

Last Chance

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Last Chance

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Summary

"Daryl doesn't know what possesses him to look up. There are no birds flying overhead anymore. No planes. Nothing worth seeing. Yet, as though pulled by a force beyond his understanding, he tilts his face skywards and that's when he sees it: a thin slither of grey smoke escaping through the roof of the trees."

Daryl finds Beth and brings her back to the Alexandria Safe Zone. They finally get to finish their conversation from the funeral home.

For Bethyl Smut Week 2k18. Prompt 3: Smoke.

Notes

I'm stepping out of my comfort zone and trying something new for Bethyl Smut Week. I've never written 'Beth Lives' before, only ever 'Beth Doesn't Die'. UNTIL NOW.

So, it might not be great but I'm gonna go ahead throw it out there for Smut Week anyway. Enjoy ;)

Shout out to SquishyCool for inspiring me with my idea for the 'Smoke' prompt. Checkout her fic for the Breathe prompt [here](#). It's absolutely beautiful.

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

Daryl doesn't know what possesses him to look up. There are no birds flying overhead anymore. No planes. Nothing worth seeing. Yet, as though pulled by a force beyond his understanding, he tilts his face skywards and that's when he sees it: a thin slither of grey smoke escaping through the roof of the trees. If he hadn't spotted it he'd have smelled it soon enough from his position down wind. A campfire, most likely.

The smell of smoke reminds him of Beth and he feels a pang of guilt at not having thought of her in a while. He feels as though he is starting to forget her, which is something he never wants to do. Or was capable of, he'd thought. Her expressive blue eyes are seared into the back of his eyelids. At first he saw them every time he closed his eyes at night. Hazy with moonshine. Narrowed in anger. *What he wouldn't give for her to be mad at him again.* Seething with fury. That's how they looked the last time he saw them. He's proud of her that she never looked scared. That at the end, she was braver and stronger than she gave herself credit for.

And here he is out looking for the good people she made him believe still exist. *For her.* She saved him. He knows in his bones that he would have checked out if she hadn't been there with him. He'd just lost everything. *Everyone.* Except her. She was still there, pulling him back from the edge and into her orbit. Like the sun, she became the centre of his universe; a guiding light for him to move around, giving him direction and much needed purpose. Now if he saves anyone it's for her, so she can be right in her conviction that there are still good people left. It mattered to her. So it does. It does matter. Even if he's still wrapping his thick head around why exactly, he trusts she was right.

That's why he finds himself heading towards the smoke, in search of the source and whatever, or *whoever*, he might find there.

It doesn't take him long to track the smoke to its origin, and when he finds it there's a small figure sat in front of a dwindling fire. Her back is turned to him – he's guessing her from the small frame and tangled blonde hair caught in a ponytail. He edges closer as he watches her poke at the small flames with a stick. He's so consumed in her movements that his foot lands on a branch. When it makes a soft crunch she stops. Daryl holds his breath, instinctively raising his bow.

Nothing.

She must not have heard.

Slowly, he lets his bow fall back down to his side.

In the next moment, she's spinning around and raising her arm to aim a gun directly at his head. She's quick. He's staring down the barrel of her gun with his bow frozen at 45 degrees when she clicks the safety loud enough for him to hear it.

"Daryl?"

The gun lowers to reveal familiar blue eyes pooling with confusion.

Beth.

With a heavy thud, his cross bow meets the ground

He's frozen in place but she's getting closer somehow until suddenly she collides with his chest and her arms wrap around his middle in a tight embrace. "You found me," She whispers against his neck, dry lips tickling his skin.

All of the air in his lungs leaves him in a rush. His hands fly to cup her elbows, clutching tightly to reassure himself she's real, or keep her there a few moments longer if she's not.

The moment stretches and she's still there; muscle and bone beneath his palms. When she pulls back to look at him he takes her in.

There are lines on her face, scars he remembers from the hospital that are halfway healed now but will never disappear completely. She's a little pale, a little dirty, but when her eyes connect with his they're bright and warm; *electric*. Only a few weeks ago he was carrying her lifeless body down the steps of Grady Memorial Hospital with tears streaming down his face. He's stunned to see her standing in front of his now, not only alive but *normal*. Not broken or traumatised but seemingly physically intact. His mind is reeling at how that's even possible while his heart feels like it's about to explode because, possible or not, here she is. Without meaning to, he reaches out and curls his hand around her upper arm, just to check she's really there and not some kind of *mirage*.

