to you, that you can't touch or hug him, you can't ask him for comfort or safety, it's just a blurry figure of what aspects of him you can still remember and a voice that you're pretty isn't his.

"You've always been so quiet, sweetheart," he pauses and you're having a hard time keeping your tears to yourself. You don't want to cry for someone who isn't even there, you don't have the luxury to be able to waste that energy.

"I remember how you used to just walk around the house, neither me or your mom would hear ya, and we always felt like shit about it. Our baby was so shy, always trying to make herself even smaller than she already was, she still does."

You've never made time to mourn your father, you didn't get to and you didn't want to either way. To you, the idea of mourning your dad was like accepting that he was gone, and you were far, far from okay with that. You didn't want to be at peace with the fact that he never came home, that you had to grow up without him by your sides, that your life turned to shit ever since he left. You didn't want to make peace with his death, it was too much to ask of you and it still is to this day.

"You're still the same little girl I left behind," and there it goes.

That's what always happens. First you see him, he talks to you like you remember he would, and then you're slapped in the face when reality settles in and you remember how dysfunctional your brain is. How incapable it is to produce positive thoughts; how messy it gets and how poorly it handles situations of stress.

"Can you imagine what kind of person you could have been? For fuck's sake! You have the goddamn mindset of a two year old!" Your head starts to ache as the projection of your father walks up to you, grunts coming out of it and you take a small step back, tears silently rolling down your face.

"I had a fucking job, a wife and a daughter I loved with all my fucking heart, a life I was happy with- What did you have, huh? What do you have?!"

"M-M'sorry- Dad- Pl-please, stop-"

"You get to fucking live and you don't even want it! What's the fucking use, sweetheart? You really believe that someone's gonna want to build a life with you when you can't even think like a fuckin' grown up and you can't even give them kids? The one thing every fucking woman on this Earth can do, you can't?"

"S-Stop! Stop it!" You beg as your mind uses your dad as a way to project all the negativity, all the anger and insecurities you have of yourself.

"You're still my little girl, and it's gonna get you killed, munchkin," are his last words before the
shape of your father turns into something much less pleasant.

You end up face to face with a walker hungrily snapping its jaw at you and come to terms with the fact that you've been crying and yelling at nothing for minutes now. You don't care that this whole thing wasn't real, those words still weight heavy and they cut deep. They hurt way more than they usually would. It's not the first time your mind finds a way to spew these words out at you using your father as a way to bring out all that anger you're feeling towards nobody else but yourself out on you, and, boy, does it work wonders.

Today might be the day too much for you, you're so mentally and physically exhausted that you don't even fight back against the walker that's now reached you, its nails digging into the soft flesh of your forearms. You're ready to let what's about to happen happen, you're okay with it. You're at peace with the idea of getting gutted and die in the most violent of ways.

You don't care if it's slow, if you feel every single bit of it until your very last breath, if you get to see it all happen- You don't care. You just want to rest and finally be at peace, you need that release. You need it all to stop and you don't care in how much pain you'll be beforehand. You can feel yourself getting crushed under all the weight you've been and still are carrying around and you can't take it anymore. You need it to end, you just want to finally be able to rest. That's all.

Thing is; no matter how clouded by your depression your judgement is, the real you is still fighting somewhere in all this mess and she doesn't seem to be so willing to give up the fight no matter how bloody, bruised and tired she will be when she'll get out if it- Because, yes, she will get out of it eventually.

That kind of thought is rare for you to have so, when you do, it gives you hope. It's a sign that lets you know that you're still in there somewhere, that you're not ready to give it all up. Not yet. It pushes you to fight back, to tighten your grip on things no matter how tired you are.

Your backpack slips out of your grasp after you've grabbed your butterfly knife out of one of the front pockets. Your left hand swiftly grabbing the back of the walker's head, your nails digging into the rotten flesh and bone, pushing the re-animated corps even closer to you so you can push the blade of your knife right through its fragile skull with the unsteady grip your right hand has around the weapon.

You're quick to let go of the body when it goes limp and open your right hand to drop your knife with a cry of pain. The body of the weapon bloody when you pick it up off the road with your uninjured left hand.

You're out of breath, your heart beating fast, and you can't stop the sobs stuck in your throat anymore. You're exhausted and the realization of what you almost let happen hits you hard. You were about to let yourself die, you were willing to get gutted, and that's a really hard thing for you to process.

You soon start to cry your heart out in the middle of the abandoned road, covered in blood, bruises and wounds, your mind trying really hard to process what happened today, to put words on it, to try
and figure out if it was actually real or not and you wish that it wasn't but you can feel it. It's all over you.

“Hey- You alright?” A soft but scruffy voice asks, making your shoulders tense at attention.

fan-fucking-tastic, thanks.

You shyly look up to see a man standing in front of you and two other persons standing behind him, they're all armed but the one talking to you has his hands up to show that he doesn't mean you any harm though it doesn't really matter to you, not after today.

Honestly, you can't really see them clearly, your eyes are filled with tears, a bunch of them still rolling down your face like water out of a broken faucet. You just know that his voice is somewhat appeasing, the complete opposite of the man's you've escaped from. It's soft and warm yet really deep.

Right now isn't the best time to be talking to you though. Mainly because you know damn well that the second you'll open your mouth, sobs will break out of there again and you can't afford to show any more vulnerability that you already have in front of those strangers.

It doesn't matter how badly you want to fight the exhaustion taking over your body or the tears blurring your vision, it really doesn't. Your body has had enough for one day, and the shit storm going off inside your head does nothing to help. Whatever drugs you've been given still clearly affecting both your body and mind.

When you're in the state you're in right now, your will to keep a straight face and to keep pushing through the day has no importance whatsoever. You can feel yourself getting dizzier and dizzier by the second, your head spinning and your body suddenly weighing a tone. Your legs are shaking so much that your knees are about to give out and, when they do, you’re out before your body hits the ground, the last thing you hear is a distinct 'damn it' from the stranger.

Chapter End Notes

A/N; I'M SO SORRY ABOUT THE DELAYED UPLOADS BUT LIFE IS H A P P E N I N G RIGHT NOW AND I HAVE A SHIT-TON OF THINGS TO DEAL WITH COS I HAVE TO BE A "RESPONSIBLE ADULT" OR SOMETHING -idk, ask your dog- AGAIN; THE STORY IS BEING CONTINUED, IT'S JUST DELAYED TO OCTOBER NOW -cos, obviously... lookin' at you karen- WE'RE ALMOST THERE THOUGH, ONLY THREE CHAPTERS LEFT TO RE-UPLOAD AND THEN THE TWENTY-EIGHTH WILL BE THERE -not like it's been thirteen years or anythin'- OKAY, I HOPE YOU GUYS ARENT TOO FRUSTRATED WITH ME - but i get it, i wanna fight me too - BUT KNOW THAT WHEN I STARTED RE-WRITING THIS STORY ON JUNE (was it june? or july? i swear i don't have brain damage, i'm just
stupid) HAVING IT ALL RE-WRITTEN AND POSTED BY SEPTEMBER WAS EASILY DOABLE UNTIL LIFE KNOCKED ON MY DOOR -which it never fucking does, mind you- AND SAID 'HEY, HOW ABOUT YOU DO THAT THING YOU’D BEEN DELAYING FOR A YEAR NOW CUZ OF YOUR ANXIETY?' AND YA KNOW WHAT? I WENT AND DID IT AND IT'S TAKEN A LOT OF MY FREE TIME (life is a scam okay)
Heya, iz me! I apologize for the long absence, but I had to take a break 'cause things weren't exactly going well in my personal life. I'm still in the dead middle of it but writing is back to being something I'm able to enjoy and focus on for more than ten minutes so; here we are.

Also, I'd been working graveyard shifts for two months and it fucked me up even more. I don't know how some of y'all have been doing this shit for years, you're amaze-balls.

TRIGGER WARNINGS FOR THIS CHAPTER: TALK OF PAST DRUG USE, GRAPHIC DESCRIPTION OF WITHDRAWS, MENTIONS OF PAST SEXUAL ASSAULT (nothing graphic, there're no flashbacks on that), LOTS OF REALLY NEGATIVE FEELINGS IN THIS ONE TOO.
STAY SAFE ANGELS.

XX:XX XX //

“Damn it, Ryan, careful.” The words sound drowned-out and far, far away in your ringing ears as your brain dances on that thin, thin line that keeps you from full-consciousness.

Your eyes weakly flutter open, your body aching in every place you can actually feel. The voices around you are distorted and lack any kind of familiarity. “M’trying, the road’s all fucked up! S’not my fucking fault,” a man protests.

“You two seriously need to get laid, s’ridiculous. Hilarious, for sure, but ridiculous,” another snickers.

“Hey-” You manage a shaky intake of air before your eyes roll back and your mind drifts back into unconsciousness.

A sharp, intense pain and the need to throw up are the first things you feel when your eyes open the second time around. Your body is being rocked uncomfortably back and forth and you can feel the motion sickness kicking in; your stomach twisting threateningly and the sharp pain of a migraine appearing all around your skull.

There's an ongoing conversation around you, the voices still unfamiliar and sounding much too loud to your aching head. You find yourself squinting your eyes hard to try and focus on what’s happening but it’s dark, the only light you can somewhat find is a soft, dim yellow one coming from ahead.

With a muffled groan, you reach out with your left arm for something to hold onto and conclude
that you're in a moving car when it abruptly stops after the woman you now realize is in the back with you announces your movement. The sudden stop of the vehicle sends your limp body flying against the back of the driver's seat and you're not conscious enough to pull your arms up to soften the impact, resulting in you completely crashing into the upholstery and falling limp in the footwell.

“Ryan, what the fuck! I said ‘careful’, fuck's sake!” The woman in the back scolds, her worried eyes on you.

You ignore the pain cursing through your body and the deafening thumping echoing around in your skull and reach your hand up, blindingly petting around until you finally get a grip on the door’s handle. You hear a soft ‘hey’ behind you but don’t really register it; your most primal instincts pushing you to push the heavy piece of steel open and drag yourself out of the vehicle filled with strangers.

Your legs aren’t quite there, and your eyes not even opened all the way yet, so you simply let your body fall to the hard ground outside, slightly lifting yourself up on your hands and knees before hurling your guts out, the uncomfortable movement in your throat bringing tears to your eyes.

“Shit,” you hear a door squeal open and gravel moving under someone’s feet. “You two get inside and tell Astrid we need her over in the infirmary,” a man orders and then there’re loud noises, something heavy behind pushed open, probably a gate if you had to take a wild guess, and the sound of the car moving again.

Your throat is on fire from the gastric acid that just came up through it, your stomach aching with how empty it is, the lack of nutrients finally catching up to you. Your body feels so heavy, it’s like you’re stuck there on the hard ground, your limbs too heavy and numb to move you.

A strong, chemically taste stays in your mouth, like a disgusting aftertaste, and it makes your body shiver with dread and tears fall from your eyes. Panic rises in your chest, constricting your breathing like a snake wrapped tight around your throat, as briefs little flashes of what’s happened to you appear right there behind your closed lids.

“Here,” the man standing above you catches your attention, his hand out for you to grab and you narrow your eyes at the limb like it might burn you. A sigh leaves the man, his breath showing up in the cold air of the night- like a cloud of annoyance. “Look, I'm not here to hurt you, alright? Just wanna help, but you can leave if you want. Hell, if you really believe that you can actually stand straight up and walk away, be my guest,” he challenges, as if he's trying to make it clear that he could have left your ass back there when you passed out and, deep down in your head, the part of you that isn’t completely frozen is giving him a piece of your mind.

Defiant and stubborn as you are, you take his words for what they are and push yourself up onto weak legs. You don't even get to take a single step forward when they completely cave in and give out beneath you, your knees buckling. The stranger keeps you from hitting the ground, sighing, once again, at your stubbornness.

“Alright, tough girl, I get it. Point made. Congrats,” he scolds like an unimpressed parent and a frustrated snarl shows up on your face, hardening your usually soft features, though the sound leaving your mouth can only be described as one a defeated puppy would make.
Without another word, the man guides you inside what you assume to be a somewhat safely guarded community, and the contact between you and this stranger does nothing to appease you. At all. Still, if you're being honest with yourself, you're thankful for his support when your body suddenly goes limp, your mind taking you straight back to the attic. You felt so helpless; you feel so fucking helpless. You can’t move and that’s fucking terrifying. You need this to stop. It’s over, you got out; it needs to stop now.

“Hey, you with me?” The stranger asks, a firm grip on both your arms to keep you up. “C’mon, kid, straighten up,” the stranger encourages as you awkwardly try to push yourself off of his chest which you're now completely crushed against, your full body weight resting on him, and it doesn't seem to be enough to make the man flinch or lose his balance, not even a little bit.

“Here, lemme-” his hands are suddenly snaking down your body to go and grab your legs to securely haul you up. “Wait- No, no. Don’t- Don’t touch me,” you manage to push out, a sudden sense of dread filling you at the foreign touch of this stranger.

He’s not stupid; he’s found a girl walking along the road in a dirty shirt and panties, her belongings in hands; he has a slight bit of an inclination as to what you must have gotten yourself out of before you ended up on that road. He can feel you shaking against him and he knows that, if you could have prevented it, you wouldn’t be so close to him right now.

“Leave m-me be. P-Please,” you whisper against the man’s chest, your body refusing to come back to you. “You can barely walk, kid,” he points out with a dry chuckle. “Wh-What’s it to you? You don’t know me, y-you should be glad I'm so-so e-eager to leave.”