"The others?" She asks, her voice is steady but her gaze trembles. With hope, he thinks, but there's a flicker of dread that wasn't there before. She's Beth, but sharper somehow. More aware.

He nods as a thousand questions form a tsunami in his mouth but when he tries to open it he finds his teeth are glued together.

Beth pushes out a shaky sigh of relief, her eyes pooling with tears and a grin rounding her cheeks. "Oh thank God," She says breathlessly, "Where?"

He swallows, dragging in a breath through his nose that loosens his jaw. "We found a community," He forces out, "C'mon." Jerking his head back the way he came, he turns and Beth follows without hesitation.

They fall into an easy silence as Daryl retraces his steps back towards Alexandria. He has a feeling of déjà vu as they move through the forest side by side. But it's different this time, his heart stuttering in his chest every time he glances up to sneak a look at her. He does it often enough that he nearly loses his own trail. Despite willing himself to keep his eyes on the forest floor they swing up to Beth again only to find her blinking back at him. A flush runs across the back of Daryl's neck as he bows his head.

“You keep lookin’ at me like...” Beth starts and then pauses before huffing a laugh that doesn't reach her eyes, “Well, like I'm a *ghost*.”

Because you are.

“Sorry,” Daryl grunts, eyes flicking back up to hers. When they connect he can't stop the words from pouring out of his mouth. “You were gone,” He says heavily, “I know, I *checked*.”

He remembers holding his thick fingers to her neck, *nothing*, and then her wrist, *nothing*. How her body felt soft and still in his arms. *Lifeless*. Bile climbs the back of his throat at the memory.

“Did you ever read Romeo and Juliet in high school?” Beth asks after a long moment.

Daryl snaps his head to the side and stares at her. He didn't read shit in high school, he didn't even go.

“The doctor at Grady told me it was like that,” She says, “The bullet tore through somethin’ in my brain an’ it put my body into a deep sleep, but then two days later I woke up.”

Beth's casual explanation and shrug do nothing to lessen the guilt that seizes Daryl's muscles like he's been doused in ice water.

“Beth, I'm so sorry,” He murmurs, words quavering at the edges with pain.

Beth's brow furrows in something like concern at the stricken look on his face. “It's not your fault,” She says, shaking her head.

Guilt wraps around Daryl's chest and pulls tight until he can't breathe. “I left you,” He confesses in a strained whisper, head hanging heavily between his shoulders with the weight of his guilt; eyes cast down and away.

Beth reaches out and grabs his arm, bringing them to a grinding halt. When his eyes fly up in surprise he meets her piercing blue gaze, the force of it straightening his spine somehow.

“No, Daryl,” She says firmly, “That wasn't your fault. But this,” Her voice softens with emotion, “*Finding me*, that's all you.” Her lips curl into a small smile.

His heart is racing under the intensity of her gaze. The violent guilt that she forbids is loosening its hold on his chest with each breath he drags in. Those expressive eyes of hers are unwavering, holding his as though willing him to understand that she doesn't blame him, not one bit.

Slowly, he does and he can breathe a little easier.

The moment they step through the gates of the Alexandria Safe Zone, Beth is scooped up in a flurry of hugs and tears as the family welcome her back. Soon the whole place is buzzing with joy at the miracle of her return. Daryl hangs back and watches, unable to tear his eyes away from the living and breathing Beth at the centre of it all.

After Maggie steals Beth away to rest and get cleaned up, Daryl waits a whole day and burns through a packet of stale Marlboros before he can't wait any longer. He has to see her; to check she's real, and that he didn't imagine the whole thing.

That is how Daryl finds himself stood frozen in front of a door; unable to walk through it and unable to turn around and walk away. On the other side of the door is Beth, in the room that is now hers in Maggie and Glenn's house. He wants to walk through it. He wants to see her. He came over here *because* he wants to see her.

Maggie had looked a little *surprised* when she opened the front door to find him scuffing his boots on her porch, but not concerned. In fact, he didn't have to say anything before her smile widened some and she jerked her head towards the stairs, telling him to "go see how she's doin'". So he did. *Almost*. He got to the door and that's when he froze.

What if she doesn't want to see him? Just because he found her doesn't mean she wants to spend time with him over her sister. He should have waited for her to come and find him, if she wanted to. He realises that now, but it's too late. He can't turn and go because Maggie will tell Beth he came and stared at her door for *nigh on ten minutes* before leaving. He's got to walk through that door.

His mind searches for an excuse for his intrusion and he fingers clutch at his sides for anything to keep them busy that isn't gnawing at his nail beds. His thumb catches on the leather of his sheath and he finds it: Beth's knife. He can give it back to her. Then go. Leave her be.

With newfound purpose, his fingers curl around the sheath and his knuckles come up to rap on the door.

"Come in." His stomach drops out through the balls of his feet when he hears her soft, sing-song voice beckon him inside.

Slowly, he turns the handle and pushes the door, hovering at the threshold. Beth is sat cross-legged on the edge of the bed, running a brush through the tangle of damp curls trailing down to her waist. Drowning in a baggy t-shirt that hangs off one shoulder she looks thinner than he remembers, cheekbones sharp enough to cut, and yet stronger somehow like she's pure muscle.

Her cheeks are flushed hot and even from across the room he can smell the soap that's radiating from her scrubbed pink skin. The dirt is all gone, making the scars on her face more prominent against her clear skin. Her face visibly lights up when she sees him, and it stirs something in his chest. She beckons him inside with her hand, biting her bottom lip in

something like excitement as drops the brush down beside her.

"This place is insane," She whispers incredulously, patting the bed beside her when he hovers just inside the door.

Daryl snorts, stepping closer, "Yeah, it is."

He perches on the edge of the bed, the uneasy feeling in his stomach flirting with excitement as she turns her body to face him. There are so many things he wants to say to her, to ask her. It's been a month, hell maybe even two, since they left Grady and Atlanta behind them. And her. They left her behind. But here she is, six hundred miles later and with a pulse.

How? How is she alive? How did she get to Virginia? And yet somehow when she looks at him he doesn't want to ask any of that. He doesn't want to muddy this moment with mistakes and struggles; pain and guilt. She's *here*. Somehow. And he just wants to be here with her.

"When I was out there by myself after a while it stopped bein' scary and it was just... *lonely*," Beth says, mouth tugging to the side, "I spent so much time just thinkin' about things."

"What'd you think about?" Daryl finds himself asking.

"My dad. Maggie. Judith," She says, clasping her hands together in her lap, "You. Us. 'Bout when we were together,"

Daryl feels his heart quicken.

"I kept thinkin' about what happened at the funeral home. Can I ask you somethin'?" She asks, lifting her gaze to meet his.

Daryl's stomach drops out through his knees. He feels sick.

..about what happened at the funeral home...

You mean, when I lost you? When I let them take you?

The guilt burns him from the inside out every second that he looks at her. He wants to look away but he won't; he owes her that much.

Beth tilts her head in question and Daryl forces out a grunt.

"When I asked what changed your mind it was me wasn't it, that's what you wanted to say?"

Daryl's breath hitches as relief floods through him from his clenched jaw to the hands fisted at his sides.

Beth laughs, dropping her gaze and shaking her head, "'Cause I kept thinkin' about it over an' over an' I was sure that's what you were tryin'a say, but now I'm startin' to wonder if I'm goin crazy or..."

“Nah,” Daryl interrupts.

Beth stops babbling and lifts her gaze up to meet his, her eyes wide and quickly filling with doubt.

“Oh,” She says on a barely concealed sigh, disappointment coming off her in waves.

“Nah, you ain't goin' crazy,” He clarifies quickly, “It was you.”

It was all you.

A smile lights up Beth's face.

“Well, I'm glad I ain't goin' crazy,” She says softly, leaning in a little closer. She's like a magnet and he finds himself doing it too, leaning in until there's barely an inch between them.

At the same time, as close as they're now sitting it doesn't feel close enough. Her blue eyes are shimmering back at him, and he's pretty sure he hasn't kept eye contact with someone for this long in his whole damn life, but here he is looking into Beth's eyes like they might contain the secret to the universe.

“I wanna know you, Daryl,” she whispers, “I wanna know you in every way possible.”

In every way...