“Maybe,” he shrugs, “but it's the middle of the damn night, you can barely stand on your own two feet, and I ain’t heartless. Throwing you out would be feedin’ you to the wolves and we both know it.” In the back of your mind, you hate how reasonable this man sounds right now.

You feel a slight pressure in your right shoulder where it should have moved to reach for the knife you don’t even have on you when the stranger picks you up in his arms, your body completely limp in his hold. You hate how disgustingly small and vulnerable you feel. The only thing you’re somewhat thankful for is that this man has the decency to keep his hands far away from any sensitive places even though just having them on you is enough to spring tears to your eyes.

“Sorry, kid, but we gotta get you seen to and I ain’t got all night to wait ‘round for your legs to start workin’ again,” he explains as he carries you to God knows where, and you’re completely powerless to stop him.

Your voice is gone now, and you don’t bother to try and get it back. You’re tired of always fighting when it feels as though you’re just kicking at air anyway.

“Things have gone to shit, kid, and I believe that if you have the opportunity to help someone out; you should. Plain and simple.” Your eyes carefully find his when you look up through your lashes, a little confused as to what he’s getting at. “You may not be a talker, but I can hear ya think from here,” he explains with a short chuckle and you drop your eyes back down, focusing on the slight tingling you feel in your tiptoes. “Choosing supplies over people in need is survival one on one, s’not how we do things around here. That ain't livin’.”
You almost want to scoff at that. You know those people had to have done some shitty things to get some sort of stability going; everyone has, and you’re not sure how you feel about this man acting holier-than-thou.

Your eyes scan your surroundings as the man walks and, you have to say; this place almost reminds you of Alexandria. There’re houses longing the streets, a few fires burning here and there to keep some light though there doesn’t seem to be anyone out at the moment – No one you can see nor hear at least.

At first glance; you’d say this look like AnyTown, USA, but you never know what kind of people might inhabit it. There’s something anxiety-inducing about such a normal scenery. With a place like The Sanctuary, you don’t get that feeling because you know. It’s clear as day that Negan isn’t trying to pass the place off as summer camp, he makes no pretty promises and the place itself isn’t really dream-selling material. It’s a warehouse with cold, steel walls, and the inside isn’t that much cheerier.

Bright whiteness pulls you from your thoughts and makes your eyes water and squint, the ghost of a jolt running through your body when you’re put down on a somewhat soft surface. "Hey-Careful, kid," the stranger in front of you warns, both of his hands on each of your shoulders to balance you.

It takes you a minute to get your sight back, your pupils shrinking when you properly open your eyes again.

“You alright?” The man asks with a frown, his eyes scanning your face- Bright hazel orbs. Still adjusting to the light, you give a silent nod, your eyes taking the stranger in. His skin is a light, toffee color, and his hair are dark brown dreads done up in a bun. He looks young, albeit tired, and although his frame is intimidating; his stance isn’t threatening.

“A doctor’s gonna check you out, patch up whatever needs patching up, then you’ll get to rest, alright?” You tense a little at that, not really feeling like getting probed and poked at.

“Why won’t you just let me go?” You quietly whine, your eyes not meeting his. You know you sound like a whiny kid, but you’re not in the mood to be grateful. Right now, all you know is paranoia and the need to protect yourself against everything and everyone.

“If you still wanna run for the hills tomorrow, I ain’t gonna stop you,” he tells you, but that’s not good enough. “What if- What if I wanna leave tonight? What if I don’t w-wanna spend the night here?”

The man sighs like he’s the one having a shit day. “Look, you don’t wanna make friends? Fine by me, but you’re gonna have to put up with me for a few hours ‘cause I ain’t puttin’ you back out there when you can’t even sit straight.”

For some reason, what he says makes your piss boil. You don’t know if it’s what he said or how he said it, but it doesn’t sit right with you regardless. You smell like blood, puke and sweat, you probably look like hell, and you cannot stand the fact that this man is able to see just how fragile you are right now. It irritates you because there isn’t a damn thing you can do about it. You can’t
put your brave face on, you’ve been stripped of it. What you can do, however, is let your stubborn streak carry you for a bit.

“That’s not for you to decide,” you inform him. “Maybe I don’t want nor need your charity. Stop acting like you give a damn when, really, I’m just an excuse. I don’t want to be your good deed for the day- I don’t even know your name.” The words spill out like water out of a broken sink and you’re shaking by the time you’re done, your eyes looking everywhere but directly at the man standing tall in front of you.

The dry chuckle he lets out makes your face scrunch-up ever so slightly and you drop your head down to conceal it. “You ever think maybe, just maybe, people happen to give a shit? I don’t know, maybe I saw some chick looking like shit on the side of the road and decided to go out of my way to help her out. Maybe that’s just what this is and, for some fucking reason, you’re being a fucking brat about it.” His tone is so scolding it makes you want to curl-up on yourself and cry. Only when he takes a step towards you do you break, a sob ripping through you, not even giving you a chance to swallow it back down as it forces its way out of your throat. The sudden sound makes the stranger freeze in his step with a heavy sigh, his shoulders slumping. He knows he’s not making things any better by being a dick but it’s one in the goddamn morning and he’d like some sort of gratitude. Still, one single look at you is reminder enough that you’ve been through enough; he doesn’t need to add to it.

“You’re safe here, kid,” he tries to reassure you, his voice softer when he speaks this time around. “Heard that one b-before,” you whisper, your eyes glued to your toes, sensations slowly coming back in them. “Yeah, no shit,” he softly chuckles, also looking down at your slightly wiggling toes, his eyes roaming up and stopping on the angry tears in the flesh of your ankles.

“Look, we don’t know each other and first impressions ain’t my strong suit- I got people to take care of, to protect, so I can’t really be going around with a smile on my face actin’ like everythin’s good and I don’t have responsibilities to hold…” The man trails off with a scoff, your eyes timidly finding his through your lashes. “I don’t even know where I’m goin’ with this,” he admits.

“You don’t seem that bad,” you quietly tell him with a little shrug. “I picked you off the road and then acted like a dickhead ‘cause you don’t wanna be there, like a damn kid findin’ a stray cat and getting’ upset when it doesn’t appreciate getting its tail pulled.”

You smile a little at that. “I- I appreciate the help, I really do. It wasn’t m-my intention t-to come off as ungrateful o-or bratty, I just…” You swallow around the lump in your throat with a frown. “V’had a sh-shit c-couple o’days is all.”

The man sighs and deflates a little in front of you. “Shouldn’t have said that, m’just tired as shit and I really wanna go home and fucking crash,” he stops and scoffs with a shake of his head. “You pro’ly do too, huh?” You give a little nod, your head feeling heavy on your neck. “Name’s August, by the way,” he finally introduces himself, carefully putting his hand out for you to shake and you hesitantly do, your whole arm feeling much too heavy and hard to move as you lift it up as high as you can, August thankfully meeting you in the middle. Your body instinctively tense when you make contact and you quickly, though gently, withdraw your shaky hand with a tentative smile.
“Y/n,” you keep it short and sweet, your voice straining to rise above a whisper, but he still catches it and nods with a small smile.

The flinch you give when the door of the nurse station opens almost sends you off the medical table you’re on, your head throbbing in pain at the sudden movement, your headache punching you in the face and, if you could, you’d punch it right back.

“AJ, what’s going on, I-” A woman walks in, stopping in her tracks when her blue eyes find you. “Hi, sweetheart,” she greets with a gentle smile, discarding her previous concerns and walking past August. “I’m Astrid, I’m a nurse-” she briefly turns to the man behind her, “could you bring me my tray please, AJ?” The man gives a soft ‘yea’ and you keep your attention on the blonde woman in front of you. She seems relatively sweet, her mere presence lightening the air in the small room.

You silently watch as August walks back to you, rolling a tray filled with medical supplies along with him as the nurse sits herself down on a stool, careful to leave you some personal space. “Her name’s y/n. Got some flesh wounds here and there, but some look pretty damn mean- I dunno though, you tell me,” he briefs the woman called Astrid, saving you from having to do it for yourself, taking a few glances at you as he speaks.

You fight the urge to shift and hide them when the doctor’s eyes find the torn flesh all around your wrists, bright baby-blues climbing up to the thick, white lines littered all over your right forearm and then back down to your hand.

Your whole arm tenses when she gently reaches for your balled-up hand and, from the corner of your eye, you can see August straighten-up, his left hand finding the gun tucked in his pants. You’re not bothered by it. You get it. You’re strangers, he has no idea just how volatile you could be, and he’s just looking to protect one of his.

“You’re bleeding, honey,” Astrid gently points out and, sure enough, there’s blood dripping from your closed hand. You’d completely forgotten. You’re so fucking exhausted and everything happened so fast. For a moment, you’d completely forgotten the big X carved into the palm of your right hand, and now it’s smarting like it’d been eagerly waiting for you to remember.

The gasp the nurse gives pulls your eyes away from the wound to her, shiny blue orbs finding your own. “August… Could,” she clears her throat, her eyes still on yours. “Could you get me my light, please?”

“Sure,” the man acquiesces, a light frown on his face as he moves to the table you’re on to move the light hovering above you. “Where d’you need…” He trails off when his eyes find your bloody palm. “What the fuck-”

“August,” Astrid cuts him off. “Light, please,” she reminds him with a jerk of her head, subtly telling him to stop ogling. “Right- Right, yea. The light.” He clears his throat, trying like hell not to let his eyes wander back down. “Where do you need it?”
“Above me, please,” she gently instructs him under you silent stare. “Great, now just tilt it a little upwards… Perfect, thank you, sweetheart.” You almost damn near break-down when the white light lands right on your wounded palm, your breathing getting heavier and faster as your mind goes back to the attic.

Everything is a blur then, you can feel yourself being laid down and moved around but your head is swimming; your mind far, far away from here, and in nowhere particular.

In the present, Astrid is now sitting to your right, your arm stretched and your hand resting on a small stand covered with sterilized tissue. Her eyes periodically fleeting to your face, but you stay unmoving.

“Where did you find her, again?” The gentle nurse asks as she cleans up your wound, her stomach turning at the damages. “Jesus Christ, bone is showing,” she remarks more so to herself than anyone else.

“We found her on the road, stopped to see if she needed help…” August trails off, his eyes watching Astrid’s hands as they work on your palm before finding your vacant face. “We don’t- We don’t know what happened though. She just passed out, didn't really talk.”

“I think it’s plenty clear what’s happened,” Astrid quietly states with a shake of her head, preparing a needle and thread to stitch-up your wound.

Only when the needle pierces your skin does your mind release you from the dark place it’s put you into. Even then, you manage to stay still if not for your bicep briefly jumping when the sharp needle pinches a nerve in the palm of your hand.

Completely avoiding August’s eyes, you tiredly roll your head to the right and look down at the wound the kind nurse is so attentively working on. Never in a million years would you say it’s ‘pretty’, but it does certainly do look much better than it did the last time you saw it. The skin of your palm is still swollen and uncomfortably tight but, at least, it’s not covered in thick, coagulated blood and dirt anymore; the X-shaped-wound almost mocking you with how clear it now is to your eyes.

“It’s almost over, darling,” the woman tending to you gently assures you, flashing you a small smile when she sees you looking back at her. “You don’t have to do that,” you whisper back to her, your eyes glued to the needle in her steady, gloved fingers.

“Don’t be silly, honey,” she gently scolds. “It’s no bother.”

You lay completely still as minutes pass, feeling August’s heavy stare on you as Astrid finishes to dress your wound after having applied anti-septic ointment on it. Your muscles tense when she pats around your ribs through your shirt, your fists clenched tight as you fight the urge to shy away from the touch.

She’s gentle as she silently inspects your body but it’s not enough for you not to panic when she reaches your right ankle. The mere sight of her hand lifting up to touch the raw, shredded skin there is enough to have your legs tense and lock tight together, your eyes wide and your breathing frantic as you look down at her.
Your body flinches hard when you see August move from the corner of your eye, Astrid lifting a hand up his way that makes him freeze on the spot. “I’m sorry, honey,” she gently addresses you, lifting her other hand up and away from your leg to let you see that she’s not going to touch you.

“You’re hurt,” she states, and you shakily nod; well aware of the state you’re in. “Would you let me take care of that? You can keep your legs closed and sit up if you want, that’s okay, I just need your ankles, darling.”

Your frantic eyes search the nurse’s calm, bright ones as you try to calm down, hiccuping on a breath every now and again.

Slowly, you push on your left hand to sit up on the table, your breath catching in your throat when you’re hit by a sudden wave of sickening dizziness. Faster than you can blink, Astrid has a small bin under your chin, your body jolting forward as you heave and throw-up in the bag protecting the steel container.

“August, put the BP cuff on her left arm-” As soon as it slips out, your brain clings on to the word ‘cuff’, completely discarding anything that came before and after it to send you in a frenzy yet again.

Muscle memory does its thing and you find yourself reaching for a knife you don’t have from a pair of pants you’re not wearing. The bandages on each of your wrists and right hand suddenly feel all-too-restrictive and you find yourself staring down at them like a cat about to tear the shit out of a curtain.

With a blink, you come back down and find Astrid’s hands gently framing your face, her eyes so soft you don’t flinch away from the touch. “Would you like August to go sit on the other side of the room?” You hear the man sigh, the gentle nurse giving him a warning side-eye. Regardless, you shake your head, not wanting to be difficult, August’s previous criticism ringing loud in your head.

“Alright, then. Would you let me put the cuff on your arm? It’s to take your blood pressure,” she quickly explains when she sees your eyes widen ever so slightly at the ‘c’ word. “You ever had your pressure taken, honey?” God, you hate the way she’s speaking to you- Like you’re a clueless kid.