His thoughts are obliterated when she closes the space between them and places her lips on his. They're soft and warm and then they're gone.

Beth let's out an explosive breath, a crimson flush spreading from her hairline down to her chest as she stares back at him with too-wide eyes.

“Spent a lot of time thinkin' about what that'd be like,” She explains breathlessly, her chest suddenly heaving.

She catches her bottom lip between her teeth as his tongue comes out to wet his and he tastes her there. Daryl stares transfixed at her mouth like he's never seen it before.

Is he dreaming? If he is, he doesn't want to wake up.

Beth is staring at him with those big doe eyes of hers that render him stupid. He doesn't know what to say to that, so he doesn't say anything at all. Instead, he leans forward and covers her mouth with his.

She gasps, letting out a little surprised moan and parting her lips under his. His tongue takes the opportunity and slides into her mouth, licking against her tongue and exploring her wet heat.

And suddenly he's kissing her like he's never kissed anyone before, *which is scarcely a lie*, and she's kissing him back with her own simmering heat. Her hands come up to tangle in his

hair, now-rough fingertips brushing the back of his neck.

His head is spinning when Beth climbs into his lap with just the perfect amount of pressure to make him groan into her mouth. His cock grows hard and strains against his zipper. Suddenly he's harder than he's been in years; he's harder than he's been in his whole damn life. There's no way she can't feel it the way they're pressed together, and his face grows hot with embarrassment.

"Maybe we should slow down," He murmurs, clenching his jaw, trying not to moan again as she shifts against him.

Not because he wants to, but because he's starting to feel a little out of control.

Tilting back, Beth looks at him with startling directness.

"No, Daryl," She says, her voice soft but with a steel boned spine of conviction beneath her words, "This is our chance,"

He stares back, confused and fearful, his mind thrown into chaos as it grapples for understanding.

"I wanna be with you," She whispers, fingers curling around his thickly muscled neck, "And I think you wanna be with me."

She pauses then, uncertainty beginning to cloud her sharp gaze.

Daryl quickly dips his chin in a mute nod and is rewarded with a smile that illuminates Beth's whole face.

Leaning forward, she presses her forehead against his until he can feel her warm exhales blowing across his lips.

"This might be our *last* chance," She whispers, her voice solemn and her eyes darkening gravely, "And I don't wanna waste it this time."

This time.

Daryl pictures the funeral home and the way she looked at him across the table, open and raw. Remembers the feeling of infinite possibilities opening up between them, only for it all to be snatched away in a moment.

He feels those possibilities opening up between them again now.

But everything can change in an instant. More often than not, things don't play out the way they should. He gets that now.

All they have in their grasp is *this moment*.

He'll be damned if they're not gonna make the most of every second.

Surging forward, Daryl cups the back of her skull and kisses her again. It's sloppy, *unpractised* to say the least but filled with months of longing.

It's frenzied as they grapple for each other with spiralling desperation. Beth's hands fall to his shirt, dipping below the fabric as she seeks his skin. There's a vertical momentum between them as they grab at each other's clothes, mindlessly trying to close any and all distance between them.

Daryl never thought that being with Beth would be like this, and he had thought about it. He thought their coming together would be soft and slow, that he'd be gentle and she'd be shy. This is nothing like that and it's *so much better*. They're colliding in a desperate frenzy that is driven by her and met by him as he tries to keep up.

There are a hundred reasons he should feel uncomfortable right now and only one reason why he doesn't; her. She's alive and she's here and wants to *know him*.

It's like she's flicked a switch inside him and suddenly his blood is running hot as it charges around his body.

He doesn't know what he wants more: to consume her or to be consumed by her.

She undoes the buttons of his shirt, each one making his heart beat faster, until she slides it off his shoulders and lets it fall down his back. Her hands return to map the bare skin of his chest, fingertips tracing his collarbones like lines on a map. She reaches between them to find the hem of her t-shirt and pulls it up and over her head.