Still, you silently nod. “Yes,” you faintly whisper. “Would you let me take it?” She asks and it takes a minute, but you eventually silently nod your consent. Astrid smiles and quietly thanks you before moving to fetch the tensiometer.

Everything goes smoothly from there. You let the kind nurse take your pressure on each arm, your eyes ever-so-often finding August’s before fleeting to look down at your bare, scraped knees. Your legs are littered with bruises, scraps and cuts of all sizes and shapes though none need stitching.

Looking at the clock ticking above the door to your left, you feel guilty when you find it’s a quarter past two in the morning and you’re keeping those people awake.

From then on, you swallow your crippling anxiety and let Astrid tend to you without a word,
repressing every flinch and urge to coward away when she touches here and there, only nodding or shaking your head when she asks questions.

She looks at every wounds, bruises, scraps and cuts marking your skin, looking for any potential internal bleeding and/or broken bones. You watch nervously as her eyes keep on going back and forth between your now dressed wrists and ankles and have to fight the urge to run away when it becomes clear she has an understanding of what might have happened.

You’d never be able to do that, keep somewhat calm, if Negan was standing in her place, looking at your wounds as realization hit him. You can’t even handle the mere thought of it, of him judging you, thinking negatively of you, looking at you with disgust and disappointment. You can’t stomach it.

And it’s not that you’re trying to convince yourself that you can take those things from a stranger because, you can’t, judgement hurts no matter who holds it, but Negan? Negan is the one person you always work overtime to get the slightest of praises from. The dynamic is completely different. It's completely unbalanced.

Thankfully, Astrid doesn't comment on anything and simply gets to gently dabbing an alcohol-soaked-cotton ball on the deep cut on your right browbone, the one you’ve earned after banging your head under one of Simon’s trucks. The little cut is long closed by now, but the gesture is kind, so you silently let her tend to it regardless.

August watches on from a few feet away, surprised by your calmness. Your stance has changed, slowly but steadily. “You know,” Astrid speaks, “you’ve handled those stitches like a champ,” she praises with a smile as she rolls away on her stool to dump the bloody cotton balls and gauze she’s used. “August hate stitches,” she shakes her head with a soft smile. “Ever since he was a kid- He just can’t stop moving around and complaining-”

“Mom,” the man to your left scolds, his expression ever-so-slightly softening when he hears the faint little laugh you let out and sees the tiny smile you give him. “I don’t like stitches either,” you quietly say, like you’re trying to lighten his mood. The thought makes him smile a little. “I'm just used to them, I guess- They don’t bother me anymore,” you faintly explain with a little shrug.

“You’ve been out there long, huh,” August states more than he asks, feeling like he already knows the answer. As expected, you nod, nervously chewing on your bottom lip, looking as Astrid pulls her latex gloves off.

“Alright, hon, you’re all set,” the nurse announces with a tired smile, another wave of fresh guilt hitting you like a freight train.

“I’m sorry. For- For bothering you,” you quietly apologize, feeling the pair’s eyes on you. Astrid frowns. “You’re not bothering anyone, y/n.” For the first time tonight, she calls you by your name. “This is my job, it’s what I signed-up for. Trust me, those knuckleheads,” she points at a window showing the street, “have stumbled into my office at worse hours of the night and for much, much less.”

“You love us,” August smugly teases from your left, the woman you understand to be his mother scoffing at him. “Someone has to. And you came out of my vagina, I have to tolerate you at the very least.” You stifle a smile at the woman’s brazenness, and she winks at you with a bright smile before moving to a mini-fridge right next to a desk, your eyes immediately locking-on to the bottle
“Here, sweetie,” she hands you the bottle of water, the condensation on the plastic making your mouth water.

With a subtle look down at your right hand that you definitely notice, the nurse cracks the bottle open before handing it to you. “Drink up.” You reach out for it with a shaky left hand before bringing it to your cracked lips, your eyes watering at the feeling of the cold liquid running down your sore throat.

Through a simple tilt of his head, August silently invites his mother to follow him outside. “I’ll be right back, don’t stand up yet, honey,” she gently asks of you and you nod, still drinking from the big 1.5L bottle.

Smiling still, Astrid follows her son out, making sure to keep the door half-opened so that you don’t feel trapped in her office. The second she steps in the cold air of the night, her smile drops, August quick to drape a gentle arm around her to hold his mother close.

“Her tension is bad, AJ, and I can’t tell if it’s because of blood loss or stress, lack of sleep, hunger or thirst,” she quietly expresses her concerns. “I’ll check on her again tomorrow but, right now, she needs a good night sleep, alright?”

“Yea, okay. Rest sounds like damn good idea for all three of us, don’t ya think?” He asks with a small smile, Astrid softly laughing. “Yes, it does.”

“Thank you- For being so patient with her. I don’t know what happened to the kid, but I do know that I haven’t been the warmest person when she woke up- Pro’ly freaked her out more, if anything.”

“I know you’re looking after us, honey, and we all deeply appreciate it, but you’re gonna have to be patient with her,” Astrid explains, pulling away from August to look at him. “That mark on her hand? It’s been burned and carved into her flesh- God, it’s- That’s an atrocious thing to do to someone, an atrocious thing to live through I can only imagine. So let her be weary of us, give her some space. She’s a sweet girl, I’m sure of it, you just have to let her show you and, for that, you need to understand that what she needs right now is to feel safe; first and foremost.”

“I gotta know where she comes from though, mom. I have people to protect, I can’t-”

“People around here need you to show them that empathy has not been lost, AJ,” Astrid cuts him off. “That girl in there is traumatized, she doesn’t need you to pock around.” August’s eyes flutter closed when his mother’s hands come up to tenderly frame his face. “Show her you’re trustworthy and she’ll talk to you, trying to force it out of her will only make her clam-up further and this goes beyond looking out for your group, August,” his eyes open then, knowing his mother means business when she uses his name instead of his nickname.

“We’re not here to damage this girl further, you hear me? You can be cautious around her, I’m not asking you not to be, but there is no need to play big bad wolf with her. Not this time.”

“Okay,” August caves with a sigh. “Okay, just- Make sure Robin doesn’t leave the house ‘til I get back, please?”
“Of course, baby,” Astrid gently croons, soothingly rubbing her thumbs against the stubble covering August’s sharp cheeks. “You need to shave, hon,” she teases to lighten the mood, smiling when her son scoffs at her.

Planting a lingering kiss to his mother’s temple, August straightens with a tired smile. “And you should go and get some rest, dad's gonna kick both our asses if he finds out I had you working in the middle of the night.” Astrid laughs at that. “What a ruthless leader you are,” she teasingly jokes.

“I know, right?” He chuckles, allowing himself to relax a little. “I'm disgusting.”

“That you are.” Astrid winks before kissing his left cheek. “But that's okay, you clean up real nice.”

“I love you, ma’,” August whispers, his demeanor completely changed. “I know, honey. I love you too, so does your father and Robin.”

“I feel like I'm never there—”

“August,” his mother scolds, making him cringe at her tone. “You're her hero. She understands why you're not always there. She does. She's smart and she knows that her father is just trying to keep her as safe and happy as possible. Everything you do, she sees. Everything you do she wants to follow through with,” the nurse gentle explains. “That’s why I need you to show her that it’s okay to treat people with empathy and respect even when you don’t know them; because everything you do- Everything you are; she wants to become, AJ.”

August shakily exhales, his eyes closing as he does. “I can't stop seeing Robin in her place,” he quietly confesses, Astrid face crumbling a little. “That girl's young- She's a fucking kid and she… she's terrified and I don't know how to deal with that- Fuck, I was waiting for a thank you when she first came in, got pissed when she wouldn't relax... I just- I don't want to scare her but I also can’t be all lovey-dovey with her, I have people to protect, they need me to keep them safe and I can't-”

The man’s ramblings are cut off when his mother reaches out to hold him tight, his head resting on top of hers as he clings to her. “Robin is safe, baby. I'm here, so s'your father. Everything is going to be okay; I promise. You're not failing anyone for not biting that poor girl's head off, you hear me? You know better, the people here know better and that's because you've shown them that. Empathy never killed anybody but people with things to hide.”

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A WEEK EARLIER / HILLTOP //

Tuesday, 11th April ;

4:15 PM;

A puffed-up cat. That’s an accurate description, Jesus decides as he watches Daryl with
cautious eyes and a closed mouth. The archer is hunched over, perched on the very edge of the feet of his on-and-off-bed, jaw and left fist clenched, his right hand shaking the small polaroid picture it holds.

Jesus knows it’s only a matter of seconds until his ticking time-bomb of a friend explodes with whatever emotion it is he’s holding-on to. If only he’d felt the damn thing slip out of his back pocket.

Daryl’s expression is mostly hidden by his hair, a thick curtain of hazel strands concealing what the shakes in the hunter’s limbs can’t.

“Rovia,” he mumbles, clearing his throat when his voice comes out rough and abrasive. “Should’ve clued me in, huh?” He gives a dry chuckle, his eyes not once leaving the ones looking back at him through the picture. “I didn’t even think ‘bout it- Why the hell would I?”

Paul is a little taken aback when the archer’s eyes finally meet his again and he finds himself shifting on his spot on the other side of the room like a kid being told off. “Honestly, I-” Jesus clears his throat. “I wasn’t even sure if… if it was her at first. I had a feeling, a weird itch I guess you could say, but I… I didn’t know for sure- Seemed insane. It still does,” he admits, not daring to relax just yet.

“Who the hell are you?” Daryl asks with a frown, his posture stiffening again. “To her? ‘Cause that kid damn near grew up right in front o’me ‘n’ I sure as hell ain’t never seen you show up.”

“Her uncle. From her dad’s side- m’his little brother,” a nervous Paul clarifies, his eyes shifting from the agitated archer to his booted feet.

Daryl mutters a barely audible ‘god damn it’ as he runs a rough hand down his face, trying his best to process the new information, absently rubbing a thumb on the picture in his hold.

You look so damn happy, a bright smile on your chubby face as you sit precariously balanced on your dad’s right thigh, his hands holding on tight to your tiny waist and bunching up your baby-blue sundress. Your eyes are bright and wide as you watch the bubbles that have been blown in front of you defy gravity, a tiny little chubby finger reaching out to one.

It was your third birthday. The first and only one Daryl has ever missed, too busy getting his father out of a drunk-tank in Vegas.

“That’s the last time I saw her- Well, the last time she saw me,” Jesus attentively breaks through the silence, nervously clearing his throat and blue eyes find his own from across the room. “My uh,” he nervously points at the photo in Daryl’s hand, “my brother would send me pictures every now and then, so I could see her grow up- I took that one though.”

“Ya left on her birthday?” The hunter asks with a frown, the guilty look on his friend’s face enough of an answer. With a shaky, contained sigh, Daryl squeezes his eyes shut before he speaks. “What the hell was so important that ya had to bail, anyway?”

“Work,” Jesus simply explains. “I got an offer out of state and I couldn’t say no. I had no one to turn to ever since I came out, only my big brother and- Well. He had a family to take care of, I
wasn’t about to ask him for money.”

Admittedly, Daryl softens at that. He knows that struggle all-too-well. Between his father draining their savings in Vegas and Merle following close behind, adding to that all those damn bails the youngest Dixon has had to pay for his two seniors; he knows what it’s like having to scrape by and make do.

“Are you gonna punch me?” Paul suddenly asks, Daryl’s shoulders shaking with silent laughter as he shakes his head. “You plan on leavin’ again?” The archer questions, his demeanor much softer now but his tone still holding a hair of threat to it. “Got nowhere to be,” is the answer he gets.

With a silent nod, Daryl gets up from the mattress and walks up to his somewhat nervous friend. “Here, man,” he hands him the picture back with one last look down at it. “Sorry ‘bout your brother.”

“Thank you, Daryl,” Jesus smiles at the kind condolences. “… Are we good?” He checks, albeit a little suspiciously so, as he carefully puts the polaroid back into his pocket.

The hunter chuckles. “Yeah, man, we good,” he assures. “Just... fix your shit, yea?” Daryl’s face falls a little. “That girl grew up thinkin’ she had no one left, had to watch her best friend die after she’d already lost her damn parents- She just lost someone again. Least ya can do is talk to her.”

“She didn't let me see her that night,” Paul breathes out, almost too quietly for Daryl to catch it but he does. Loud and clear. “Said I’d already caused her enough pain, that I didn't get to come crawling back now that something real bad had happened, that I should have been there before, when she was asking for her uncle.”

“Well that’s fuckin’ harsh,” Daryl mumbles, making his friend let out a breathy chuckle.

“I didn't- I couldn't just stand there and let her make a scene in the middle of the hospital, so I left. I left the second the doctors declared my brother dead, I couldn't- I got overwhelmed. Between the sound of my brother's heartbeat turning into a flat line on that damn monitor- I forgot y/n was in this storm as well, laying in a bed two rooms away from her dad's, hooked-up and fighting for her life.”

Daryl remembers that night vividly, every stain and smells he has memorized. He’d barged in after your father had been declared deceased – six seventeen p.m on the fifteenth of October. He’d been allowed in because he was your emergency contact, Merle and his father, Will, both told to stay behind in the waiting room.

He’ll never forget how broken and fragile you looked, bruises and scrapes of all sizes and shapes covering your skin, your head firmly kept in place because the doctors feared for your bruised neck and a tube down your throat.

Yea. Daryl isn’t ashamed to say he cried his heart out that night.

“Look,” the hunter clears his throat to shake himself out of his memories. “Ya shouldn't have left, t'was fuckin' stupid ‘n’ selfish and you can't take that shit back but, somehow, you been lucky
enough to get her back and, I mean, with the world the way it is? What're the fuckin' odds of that, huh?” Jesus silently acquiesces, all too aware of the truth Daryl’s words hold.

“Me and Merle, we were there for her, but I mean, shit, neither of us were father material or nothin’,” the archer admits with a shrug, “but we made do, and she understood that, pretty sure she loved us that li'l bit more ‘cause of it. She knew we had no fuckin' clue what the hell we were doin' but we were doin’ somethin’, y'know? We didn’t want her to be alone, ‘specially after her dad died and all- D’you know about… ‘bout her mom?” He ventures to ask.

“She told me very little about it, but I got the gist. Yeah.”

“Hey,” Daryl frowns. “Stop beatin' yourself up over shit you can't change and just come clean, huh? Man, believe me, you're better off tellin' her than ta have her findin' out on her own 'cause she will punch ya,” he informs Jesus with a small smile to try and kill the tension floating in the air between the two men and it seems to do the trick, pulling a chuckle out of the taller man.

“You ain't gotta do it alone, y'know? I could tag along, just in case she tries to punch ya in the throat- she actually does that, man, s'violent.”

“Thanks, Daryl, seriously. I really appreciate it,” Jesus expresses his gratitude, getting a nonchalant 'meh' from the hunter and a punch to the shoulder in return.

Both men perk up when the door of Daryl’s on-and-off cabin opens, a frowning Glenn peaking in. “Ah! Look who I finally found!” The soon-to-be father stops to pull out and look down at the watch his father-in-law has given him. “And only an hour later!” He teases with a smile.

“Don't make me punch ya, man. Maggie’ll be mad at me and that woman ain’t to be messed with, ‘specially with all them hormones runnin’ wild.”

“Hey, watch how you talk about my wife's hormones, Dixon-” Glenn frowns at his own words. “Wait, no, that came out wrong. Do not talk about my wife's hormones.”

“Deal,” Daryl chuckles as he steps around his friend and outside of the little cabin, Jesus closely following behind.

The second his feet touch the hard ground, Rick hollers at him from afar. “We're headin’ out! You done??”

“Yea! Be right there!” He hollers back, snorting a laugh when he spots Carl giving Enid a piggyback-ride to the car.

“… That’s good to hear, you let us know if she, or any one of you, ever needs anything, alright?” Daryl catches the middle of the conversation going between Jesus and Glenn.

“Thanks man,” the latter smiles. “We’re here for you guys too. Man, getting Negan off our backs has been such a damn relief, you wouldn’t believe…” He trails off, his eyes finding Daryl’s. “Aw, man, I’m sorry-”

“Eh, s’alright,” Daryl waves him off. “So, Maggie’s good, then?”
“Yeah. Yeah, man, she’s great. Pissed-off about my constant, and I quote, ‘hovering, mothering, hawk-watching, babying and smothering’ but, hey, beggars can’t be choosers.” Daryl chuckles at that.

“You know she’s pissed when she’s making up words to describe just how annoying you are,” Jesus points out, making the hunter double his laughter, Glenn smiling and shaking his head.

“You’re lucky she didn’t hear you say that, ‘cause she’d have your head on a stick for it.”

Goodbyes are exchanged between the two groups and Rick makes sure everyone is accounted for before the gates close behind Alexandria’s people. “Alright, let’s hit the road,” he announces with a smile, leaving a lingering kiss on Michonne’s temple as he walks by her. “I take the head, Abraham in the middle and Daryl closes the line. That okay?”

“Damn straight,” the former soldier acquiesces, quick to jump into his truck, Sasha his shotgun.

A simple nod from Daryl is all Rick needs before getting behind the wheel of the car Enid and Carl are already sitting in the back of – the car you let Daryl have. The other, and last one contains Glenn and Maggie in the back and Michonne behind the wheel, shotgun left to Carol who, just as the thought pops into Daryl’s head, calls out his name.

“Hey-” The grey-haired woman stops, a small smile formed on her lips. “You look like crap, pooky.”

“Goddamn, woman, rude much?” He scolds though there’s no hiding the smile on his face and the laughter in his voice. “Don’t be such a boy,” she teases before scrunching-up her nose his way. “And go take a shower when we get home.”

“You go take a shower since you love ‘em so damn much,” he childishly fires back as he walks up to his bike, carelessly throwing an arm around Carol as he goes and immediately regretting it when she winces the second his muscled arm comes into contact with her sore shoulders.

“Sorry- Damn it,” he hurriedly apologizes as he withdraws his arm, Carol quick to soothe him. “S’okay, Daryl,” she assures him, walking with the archer by her side, the two of them content but not putting it into unneeded words.

“I think I’m gonna have to lay off heavy weapons for a little while- My shoulders are killing me.”

“What’s with you and big guns anyways? Y’got somethin’ to compensate for, Peletier?” He teases, too tempted not to push the woman’s buttons.

“You know, you’re real cute when you’re quiet too, Dixon,” she fires back with a smirk, playfully pushing him with her shoulder, making him laugh.

“Don’t objectify me, woman. I ain’t just a pretty boy, y’know?” He complains with mock offense, making Carol laugh, the sound making him grin as he straddles his bike. To feel loved, appreciated. For his company to be needed is something Daryl needs. Truth is, the first person who’s ever made him feel special, needed, useful; was you.
He still remembers the day your dad sat down next to him on the stairs of his porch and oh so casually told him he wanted him to be the one looking after you if something ever was to happen to him. Your own father didn't want his wife, the woman he loved and supposedly trusted with his entire being, but wanted him, of all people, to look after his little girl; his world. And he did, although, legally, you were still under your mother’s charge.

All the care and love he gave you; you gave right back. You always had a smile for him, always had a hug at the ready. You’ve loved him since day one, when you blindly reached out with a chubby, tiny finger to grab his much bigger one, your eyes still puffy and a white beanie protecting your fragile skull, your head limp and too heavy for your underdeveloped neck. You still love him to this day, even though you don’t need him to hold your head and make you burp anymore.

After all, he’ll always be the guy who’d scare boys away with his deadly glare, the one who’d punch the back of his big brother’s head whenever he’d swear too much around you. He’ll always be the man who’d help you with your homework even though the system had been so unkind to him and made him out to be hopeless and stupid.

He’ll always be the one who came running the day you almost broke your knee when you’ve had the bright idea to try and go hunting all by yourself for the first time and quickly concluded that you were much too easily distracted to do so. “You don’t even like hunting,” he’d scolded as he picked you up, to which you’d whine “I just wanted to watch the deer.”

He remembers how angry he got that day, so damn scared after hearing you crying out, your knee swollen and bruised to the point where you couldn’t move it without crying.

You got into your first argument that day, too, which ended in tears on both sides and Daryl cuddling up with you in his bed, keeping you impossibly close to him as you both drifted off to sleep, afraid that something else might happen to you if he let go.

Truth be told; he was terrified your dad might take you away from him once he’d know that you got hurt under his supervision. He was supposed to protect you and he hadn’t been able to that day.

Of course, that didn’t happen. Your father only sat you down and explained to you why you couldn’t go off and wander around all by yourself, chuckling a “of course you did,” when you’d quietly explained that you’d seen “a really pretty butterfly” which is what kept you from properly lifting your foot and got it caught into a big root sticking out of the forest’s ground.

You’d clung to him that afternoon, like it’d do anything if your dad decided to separate you two, and the hunter swears he could feel his heart in his throat as he watched and listened to you talk to your father, your tiny hands gripping his tight.

Your old man quickly noticed and assured you both “I’m not angry, baby girl. Not at you, nor at Daryl here. I just want you to promise you won’t go off on your own like that again, please.” You were quick to do so, hugging Daryl’s leg as you spoke, your words muffled by his thigh and your desperate sobs.

Yeah, no matter what happens, no matter who comes along, Daryl will always be the one and only person you trust entirely with your life, no questions asked, and the same goes for him.
You're both capable of trusting other people and, to some extent, you do. He trusts his group, his family, with blind eyes, but the way you two trust one another? It's special, something else, maybe even a little reckless, but neither of you ever questions it. You don't need to. You're not afraid of it, never have been. Most likely never will be be.

No matter how afraid of love you two are as separated individuals, you're not afraid of the overwhelming amount there is between the two of you. You'd die for Daryl Dixon as he would for you. Even after all these years.

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NOW //

19th April ;

3:20 AM //

You're standing by August's side in the middle of the small, cozy house you'll be spending the rest of the night in and, sincerely, you love it. The house is a big, open space, the floor all shiny wood, there's a big, white, fuzzy carpet covering most of the living room which is furnished with a couch filled with pillows and an extremely comfortable looking fuzzy, brown throw blanket, a fireplace and a few pieces of wood waiting to be consumed by a warm fire. There's also a bathroom, warm water, electricity and an open kitchen with an island in the middle, and the last room is a disgustingly cozy-seeming bedroom.

The whole house is colored in warm, fall tones, there even are fairy lights hung above the chimney. You hate how much you love it here. This place that's completely foreign to you somehow feels the safest and most welcoming. It's a drastic change from the Sanctuary and what you're used to from the outside world. There's no cold, concrete walls here. No linoleum floors and common shower-rooms. There're no bars on the windows, they're not completely out of reach either.

It all kind of has your head spinning- How normal and comforting it all feels and looks. You want nothing more than to curl-up in the huge bed and settle beneath the warm blanket covering it, but you can't. This is temporary. You don't want to get too comfortable and miss all this. You're leaving at dawn; it'd be stupid to settle-in and get comfy... God, do you want to, though. The domestic girl in you is screaming, already imagining herself baking in that kitchen, lounging on that couch in front of a warm fire, drinking hot cocoa on the porch in the early hours of the morning- Fuck. You hate this.

"S'not much but..." August trails off with a little shrug. "It's- It's more than enough," you quietly assure him before turning his way, your eyes trained on your newly socked feet. "Th-Thank you."

As you're standing there, shifting on your heels, avoiding eye contact with August as much as possible, you take quick little peeks at the man, your eyes scanning him from head to toe, taking in things you didn't back in the infirmary. For starters; he's ridiculously tall, easily above six foot. He's wearing a white under-shirt with an open red and black button-up flannel on top, sleeves rolled up to his elbows. He's also wearing a pair of black, clearly over-used jeans and a pair of black combat boots, similar to yours.
The defined muscles covering his chest are showing through the fabric of the thin white cotton of his t-shirt and his flannel is clinging to his impressively muscled upper-arms, the deep and light colored ink covering both of his forearms contrast really nicely with his toffee skin tone. You also notice that he's wearing an engagement ring before directing your attention to his face.

He sports a clean-cut, thin beard covering his just as impressively cut jaw. It's too thick to be considered a stubble but also too thin to be considered a full-on beard, it's a really nice in-between.

Your eyes quickly snap away from him when they meet his, a small smile on the man's full lips, your cheeks burning at the fact that you've been staring at him for, undoubtedly, way too freaking long and he probably just stood there wondering what the hell's wrong with you.

"You gonna be okay?" August carefully asks, clearly trying not to sound belittling. "Mh-m, y-yes," you quietly answer, your throat a little tight.

"Alright then, I’ll leave ya to it. M'around if you need anythin',' he lets you know and, still looking down at the socks covering your sore feet, you nod, pinching your lips together with a hum.

"O-Okay. Thank you," you whisper. God, you need a shower. You smell like puke and sweat. Your entire body feels sore and achy now that you can feel it again. But you also really want to just pass out for the next century or three.

"You know, for what it's worth-" He stops at the front door, your eyes shyly finding his beneath the umbrella of your lashes before fleeing. "I’m sorry," he apologizes, your ears perking up at the words. "Wh-What for?" You venture to ask, your voice barely a whisper in the quiet house.

August lets out a soft chuckle and you briefly look his way to find a tired, small smile on his lips as he leans against the wall right now to the door. "For expecting a 'thank you' and callin' ya a brat when I didn’t get it? For bein’ an irritable, impatient dickhead? For what happened to you? Pick’n’choose, kid."

The scoff you let out is soft, barely audible, as you slightly shake your head with a hint of a smile on your lips. "I’ve met much more irritable and impatient dickheads," you inform him before gathering what little courage you have left to properly look up at him. "You have nothing t-to apologize for. You've got people to look out for, and nothing you’ve done was o-out of line. No worries."

The man sighs, his eyes closing as he tilts his head up at the ceiling. "You know what that’s like?" He asks, bringing his head back down to look at you then. "You talk like you do," he points out with a tired smile.

"Kinda, yea," you whisper with a shrug. "You’ve been alone as I have, you see… things. I’ve met all types of people, all types of men and women calling themselves leader- I never really believed in those."

"That’s a whole conversation right there, huh?" August chuckles and you give him a little one back, breathing out a small “yea.”
"I'm not-" You take a shaky breath, your chest burning has it expends. “M'not gonna hurt you o-or your family,” you feel the sudden need to clear up. “I'm not- I don't- I can't just- I don't do things like that. I don't just… go and kill people for fun. I can't-” You look at him, nervously pulling at the hem of your dirty t-shirt.

"I just- I've done b-bad things, a bunch o-of 'em even, and… as much as I want to, I can't t-take them back, I can't... can't bring those people back and- then there's the ones I can't bring myself to feel sorry about- But I'm not…” Negan. That's the word that comes to mind. “M'not gonna be a problem,” you resolve yourself to land on, your shoulders deflating and your mind reeling.

"Look,” he sighs, hesitating for a minute, taking in the state of you. “I talk a lot of shit but, I was serious when I said you should get a good night of sleep before deciding what your next move's gonna be,” is his way of telling you that he thinks your decision to leave at dawn shouldn’t be taken lightly without really having to say it because, after all, not only is it your own decision to make, but you're a stranger to him, to the people he looks after, and he shouldn't let his paternal instincts sway him and cloud his judgement.

“No offense but- Wh-Why do you care?” You quietly ask, a frown creasing your forehead. “I owe you big time, I know that but-”

“It's not about you repaying us if that's what you're implying, I don't give a damn about that,” he's quick to cut in. “I don't help people to use it against them, who the fuck does that?”

“The people I live with.” The words spill out without thought. You freeze and shyly look up at the man, your eyes glistened with tears. “They do it- all the time,” you whisper, feeling ashamed to be somewhat part of it. “Sounds like you could use a change of scenery, kid,” August dryly chuckles.

“T-Tell me a-about it,” you murmur with a small, forced smile. “It's just- I try-” A tear rolls down your cheek but you're quick to wipe it away. Though August has already seen it, it's more for you than it is for him. You honestly couldn't care less about looking vulnerable in front of this man anymore, you're too tired and can't be bothered.

“Every time… Every time I try and-and find something good, something just a little brighter than what I'm used to- It just… It's all so dark out there, you know? It's just… so ugly and... empty.”

Once again, because of the fact that you're a stranger to him as he is to you, August finds himself stuck, looking for the right words to say. So, in an attempt not to make things awkward after you've finally decided to let him see the tiniest bit of yourself, he softly changes the subject, knowing damn well that you don't need a stranger to shove his nose where it doesn't belong especially when he’s completely clueless as to how he should even act around you.

“You uh- The bedroom's at the end of the corridor and- Yeah, you already knew that- I already gave you the tour...” He audibly cringes and scratches the back of his head nervously at his terribly clumsy attempt to shift the conversation, but it makes you laugh a little so he doesn't really consider it a complete fail. “Sorry,” he apologizes with a sheepish smile.

You shake your head. “It's okay,” you softly assure him, nervously picking at the band wrapped around your right hand before looking at him. “Thank you, for everything. I mean it- If… If you need anything… I'm your gal.”
“You got it. Try ‘n’ get some rest,” he insists, barely catching the quiet ‘okay’ you whisper, before turning his back to you to walk out.

Hand on the doorknob, August almost curses out loud when his little girl creeps back up to the forefront of his mind. The mere thought of her standing where you are, looking the way you do; beaten and bloody- God, it makes bile rise in his throat. That ‘x’ carved in the palm of your hand is malicious but, even without that, it wouldn’t take more than two brain cells to put together the kind of Hell you’ve managed to crawl out of.

His mother’s words surface again, and he lets out a heavy sigh. August has seen fakers over the years, rescued some, people willing to fake anything to get to safety, supplies- guns. He’s always done what he had to in order to keep his group, his family, his baby girl, safe- And now he’s stumbled upon something – someone – he doesn’t know how to fucking act around because, yes, those wounds you bear could have been inflicted by someone you know, you could have been planted there, neatly on the side of the road for people to find and take you in- Again; he’s seen it before, he’s fallen for it.

Point is; he can’t pinpoint your angle. The pain in your eyes is real, that much he knows, he’d put his hand out to cut on it, but, again, you would be in pain if you were abused and forced to be bait. However, you don’t seem like the type, if anything, you seem more eager to get the hell away from here than August is to watch you go- But then again, if you have people waiting for you outside- You did mention a group, a bad one too- Why would you do that? If you really are bait, then why the fuck would you tell the leader of the place you’re scouting that you’re with a bunch of meanies? But what if-

“Hm,” August hears your soft hum from behind him. Great. How long has he been standing there with his damn hand on the doorknob for?

“If-“ He starts hesitantly, knowing that he's about to walk on some real fucking thin ice right now, all whilst staring down at that damn doorknob, ready to walk out as soon as his words will have left his mouth. “If you need to talk, y’know, one stranger to another- I ain't never too far.”

You blink and he’s gone, the door softly closing behind him, leaving you to stand there, unsure of what to do. “One stranger to another,” you whisper his exact words, finding them somewhat reassuring, almost appeasing.

With a sigh, you make your way to the big couch in the living room, eyeing your backpack leaned against the empty chimney, your bow sticking out of the black canvas. He's left you your weapons, which means he’s either really stupid and reckless, or that he knows he’ll be able to kill you the second you dare look at him the wrong way. Honestly, you suspect it might be a mix of both, but you're thankful that your weapons have been left untouched, the reason why doesn't really fucking matter to you at the moment.

You lay down on the comfortable couch, your head hitting one of the plushy pillows there and you shimmy down a little bit, trying to get as comfortable as possible as you lay on your right side, your eyes intently watching the empty belly of the chimney, the soft, white fairy lights above unfocused and splotchy in your peripheral vision.

Your body is aching, your mind still dizzy and a little loopy from the drugs you've been
administered God knows how many times for a day and a half straight, your body still reacting to them, especially to them slowly disappearing from your system, and you know that you'll be waking up in cold sweat, shaking and ready to throw up tomorrow morning when withdraw symptoms will really start to hit you hard. You have to admit, you're dreading it. You're terrified of feeling that way again, it's been so damn long, yet you remember just how painful and uncomfortable it is.

Your shaking hands reach up to grab the fluffy blanket sitting on the couch’s back and cover your shivering, tired body with it, a pleased sigh leaving your mouth at the softness and warmth the brown blanket offers. You happily nuzzle into it, unconsciously bringing your legs up for your knees to rest against your belly.

There's no telling when exactly sleep claims you, all you know is that, when it does; your friends are on your mind. Faith, Daryl, the people of Alexandria, Jesus- Connor and Randall. You fall asleep with tears clouding yours eyes, wondering where those two are; if they can see you from there. God, you hope they can’t.

FLASHBACK // Friday 17th May 2013.

NINE Y/O OC // FOUR YEARS BEFORE THE OUTBREAK //

5:16 PM;

It’s official, until today, on the seventeenth of this month of May; Daryl Dixon has never, ever, heard anything as heart-wrenching as your cries and pleas. Worst part? He can't do a damn thing to make it all stop- In fact, he has to push you through it. What an asshole.

“Daryl! Please, please, make it stop! Make it stop!” Your cracked sobs smack him right back down to reality. A reality in which you're laying on his bed, your little hands fistig his sheets in a white-knuckled grip, your face soaked in tears, your nose full and running, and the bullet wound in your belly bleeding profusely.

He wishes he could put his hands away, hands that are now covered in your blood -not helping his heartache one bit,- and swipe you into his arms to take you away from his big brother who's currently working on carefully taking the damned bullet out of your body as Daryl keeps the wound open, giving the older Dixon room to work and to, hopefully, make the whole process a little less painful than it has to be for you.

He’d say that’s not doing wonders if you were to ask him, judging by your cries and pleas for them to stop doing what they're doing and the constant flinches of your body as it desperately tries to get away from the pain- From them.

“How?” Merle barks, though he somehow manages to stay carefully as he works on your wound. “How the fuck are you so fuckin' stupid?! How the fuck do ya shoot a li'l girl, you dickhead?!”

“I-I told you! I didn't mean to, alright!? I-” His friend, Rufus, stumbles as he looks-on from the
bedroom's threshold. “Alright!? Alright?! Are you fucking kidding me? You gotta be! You're fuckin' high, you dumb bag of shit!”

“Merle!” it's now Daryl's turn to bark, successfully getting his brother's attention. “I get it, man, I do, but right now, you gotta shut up and finish what you're doing, alright? She's in pain, man, c'mon.” The youngest Dixon's voice softens as do Merle's eyes when they land on you, wiggling around in his baby brother's grip, trying to break free as sobs keep slipping past your parted lips.

With a quick nod between the two brothers, Merle gets back to work, his jaw trying to close tighter than is physically possible when your back arches off the bed and a shaky sob rips through you as he finally gets the goddamned bullet out of its hiding spot, guilt and relief washing over the men tending to you.

You're in pain, that much is pretty damn obvious, yet, when Daryl announces you as softly as he can that the hardest part is done but he's gonna have to stitch you up, you put your brave face on, hold your breath, and quickly nod your head.

The two brothers should have been reassured by your calmness, but it only makes a fresh wave of guilt wash over them. They know that face, the I'm fine because I have to be face that you seem to be oh so fond of. They know it through and through. Hell, you probably got it from them.

Daryl handles the stitches and Merle stays right next to you, one hand on your stomach, holding you still, as he tries his damnedest to calm himself down. Everything happened so fucking fast. He heard a gunshot and then, bam, there you were; clutching your belly on the dirty ground, crying as blood seeped through your tiny hands.

Turns out, Rufus was high as a kite and got startled when he heard a tree branch break beneath his own damn foot, the finger stupidly laying on the trigger of his riffle pushed down when his body reacted to the sudden rush of adrenaline. Wrong place, wrong time; you got the lost bullet straight to the belly.

Neither him nor Merle realized that he'd managed to shoot you until they heard you calling and crying for the latter, your small hands pushing down on your belly. Horror took over Merle’s features when he pushed your hands away and blood started to pour out, raw guilt showing up to the party when it hit him; you just got shot because he, for the first time, agreed to take someone else with you on your weekly training hunt, the only moment you two get to spend together, just the two of you. He went out of his way to bring someone else along and it got you hurt.

“Hey, pumpkin, shh, it's okay- S'okay, it's gone, s'all gone,” Merle coos, his free hand cupping your cheek and his thumb absently wiping your ongoing tears away. “M’so damn proud o’ ya. Shh, I know pumpkin, I know. I'm sorry.” Daryl looks-on as his big brother lets his soft side come out, hushing you, trying his best to calm you down.

That’s something only you have ever managed to do, to pull gentleness out of Merle Dixon, even he gets grossed out when he realizes just how mushy he gets around you; but he can't help it.

“Don't-Don't c-call me p-pumpkin,” you breathily protest, the nickname making your cheeks red, not used to anyone but Daryl and your father giving you pet names, which is why Merle takes a
twisted pleasure in doing so.

“Or what? Ya think you can take me right now, li’l shrimp?” He teases, earning a giggle which is quickly choked-out by a wince of pain as the needle Daryl is working on your wound with pierces through your skin again. “Hey-”

“Don't think I- Don’t think won't k-kick your butt, Merle. 'C-Cause I will. St-stitches ‘n’all.”

“Oh, I know, pumpkin. Tell ya what, y’get through this shit and I’ll let ya punch the livin’ shit outta me,” is Merle's way of telling you that he's sorry for getting you hurt like that, his way of admitting guilt. You’re young but you still see through it; loud and clear.

A high-pitched yelp escapes you as Daryl works on the lower, most sensitive part of your wound, the man cringing an apology. “Sorry, sunshine. M’almost done, swear.”

“Okay,” you whisper, swallowing around the hard lump in your throat, your hands still tightly clinging to the archer’s sheets. “I wouldn’t- I wouldn’t h-hit you, Merle,” you redirect your attention towards the eldest brother. “Y-You bruise l-like a peach.”

Your words get a small chuckle out of the two men. The sensitivity and fragility of your skin and body became somewhat of a joke between the three of you ever since the brothers realized that your condition was something you’re somewhat embarrassed of. It being something you can now laugh about is what helps you cope with better. They don't give you weird looks when you flinch whenever something or someone so much as grazes your skin, they don't judge nor make fun of you for it- not in a mean way at least. It’s never malice. “Jus’ teasin’, pumpkin. Never makin’ fun.”

6:30 PM //

A good hour has passed and you’re still out cold on the Dixons’ couch. The brothers moved you after you’ve passed out when Daryl had finally finished stitching your wound, exhaustion getting a firm grip on you, dragging you down under and straight into unconsciousness.

Daryl said it’d be best to move you from his bloodied bed and they’ve both decided to put you on the couch whilst he changed his bed sheets, ignoring the sounds of Merle kicking Rufus’ ass outside before telling him to get lost and taking off himself in a true Dixon fashion. That’s what the Dixon men seem to do best whenever emotions suddenly show up and get involved; take off.

But he's not going anywhere.

8:30 PM //

You wake up two hours later, curled up between Daryl’s parted legs, your head on his stomach and his hands protectively wrapped around you, coming together to rest on your back. You flinch and quietly whine when the fresh bullet wound in your belly wakes up along with the rest of you, the soreness of the tender skin and muscles more uncomfortable than it is painful, but you're still in shock about what’s happened.

“Hey, sunshine. How are ya?” Daryl’s voice is rough with sleep and it makes you smile a little
against his chest. “M’okay, just a little sore is all.” You sigh, relishing in the safety and comfort your friend is providing even though your head is reeling.

“Thank you for fixing me, D,” you quietly thank him, frowning against the throbbing in your belly. Getting shot sucks. Good to know.

“I’ll always be there t’fix ya, y’know that. You’re my girl,” he quietly assures you, one of his hands soothingly rubbing up and down your back.

“I love you,” you whisper against his stomach, your voice a little tight; and Daryl cranes his neck to look down at you. “I love ya too, sunshine.”

A powerful shiver makes your body jolt against the hunter’s and he frowns down at you, his eyes widening when he sees the discoloration in your lips and the silent rattling of your jaw. Your body is fighting against the injury it’s sustained and the blood it’s lost, and the exhaustion of it all is making your body temperature drop.

“Hold on,” Daryl gently warns, focusing on staying calm as he carefully moves you.

Sturdy hands gripping the backs of your thighs, he softly stands up with you tightly wrapped around his body, mindful to keep his movements fluid and tender as he pushes the blankets on his bed down and climbs back in with you in his arms. You naturally fall into place, nestling into his neck, right below his chin, while Daryl’s hands stay on your back, gently rubbing as he holds you close under the blankets.

You’re both laying on your sides, you on your uninjured right and Daryl on his left, mindful not to put his arm too low where he has it draped around you as to not disturbed your wound.

“Better?” He asks once you’ve both settled and you give a timid nod as you wiggle yourself further against him, your hands balled up between the two of you.

“Thank you.” Your voice is quiet and muffled into the hunter’s neck, but your words reach him nonetheless and he plants a lingering kiss in your hair; a silent gesture to comfort you.

“Merle’s gone, isn’t he?” You whisper after a while, more making an observation than you are asking a question, and Daryl stiffens a little. “He’ll be back soon,” he tries to reassure you and misses your frown as you hide away in his neck.

“Are you mad at me too?” The hushed question almost makes the archer spring up. “What?” He pushes his head back to try and look at you, but you seem plenty content to hide away from his gaze.

“Y/n, look at me,” Daryl gently demands, a deep frown twisting his featured. Slowly, you unravel from the hunter and sit down with a wince, your friend following suit with worried eyes though you can’t see them with your head bowed.

“You kiddin’, right? Y/n,” he tilts his head to the left, trying to get you to look at him. “Why would we be mad at’cha?” Your eyes finally find his then and he sighs, deflating a little when he finds them wet with tears he knows you won’t let fall.
“You got shot, sunshine,” he reminds you like you could have possibly forgotten. “No one’s mad at’cha, and Merle… Well, he’s Merle.”

“Yea, but-”

“But nothin’,” Daryl cuts you off, tilting his head some more not to lose your eyes, needing to make sure that his words get through to you. “Merle’ll be back when he’ll have decided to stop bein’ a li’l bitch. ‘Til then, you get some rest and stop worrying ‘bout shit you shouldn't even be thinkin’ about, alright?” His voice is firm but not angry, his dad voice you call it, and you nod before taking a deep breath and crawling back to your original position with him, letting his heartbeat lull you.

“Who ya callin’ a li’l bitch, sweetcheeks?” Merle's voice booms through the room making you and his brother jump although you’re quick to settle back down and giggle at the nickname he’s used for his little brother.

“Move over, ya fuckin' losers,” he demands with a smirk as he approaches Daryl’s bed before jumping on it without further warning, making the headboard hit the wall behind it and the mattress bounce around, making you laugh into the younger Dixon's chest who’s clearly not amused, holding you tight against him to make sure you don’t get jolted too violently and break your stitches.

“Hey, how you doin', pumpkin?” Merle asks once he’s settled, looking at you from where he lays on the bed to the right of his brother.

“M’okay. How about you?” You ask, barely stifling a yawn. “Ya worried ‘bout me, doll? Last time I checked, you're the one who got shot today, not me. S’real fuckin’ cute ‘n’ all but, don't worry about me, li'l lady. M’all good,” he assures you, chuckling as you let out yet another yawn.

Merle is the first to pass out, you following right on his heels and Daryl barely gets enough time to take a look at you when sleep consumes him as well, his hands still tightly wrapped around you under the blankets, keeping you warm and safe; terrified that you might slip away.

Truth be told, you should probably be with your mother right now, instead of growing up without her. But this, this right here, is your home. Merle and Daryl passed out in a bed alongside you. The three of you sore, bruised and exhausted is a pretty damn common way to end the day whenever you're with them and, although you’re the only one barring any soreness today, you wouldn't trade it for the world.

This is where you feel safe, loved and cared for. At home. No doubt in your mind, life without those two would be pretty damn pointless.

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NOW //

19th April ;

7:55 AM;
You can't go back to Negan, not after what happened, he'll never forgive you, he'll think you're gross, he'll be mad at you, he'll never want to see, talk or touch you ever again. God, he's gonna be so fucking angry. You can’t let him know, he can never know, but if you go back to him, it'll slip out someday and then he’ll know and he’ll be mad at you, he’ll be disgusted and-

Your erratic train of thought is cut short once again as your upper body lurches forward, bile coming out of your mouth, burning your throat on the way up, to then land into the toilet bowl right below your head, your knuckles whites from holding the sides of the white porcelain so tightly, and your eyes teary because of your gag reflex. All in all, you’re just thankful that your hair is short now so you don't need to hold them out of the way because that’ll only be another thing you can’t be bothered with at the moment. It's the little things.

You’re shaking like a leaf, sweat dripping out of every pore in your body, and achy all over. Your system is freaking out, begging for another hit of whatever it’s been given for two days. Your skin feels all itchy and comfortable; you wish you could peel it off and crawl out of it.

“Good God,” you whisper, your voice coarse after hours of throwing up, as you flush what came out of your stomach down the toilet before crawling away from it, your bare feet dragging you away on the floor, your uninjured left hand steadying you, your butt never leaving the cold tiles covering it but the coldness came to numb your bare skin by now.

Your knees are a bright red from you staying too long down on them while you were puking your guts out. You've been up for two hours, woke up a trembling and sweating mess, your already filthy t-shirt clinging to your soaked skin and you’ve had to rush to the bathroom when you felt your stomach screaming at you to run for dear life and give it something to empty itself into because it couldn't hold it any longer.

“Hey, kid, you doin’ okay in there?” August's voice makes you jump, almost making you bump your head on the rounded edge of the countertop you’re sitting under. “Y/n?” You hear his footsteps getting closer to the bathroom by the second when you finally gather your thoughts.

“M’fine,” you assure him, your voice croaked and your throat scratchy, stinging from the burns the acid of your stomach has left behind.

You watch, buzzing with renewed anxiety, as the man’s tall frame appears in the small bathroom and his eyes almost immediately fall on your shaking body, all curled up into a ball against the counter where the sink is. “Hey, are you-” He stops in his tracks, his eyes narrowing at you. “Shit-D’you-”

“N-No,” you cut him off, slowly shaking your head. “No, m'not bit. I just- I woke up sick, s’all,” you assure him, and he knows that there's more to it than you simply ‘waking up sick’, but he doesn't push the issue.

“Can I get ya anythin’?” He asks as he slowly crouches down in front of you and you shake your head at him as you struggle to keep your eyes open, exhaustion catching up to you.

“Hey,” August carefully reaches out to you with a single hand, putting it just as carefully underneath your left armpit, his eyes never leaving your paled face, and you flinch at the contact. “I’m gonna take ya to the couch. That okay?” He checks, watching your face for any signs of
When you shyly nod your head at him, he carefully snakes his other hand right behind your knees to then swiftly lift you up, making it seem effortless, like your weight is nonexistent. You almost expect him to say something stupid like Negan does whenever he carries you around the place but, yeah- He’s not Negan, there’s only of one him.

_August is gentle as he sits you down on the couch, kneeling to take a look at you as you struggle to catch your breath and calm yourself down, your eyes glued to your bandaged hand._

“**Y’know,**” he starts, your eyes shyly finding his through damp lashes, “**I get it. Hell, I can't even remember how many times I’ve been through relapse circles. It sucks.**” Looking at him, you wouldn’t really be able to tell he used to be hooked on any kind of substance, he seems so... Clean and healthy. So put together. Still, he must have struggled a lot with whatever addiction he’s had if he can tell what’s put you in your current state with a simple look at you.

“**S’not,**” you swallow around the lump in your throat, struggling to openly speak to this stranger. “**S’not what this is, it’s just... I dunno. I mean, I've relapsed too but... This isn't it,**” you shrug, seemingly unable to find the right words.

“**Withdraws?**” He suggests and you find yourself nodding, not really feeling like talking about it. “**You were dozed up? Yesterday, when we found ya? That why you passed out? Some kind of light overdose?**”

“**I dunno,**” you whisper. Yesterday is a blur to you, all that is clear is the nasty X carved into your right palm and the pain it’s causing you. “**I don’t really- I don’t r-remember a whole lot.**”

“**What d’you take, kiddo? Must have been strong whatever it was,**” August probes as he carefully traces the veins showing much too clearly through the skin of your forearms. “**Your skin looks paper thin,**” he points out and looks up at you, waiting for you to say something.

“**I… I’m n-not sure wh-what it was,**” you quietly admit, your head dropping down, scenes from back in the attic playing in flashes right in front of your eyes over and over again. You can almost feel the syringe piercing through your skin, the substance in it making your insides boil as it poisoned your blood and intoxicated you against your will.

Seeing your breathing pick-up, August decides to cut it with the questions, no wanting to send you headfirst into a spiral you don’t need to be getting into.

“**You need anything? Anythin’ at all?**” He quietly asks, moving his hands away from you to give you your personal space back. “**I-**” You're about to ask him for something to help with your raging headache but quickly decide against it, your anxiety screaming at you to not take any more medicine from this stranger. He’s been good to you so far, and even that feels icky.

“**A shower, I just… I’ll be better a-after a good shower. I reek. S’awful,**” you shrug off with a terribly forced chuckle.
“Alright,” August sighs out. “I’ll uh- I’ll leave ya to it then, kid.” You’re too busy avoiding eye contact to realize that his are scanning your bare forearms, taking in the few swollen veins pushing against your skin and the little red-ish dots the syringe has left behind.

Without a word, the man gets back up and goes to leave you to your own devices, stopping right at the door where you can’t see him anymore. “I know you said you’d leave at dawn and you don’t owe me shit but… I’d really like if you’d let me know what the next move’s gonna be, kid. Just so ya know, you ain’t a bother here,” August reminds you before silently leaving the small house, leaving you to brew over his invitation.

With a shaky exhale, you let yourself sink further into the comfortable couch and swallow a few tears back, your brain unable to treat every single emotion going through you all at once, and you quickly find yourself overwhelmed again.

Gathering enough strength to get up off the couch with an annoyed grunt, you drag yourself back to the bathroom, dragging your feet on the floor to stay in what seems to be today's big mood; brooding.

Even under the shower spray from which is coming out the cleanest, warmest water with the most amazing pressure you’ve ever felt; you can’t seem to be able to relax. Your jaw is clenched shut, your teeth grinding together, your shoulders tensed like the string of a loaded bow and your wounds, cuts and bruises are making themselves known with consistent, painful throbs. It’s like you can feel your heartbeat in every single of your limbs. You’re sore all over, making every little movement uncomfortable and borderline painful.

At this point, your body is becoming a nuisance and your bitch of a headache isn't helping you calm down either, it just aggravates you further. You want to scream until you can taste blood in your throat, cry until your eyes ache, hurt yourself to make everything go the fuck away if only for a brief minute. The urge to rip every single bit of skin and flesh off your bones is awful to withstand. Everything just feels so fucking gross and wrong. You want out of there. Out of your head and this body that feels less and less like your own.

You get out the shower clean but vibrating with anger and anxiety. You’re pissed at yourself, pissed at the pain you're feeling. Everything is prone to piss off and you don't need to try and justify it. You're pissed and that's that. Just thinking of having to try and justify yourself makes you seethe.

Back in the living room, you grab your backpack and throw yourself back onto the couch before angrily rummaging through the bag, looking for the old GameBoy you’d found a while back but never got a chance to really play with. The only person who’s ever touched the damned thing is Randall and you don’t want to think about that now. Just the thought of him makes you want to scream.

Your hands are frantically shaking but you still manage to get the big grey console out, letting out a small laugh when you spot the Zelda game inside of it, ready to play. Tears spring to your eyes when you remember Randall pulling his box of old games from his bag, how excited he was when
you’d shown him the console. For a moment, your anger takes a backseat and tenderness has you gently turning the device on, smiling a little smile when the music of the game fills the terribly quiet house.

_________________________________________________________________________

THE NIGHT BEFORE / 19th April //

SANCTUARY // 1:10 AM;

A disgustingly loud belch makes Faith’s face twist with disgust as she steps into the workers’ breakroom, the strong smell of alcohol almost burning her throat as she takes in the state of her ruthless leader, now well and drunk off his ass.

“That the plan?” She asks, annoyance clear in her voice as she leans against the door frame, her left hip popped-out. “Get wasted and sit on your ass all day?”

“Watch it- Might be drunk but m’still your boss… or whatever the fuck,” Negan slurs out, clumsily turning around to sit on the pool table in the room just as ungracefully, making Faith sigh as she gets to him just in time to keep him from falling straight on his face.

“Thanks,” he mumbles as he gets comfortable on top of the table, groaning in frustration. “Negan-”

“I fucking love her, Faith,” he spills out with a dry chuckle, looking out the window in front of him as if it’ll somehow make you appear in front of the gates of the compound. Faith stays silent, trying to process that information. Faith knew Negan before, she’s known the man he used to be, and the one he’s become can’t compare, that much she knows. He’s always been cocky and confident, that's nothing new, but he had a big heart that he wasn’t terrified to show. After he’s changed so damn much, hearing him say that he loves someone isn't something she could have ever predicted from him, and she's usually pretty damn good when it comes to anticipating the man. Her shock mostly lies in the fact that those are three little words that have always been reserved for the late wife.

Though, in a way, she had an itch. It’s in the way he looks at you, the way he speaks so highly yet so defensively of you, the things he lets you get away with, the things he does for you. She knows, in his own, stupid, messed-up way, that the man cares, there never was a doubt in her mind, but hearing those words from him? That's not something she ever could have been prepared for and the thought almost makes her laugh. If that’s how she reacts, how will you?

Silently, Faith joins her friend on the pool table, waiting for him to unload. “I can't- I can’t fuckin' stand not havin’ her around, y’know?” He confesses, his eyes looking through the window and into the woods ahead. “Not bein’ able to touch her, not havin’ her right here with me- Hell, I miss her fuckin' smell. God damn it, I sound so fuckin’ stupid,” Negan laments, unused to talking so openly about his feelings. He’ll blame Mr. Daniels for it in the morning.
“She smells fucking heavenly, seriously, even covered in guts ‘n’ shit. Fuckin' hell, I hate that mushy shit. I hate how she does this shit to me.”

“Hey now, don't blame the girl for your insanity, that wouldn’t be fair on anyone,” Faith teases, trying to soothe the man. Though Negan smiles at that, he keeps going on with his rambling as if she hadn't spoken.

“It's so fuckin' selfish but- Goddamn it. Is it weird that I would rather have her fuckin’ hate me and keep her ‘round then let her go out on her own if it means she’ll be safe? No ‘cause, fuck that, I can't do that, makes me fuckin' sick just thinkin' about it.”

“S’not weird, per se. Just… Not healthy. For either of you. Plus… Well, that didn't really work out now, did it? I’m not tryin’ to twist the knife here,” Faith quickly rectify, “but restricting her will only make it so she’ll have to go behind your back and that’s unsafe.”

Looking over at the man sat next to her, Faith feels her heart swell for him. In his very own odd and fucked up way, she can tell that Negan holds nothing but love for you, yet she can't really sit there and tell him that the way he treats you is right because it just isn't. At all.

“We'll get her back, we won’t rest until we do; you know that,” she assures him. “And when we do, well- You’re gonna get your head out of your ass because, honey, I’m sorry to tell ya but it ain’t a hat and you’ve been actin’ like it might as well be for a li’l over too fucking long.”

Negan chuckles at that, absently shaking his head before taking another swing of his whiskey. “We uh- We got into an argument and then she stormed out and fuckin' ran off again and- Fuckin’ hell, now she's gone, and I can't handle this shit anymore. I’m fuckin’ worried and it's pushin' me outta my fuckin' mind.”

“I know you did it for your own good, debatably good, reasons; but you can’t just turn emotions off, Negan. We both know that,” she points out, hazel eyes finding hers for the first time tonight. “Those suckers were bound to come back to smack you in the fucking face at some point,” she adds with a crooked smile, trying to lighten the mood a little, Negan scoffing a laugh.

“Easy women are just that, Negan. You don’t fall in love with them, not you at least. And just because you feel for someone doesn’t mean your balls are gonna drop any lower and people aren’t gonna respect you anymore.”

“Aw, c’mon, leave my balls out of this, Faith,” the man laments, a smirk crooking his pout. “I would if they weren’t a big part of the problem.”

“Oh, so you sayin’ I got big balls?” Negan wiggles his eyebrows at the woman sitting next to him, her amusement showing through her mask of annoyance. “Don’t make me whip mine out, I wouldn’t want to emasculate you.”

A deep laugh resonated through the otherwise quiet room as the Saviors’ leader throws his head back and bumps his shoulder into Faith’s right one. “Knew I liked ya.”

The woman shakes her head, a small smile on her face as her companion calms down next to her. “She really likes you, you know? It’s pretty damn obvious, but you can't blame her for being afraid...
of getting too close to you, Negan- Not after all the shit you've put her through.” The tone of the conversation shifts again, to one gentle but serious.

Negan’s eyes silently fall to Faith’s face, his dizzy mind taking her words in. “I think- I think she looks up to you a lot when it comes to knowing whether she’s doing the right thing or not and, when you’re not being a fuckhead, I think you really do her some good but- Shit like makin’ her kill that guy months ago? That needs to stop. I know why you did it, but I still fucking hate that you did.”

“I regret this shit every single fuckin’ time I think back on it, but I needed her to do it- I don’t fuckin’ know why, I just did.”

*Because you wanted her as low as you felt,* Faith silently remarks. “*You did it with us- Me… Connor and Randy.* It fucking sucks but you learn to move past it,” she tries to somewhat reassure him without giving him a pass or telling him that it’s okay. Because, again; it absolutely is not.

“Look, no one’s askin’ you to turn into a goddamn Care Bear and go ‘round kissin’ and huggin’ people. If you love her, *really* love her, than that’s just between you and her. You can still be big bad Negan when you have to be. Has she ever asked you to change the way you are out there or with your men?”

“Nah,” he quietly admits, finally putting the bottle of amber liquid down. “*Jus’* wanted me to stop fuckin’ ‘round, but I’m fuckin’ scared shitless and it fuckin’ suck to say it. I shouldn’t feel that way. I don’t fuckin’ get to, I got people t’look after, shit I gotta do.”

“You really- You really think that people won’t respect you if you settle?” Faith recoils a little, shaking her head in disbelieve. Not that this is new info to her, but it still aggravates her. “Seriously, Negan, get your shit together. People don’t respect you because you have a bunch of whores laying around, alright? Hell, I know for a fact that Amber would love nothing more than to go back to Tom and you’ve already sent Laihla back to her hubby so… I mean, I get it; you’re scared.”

Negan goes to cut her off but she doesn’t let him. “*Don’t* tell me you ain’t, *cause that’s just insultin’ my intelligence at this point, dickbag.*” The man shrinks back at that, putting his hands up in silent surrender. If anyone can make him shut up like that it’s always been Faith.

“But what about her?” The woman’s tone softens then along with her demeanor. “*What* about her being scared and gettin’ hurt ‘cause you can’t get your shit together? You’re a grown man for fuck’s sake, Negan, and I *know* you know better because, while you love actin’ like you’ve forgotten the man you used to be; I sure as Hell haven’t. And I remember a man who’d order push-ups from dumb high-schoolers whenever they’d talk inappropriately of a woman within your earshot.”

“Things changed, Faith. I can’t be that man anymore- Hell, I don’t know if I can be-” Faith jumps off the table then, flinging her arms out. “And no one’s asking you to, Negan! Jesus!”

“Well, fuck, what the hell d’you want from me then? ‘Cause I’m real fuckin’ confused right now it ain’t all the fuckin’ alcohol, woman!”

“I know you’ve read *Forest Gump* to her over the talkie when she ran off with Randall, okay!?” The brown-eyed woman shouts back. “*Y’know* how I know? ‘Cause y/n told me! That’s all she
could talk about! How you made her laugh and how easy and safe it felt to fall asleep to you reading to her- *Jesus fucking Christ*, Negan, no one’s askin’ you to be the man you used to be- Lord knows I can’t go back to the woman I used to be, but you can be good to her and we both know it so just stop being a dickhead and let yourself be!”

“It ain’t that fuckin’ easy!”

“Yea no shit! Don’t you think I know that!? I lost my fucking child and my goddamn fiancée!” The pair deflate simultaneously at the words Faith let slip out, the woman shutting her eyes tight and shakily exhaling through her mouth.

“Well now I just look like a dickhead,” Negan drunkenly mumbles. “And that’s a fuckin’ hard feat, doll,” he jokes with a smirk, relaxing when he gets chuckle.

“Negan... What if... I mean- What if something happened to her? What if she ran into trouble out there?”

“Don’t.” The Saviors’ leader sighs, his stomach sick enough as it is without the thought of you being hurt or holed-up somewhere you shouldn’t be. “But what if she did? C’mon, she said she'd be back by morning yesterday and, well, it's yesterday and she ain't back. I think it's time to think about that possibility because we both know she didn’t run away this time. I mean- She's left you a note and not the ‘go choke on your own dick I'm outta here’ kind. She couldn’t have just left... Not with the deal you’ve made with her friends back at Alexandria. She wouldn’t risk it.”

“I’m gotta be fuckin’ sick,” Negan whispers as he drops from the pool table and onto the floor, clumsily balancing himself on his feet, the alcohol running through him making his limbs much heavier and his movements much more difficult than they should be.

“Let's get your sorry ass to bed, we'll go look for her again first thing in the morning,” Faith breaks with a sigh as she puts a gentle hand on her friend’s back, helping him walk out of the room, through his quarters and to his bedroom where she leaves him with a goodnight and a small laugh when he lets his body fall heavily on his bed, grunting a *night, doll* into his pillow.

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**NOW / 19th April //**

9:15 AM:

You’re so absorbed in your game that you don’t even hear the door of the house opening and closing nor the sound of tiny feet running inside the living room. You don’t realize that you’ve got company until you feel the couch dip lightly next to you.

“Wow, wh- Hm... Hi?” You look at the little girl sat next to you on the couch, confused as to what the hell is happening and *why* it's happening. “Hello!” The little girl frantically waves at you, her high-pitched voice due to her young age and the huge grin on her freckled face make you melt and forget just how awful the last couple of days have been to you for a short but enjoyable second.
“Who are you?” She asks, her head curiously tilted to the side, making you laugh a little. “I, uh—I’m y/n,” you gently introduce yourself, still unsure what’s going exactly. “Hi, y/n! I’m Robin! I’m five!” She’s so enthusiastic about everything that her head keeps moving around as she speaks.

The little girl has gorgeous, thick, brown curly hair that flow smoothly with every move of her head, baby hair framing her face as well as a couple of loose curly strands of hair here and there. She has a breath-taking pair of shining hazel eyes, her face is covered in freckles and her skin is a deep toffee shade, her pastel yellow dungarees and the white t-shirt she’s wearing underneath perfectly complimenting it.

“Hi, Robin,” you extend your hand out to her. “It’s nice to meet you.”

“Thank you!” She gives you her tiny hand to shake. “You’re really pretty! Oh! What is that?” The tiny girl points at your console and you have to blink a few times to get your bearings because that’s a lot of energy and a lot of information to take in all at once and so suddenly. Your mushy brain was not prepared.

“Robin?” A somewhat familiar voice calls out for the young girl before the woman who took care of you in the night walks into the living room, giving you a warm smile. “Hi, there. I’ll take it you’ve met my granddaughter, Robin,” she chuckles, and you silently nod at her, giving her a small smile.

“Yes, I have. She's lovely,” you quietly let her know. “Thank you for-”

“Abuela! Abuela! Nana! Listen!” Robin begs for her grandmother’s attention as she kneels in front of you, settling a big, brown leather bag down next to her on the carpet covering the floor. “Abuela!”

“Yes, Robin, I hear you sweetheart.” You briefly admire the woman's patience and tenderness in the face of the young girl's high-pitched calls.

“Oh…” The little girl seems a little embarrassed for a second, like she’s just now realizing all the shouting she’s been doing, but is quick to recover when her eyes find you again. “This is y/n!”

“Yes, I know, sugar,” Astrid smiles at you before winking at her grandkid.

“She’s pretty,” Robin points out, your cheeks burning up when her grandmother acquiesces. “She sure is.”

The little girl goes stiff and quiet when Astrid pulls a BP cuff out of her bag, intently watching as you quietly nod at the nurse and let her wrap it around your right bicep. “You got a boo-boo,” Robin observes with a frown, her eyes on your bandaged right hand.

“You should ask your daddy to kiss it better. My daddy always does and it’s always better then,” she tells you very seriously, clearly believing in the magic of a father’s kiss. You wordlessly open and close your mouth multiple times, trying like hell to find words and push them out but nothing’s coming to you but tears and a strain in your jaw.

“Are you saying nana’s kisses aren’t magic, too?” Astrid cuts in, clearly sensing your distress.
though she’s not showing it for shit. When you look down at her, she’s focusing on taking your
tension and getting your pulse on your wrist with her fingers.

The little girl giggles and lets out a wet ‘pfft’. ‘Of course they are!’ Her bright hazels find you
again. “Abuela’ll make you better, you’ll see.” And, just like that, the matter is dropped, and you
watch with slightly widened eyes as Robin wordlessly crawls between your parted legs the second
Astrid undoes the cuff from your bicep to check the other arm.

Nothing is said as the kid settles between your thighs that you’ve opened slightly more to
accommodate her, your heart farting glitters at the smiling and ever-so-enthusiastic ‘thank you’ she
gave you when you did.

Her grandmother doesn’t say a word of it as she finishes taking your tension, if anything, you catch
the woman looking at you with a gentle smile every now and then. You know she probably won’t
say anything out loud not to alert the little girl, but you know your tension is bad by the little
frowns you’ve caught here and there.

Minutes tick by and you find yourself guiding Robin through Zelda, her elbows on each of your
thighs, laughing with her as you tell her the story of the game and teach her how to play.

You have to admit, it feels great to interact with a human being with clean and good attentions,
with no wicked thoughts, no urge to take from you. Someone who doesn’t seek to hurt you in any
way, shape, or form. The little girl is radiating so much happiness and enthusiasm that it’s kicked
your anger and sadness to the back of your mind for the time being.

Your focus drifts back to Astrid when you feel her tend to your injured ankles and find her gaze
lingering of the raw, torn skin as she finishes tending to the wounds.

She gives a subtle start when she finds you watching her looking at you. She seems sheepish about
having been caught. “Sorry, honey.”

“It’s alright,” you quickly dismiss her apology with a tight little smile. “Thank you. For last night
and…” You trail off, your eyes finding your dressed hand on their own accord and the kind woman
seems to understand.

“No need for that, hon,” it’s her turn to dismiss you with a wave of her hand. ‘I’ll come back
before the end of the afternoon to change those bandages and clean the wound, alright?’ You go to
tell her that you’ll be gone before then but, in the face of the little girl happily playing on your
GameBoy between your legs, you settle on a quiet nod and a tiny smile, letting Astrid finish
cleaning the wounds on both your ankles and wrists, something along the line of pity twisting her
features as she does.

It's almost too much for you to bare. It's like there's a fucking detailed script of what happened
written on your skin and you absolutely hate it.

After putting her medical supplies back into her back, Astrid asks her granddaughter if she wishes
to stay with you for a little while longer, the only answer she gets from the little girl is a low mumble and a laugh from you. You make sure that August, her father, won't have a problem with his daughter staying with a stranger and Astrid assures you that she’ll ‘handle him’, Robin backing her grandmother’s words, saying that she, too, will handle him.

You’re not sure how you feel about that but you’re not about to kick the little girl out. If she wants to stay, then you’ll take her father’s wrath when it comes- And it most definitely will come because that’s his baby girl hanging out with a complete stranger.

A good hour passes, giggles filling the empty house as well as short but meaningful and adorable conversations between you and the young Robin. She’s asked you about the world outside, but you smoothly changed the topic. You don’t want to have to lie to her, but you also can't afford to tell her about how dark and terrifying the world outside the walls she lives inside of truly is. That’s not your place.

You know that, someday, she’ll have to learn if she wants to survive but she’s so young, now doesn't seem to be the right time and, again, you’re not the person with whom she should be having that conversation. For her sake, you wish she wouldn’t have to have it at all.

“Robin!” August roars making the two of you jump on the couch though Robin is quick to smile at her father when he steps into the living room, worry and something like anger in his eyes. “You scared the crap outta me! You can't just disappear like that.” His eyes shift between you and the little girl.

“Nana knows I'm here, daddy, plus y/n’s really nice... And that’s five dollars in the swear jar by the way,” Robin points out matter-of-factly, looking at her father with a smile, seemingly unfazed by his outburst -unlike you- and it seems as though he can't help the smile that appears on his lips even though he’s supposed to be an angry and worried to death father right now.

He just can't assume that position when his little girl seems so genuinely happy. “Oh yeah? She is, huh?” He softly asks, calming down from his panic, his eyes now on you, a small smile tugging at his lips.

“Yes, so you be nice,” the little girl scolds with a frown and a pout. “Alright,” her father gives, putting his hands up in surrender. “Abuela wants to know if you’d like to go help her cook dinner-”

“I’m playing with y/n,” she softly points out, twisting around to look at you. “It’s alright, Robin, we’ll pick it up later if you want?” You gently assure her, super uncomfortable with the situation at this point.

The little girl hesitates before giving-in. “Ok. Later?” She asks and you nod at her with a little smile, startling when she plants a kiss on your cheek before wiggling out from between your thighs. “Be nice, please,” you hear her mumble into her father’s leg as she hugs it, apologizing about vanishing and worrying him like that before running out of the house, a small squeal leaving her mouth when she runs into something before recovering with a giggle.

The moment you’re left alone with August, it feels like led just dropped in the pit of your stomach, anxiety twisting your insides. The front door has been left open, but you still feel disgustingly
trapped and claustrophobic.

“T’im so sorry-”

“Hey, it’s fine,” he gently cuts you off, his tone catching you off guard and he can tell by the way you’re still wearily eyeing him. “Seriously, this isn’t on ya. I just- I got worried, father instincts ‘n’ all- I mean, you seem really nice but you’re still a stranger and I freaking for a minute. That’s not on you,” he takes the time to explain before sitting down next to you on the couch, careful to respect your personal space.

“I get it,” you assure him, fidgeting with a loose thread from your sweater, trying like Hell to ignore the fact that the cotton shorts you’re wearing do little to hide your bruised thighs. “She wanted to stay, and I didn’t want to kick her out, but I should have made sure you’d be told she was with me… And I knew you wouldn’t like it. Understandingly.”

“I like seeing my little girl happy, I didn’t walk in on her crying. Yea, like I said, I freaked for minute, but she’s okay and that’s all that matters. No one’s getting their heads chopped off today, don’t worry,” he jokes, and you give a little smile, relieved to know that he’s not pissed at you. You don’t think you could handle any more anger right now.

“Hey, it’s okay,” his voice softens once more when he takes you in. “You know, I haven’t seen my little girl smile like that in what feels like forever. I’m not- I’m not the best dad in the world, don’t think I ever could be, not if I want to protect her. But- I mean- It doesn't mean that I don’t love her more than anything else, there’s not a damn thing I wouldn't do or give away for her to be safe and happy... Well, as happy as she can get given, you know, the circumstances and all.”

“You’re not a bad father,” you contradict him with a frown. “At least that’s not what I’ve gathered from the way your little girl talks about you. You’re all she talks about,” you quietly inform him, not wanting to cross boundaries but feeling like he should know.

“What about yours?” August ventures to ask. “Don’t ya have a family to come home to? A worried-sick father going insane looking for you?” You give a little laugh at that before shaking your head.

“No,” you breathe out. “They’ve both been gone a while.”

“I’m sorry.” You wave him off. “Thanks, but there’s no need to be. I’ve made my peace with it… Somewhat,” you admit before clearing your throat and adverting your eyes back to the empty chimney in front of you.
“You know-” August is interrupted by a knock on the door. “Yea?” He calls out, throwing his head back on the couch to look behind him. “Hey man, what’s up?” He greets the newcomer and you feel your stomach tighten with anxiety at the arrival of another man, your heart-rate picking-up.

“ Came to help your father with his roof since I finally have time and-” Your ears perks up at the familiar voice that reaches them and your head snaps up to meet Jesus’ baby-blues as he stands in the living room, looking at you with a grin.

“ Well, hey there, y/n. Long time no see, huh?” He lets out a small laugh and you take your time to take him in, carefully watching him.

He's not wearing his beanie, his hair is done into a neat bun and his beard is still going strong, taking over the lower half of his face. His presence is still as reassuring as you remembered it to be and you feel the dam holding your tears inside your eyes starting to crack, like the simple fact that he’s in the room is enough to let you know that it’s finally safe, that you’re finally allowed to let go. And so you do.

And, of course, he rushes to you, August not making a move to comfort you since he’s still unsure if touching you is the best idea. Paul, though, doesn’t hesitate to take you into his arms and hush you.

“ Paul-” You sob into his chest, hiding your face from both him and August. Your hands are clinging to the black Henley is wearing, terrified and needing the comfort of his familiar company in this new, foreign place.

One of his hand comes down to rub your back but he quickly withdraws it when you sob out at the contact, the sound almost sounding like a scream, your whole body tensing up and trying to push away from him as panic engulfs you like a thick, suffocating blanket.

“ Hey. Hey, hey, y/n,” he tries to get your attention, trying in vain to calm you down, but you keep crying and shaking in his arms. “Y/n, sweetheart, listen to me,” he pulls away from you, firmly yet gently framing your face with gloved hands, absently wiping away the tears falling out of your eyes but there’re so many that most of them roll down and climb over the leather of his gloves to keep going on their way down.

“ Hey, it’s okay, it’s me, s’Paul. You’re okay, y/n. I promise.”

“N-No! No, I-I’m not!” You let out between sobs, your body shaking along with them.

Jesus frowns, his features twisted with worry and hurt. He doesn’t know what’s happening and he’s at a loss on how to make it better. His eyes scan your shaking form from head to toe and his throat closes on itself when he spots the nasty wounds on your ankles, the bruises on your legs and the blood-stained bandage dressing your right hand.

“Y/n,” his voice got lower and, although it's not in the same threatening way Negan’s drops whenever he's mad at you, it’s enough for you to feel the need to cover your ears and squeeze your eyes shut to try and make him disappear.

You almost scream when he gently catches your hands on their way up before you can get the chance to do so, and settle on squeezing your eyes shut, so tightly-so that it makes them ache
behind your lids.

“Did- Wha-” Jesus is unsure what question to ask first, how to formulate it and if he should even go there but he needs to know. The state of you, body and mind, isn’t something he can’t just let go of like that. He needs to know what happened and if Negan is behind it.

“Y/n, honey, please talk to me,” he's pleading and that's all it takes to break you. He sounds so distressed; you can't stand it. The anger you've woken up with is back with a vengeance and it's mingling with your pain and sadness like the most disgusting poison.

“I don't- I don't know-” You try to take a deep breath but can only manage to take a short, shaky one that hurts your chest. “I don't know what's happening to me!” You break, and if wasn’t for Paul holding your hands in his, you’d be pulling your hair out you’re so fucking frustrated.

Outside the house, August is leaning against one of the posts on the house’s porch when he hears a familiar voice calling for him. “Hey, AJ! Ya seen the majestic bearded sonuvabitch that dragged me here anywhere? Can’t find him.”

“Hey, Dixon, s’nice to see you too. I’m fine, thanks for asking,” he teases the hunter, getting a chuckle and a punch to the shoulder in return. “Jesus' inside-” August puts his hand on Daryl’s chest as he tries to get past him to get inside the house, getting a confused stare from the archer.

“I uh- I think you should leave him be for a little bit.”

“Why’s that? The hell is goin’ on?” Daryl asks with a frown. “Well, I think he reunited with a friend of his so, y’know- Seems like they have to lot to catch up on and the kid’s havin’ a rough time, s’all.”

“An old friend? Man, who the hell’s in there?”

“A girl we found yesterday. She’s in bad shape, man, said she wanted to leave today- Dunno if that’s such a good idea though. Gotta talk her ‘bout it and-”

“What’s her name, August?” The leader of the small community is taken aback when he hears Daryl use his birth name instead of his nickname like he, and everyone else, really, usually do.

“Uh- Y/n, wh-” He doesn't get to finish his question when the hunter shoves right past him and rushes inside the house like there’s a fire somewhere he doesn’t know about, the door slamming shut.

“Cool, okay. Could’ve told me to go suck a dick too, would have been quicker,” August mumbles, confused as to what the hell just happened.
The door slamming shut makes you jump and sob aloud in Jesus’ chest, the man frowning at the intruder as you push yourself further into him.

“Y/n,” Jesus starts, gently pulling you away to make you look at him. “It’s okay,” he quickly looks behind the couch you’re sitting on, his eyes locking on his friend. “Daryl’s here.” His words barely register in your mind, the simple mention of his name enough for you to turn around, your swollen eyes landing on a seemingly tense Daryl, looking at you with worry in his eyes.

Your legs grow a mind of their own and drag you to him with clumsy steps, letting your body collide into his once you get close enough. The hunter’s strong arms quickly wrap themselves around your shaking frame, his lips landing to the top of your head, one of his hands firmly but lovingly grabbing the back of your neck to keep you close to him, terrified that you might disappear somehow.

“Holy shit, y/n,” he whispers against the top of your head, his grip on you getting tighter. “I was fuckin’ worried sick ‘bout you, sunshine. Where the hell’ve ya been?”

“I-I don’t- kn-know,” you sob out in his chest, screwing your eyes shut once more to drown everything that isn’t Daryl out.

All it takes is for Daryl to look up at Paul, for them to share a simple look and he knows. He knows something bad happened, something beyond bad judging by the look in Jesus’ eyes, but it’s not just that. It’s your behavior. You’re shaking and clinging to him like you used to when you were little and something bad had happened at home.

The hunter closes his eyes before carefully picking you up to rock you in his arms, hushing you, trying his best to calm you down, something he normally would be embarrassed to do with someone else in the room but he doesn’t give a crap about that right now. He wants you to feel safe, regardless of the fact that he’s showcasing a whole new side of himself to his friend.

“I wanna- I wanna go home,” you choke out, your body going limp with fatigue.
Kiss it better

[CURRENTLY BEING RE-WRITTEN]
Whiskey and honey

[CURRENTLY BEING RE-WRITTEN]
Hi... So... This is awkward...

....

OKAY SO! WAIT! LEMME EXPLAIN! I THOUGHT I WAS OKAY LEAVING THIS STORY AND STARTING ANEW BUT GUESS WHAT? I'M NOT! Oh wHAt a sUrprISe!

In all seriousness, I don't know why but I just can't get inspired to write something else, even something extremely similar, because I still love this story despite the fact that I wasn't in a good place when I first started it and re-reading it makes me cringe so hard my face sinks into my fucking skull.

So, in my spare time, I started going back and cleaning it up a little and, ya know what? Yeah it's still cringe-worthy but I kinda (AND I MEAN K I N D A) don't mind? I mean, "GIVE ME HELL" literally is the first thing I've ever wrote, let alone put out for people to read so, I mean... Yeah, it's cringe but I guess it's all part of growing 'n'all.

POINT IS! I'm gonna go through every single chapter of this story, smooth it over as much as I can while still keeping things the same (talking about just changing the formatting and shit) and THEN I'll FINALLY (FUCCING FINALLY) post the rest of the story.

YOU WON'T HAVE TO RE-READ THE STORY BECAUSE I AM NOT CHANGING IT, I'M JUST GONNA RE-WRITE SOME THINGS AND WHATNOT, WHICH IS WHY THE TWENTY-EIGHTH CHAPTER WON'T BE OUT FOR A LITTLE BIT.

I don't know if any of you are still interested in this shit-show but, if ya are... Hi, thanks for your patience, thank you for letting me take some time to figure things out, thank you for allowing me to try new things even though it turned out that's not want I wanted. Just thank you, so so much for being so comprehensive and kind.

This year literally has been a shit-storm for me as I'm sure it's been for some of you as well so I really appreciate how sweet and patient you all have been. Honestly, I can't even put into words how much it means to me because, after all, we're all strangers to one another and I think that's what makes it even more special. Y'all don't have to be nice behind a screen but you are and that's everything.

Okay, I'mma stop rambling now and I'll see you guys soon. AND BY SOON I MEAN PROBABLY MID-JUNE / START OF JULY.

Stay safe out there, angels. SMOOCHES!
Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!