His huge hands explore the smooth expanse of her back as his eyes fall to her bee stung nipples. When she frames his face with her hands and kisses him again her pebbled nubs dance across his collar bones. The sensation pinballs down his spine straight to his aching cock. His hands circle her waist and pull her down as he rocks his hips up, grinding them together. Beth moans into his mouth, nipples tightening against his skin and he growls in response, halfway to undone from the evidence of her arousal. Just their chests pressed together, skin to skin feels incredible. He can't help the grunt of protest that escapes when Beth suddenly slides off his lap. He watches her discard her pyjama bottoms in some kind of trance, frozen as he catches a glimpse of the curls between her thighs, before he realises she's stood waiting for him to do the same. His eyes flick up to hers and she smiles, eyes bright with a thrumming excitement he feels in the air between them.

He bends down to unlace his boots and her bare legs pass a breath away from his quickly reddening face. The mattress dips as she climbs on the bed. Kicking off his boots his hands fall to his belt and he turns his head towards her.

His usually deft fingers fumble at his buckle like he's never undone a belt before when she comes into view.

Completely naked and lying spread out on her front, she's looking over her shoulder at him with lust blown pupils that turn her eyes a hazy night sky blue.

Crawling on all fours down the bed, he covers her with his body and presses a kiss to the cradle of her shoulder before burying his face in her skin.

She twists her neck to meet his mouth, tongue flicking out to lick his lips and push between them as they part for her.

His forearms and knees are braced on either side of hers, caging her in with his huge body. When he relaxes into her kiss and sinks down, the head of his cock nudges between her cheeks. She arches her back in response, pressing back and enveloping his swollen head between her soft cheeks until he moans low in the back of his throat. They part on a gasp, panting into each other's mouths. He falls down onto his elbow, hand coming up to curl around her jaw and keep her face pressed against his. His other hand reaches under her raised hips to nestle between her thighs. His questing fingers follow the curve of her mound to her centre and nudge between her swollen lips into her wet heat. Beth keens high and needy when his rough fingertips gently stroke her inner walls and he feels her pulse quicken against his palm. His finger slides easily through the wetness of her arousal as he pushes a thick digit deeper inside her and *curls*. She shudders beneath him and moans against the side of his mouth. Daryl turns his face and kisses her, absorbing her moans as he rubs his finger up and down her swollen clit, in and out of her trembling walls, until her hips start to rock forward in search of more.

Running his tongue across his bottom lip, he pulls back just enough to catch her gaze.

“Can I...” Daryl trails off, the question dying on his lips as Beth's raw, lust filled eyes connect with his. Her eyelids fall to half mast as his fingertip presses down on her clit and his cock nudges between her soft inner thighs, ghosting the bottom of her wet pussy lips.

“Yes,” She gasps, “God, yes.”

He angles his hips so that his cock rubs along her slit, covering himself in her slick and making her whimper as his tip brushes her clit. His breath catches in his chest as he wraps his hand around the base of his cock, guiding himself until his leaking tip catches on her hole.

Slowly, he buries himself inside her, letting out a shaky breath against the back of her neck when their thighs press together. He thinks he blacks out for a moment; the sweet smell of her sweat and shampoo filling his lungs; the tight wet heat of her walls pulsing around his cock until his eyes roll into the back of his head.

His hips jerk forward as a shudder works its way down his spine. As his hands curl around her jutting hipbones she lets out a soft moan and arches her back, rocking back against him. All of a sudden they're moving together as one, becoming a blur of rutting, squeezing and panting as he loses himself in her, and she in him.

With his forehead pressed against her temple he fucks into her, slow and deep. His hands slide under her body to hold her pressed against him as he thrusts in and out of her, harder each time like he's trying to carve himself a home inside her.

“Now I got you back I ain't lettin' you go again,” he gasps, “I ain't lettin' you out of my damn sight, girl.”

She turns her head and he pulls back to meet her gaze. Her eyes are bright and shining as she reaches back to tangle a hand in his hair and crash their lips together.

He whimpers into her mouth as her walls tremble and then clamp down around him. The hand in his hair closes into a fist, sending hot pin pricks of pain burning across his scalp. He feels her body go ramrod straight in his arms as her orgasm possesses her. Her inner walls begin to pulse as she comes, dragging his release out of him. He lets out a broken moan as her pulsing cunt sucks him dry. His seed, his soul, his bones all pour out of him and he collapses on top of her. They lie there all in tangles, his cock still buried inside her trembling walls. The air is thick with sweat, come and the sound of heavy breathing as they try to catch their breath.

He rolls onto his side, pulling her with him where she's still pressed against his heaving chest, stuck together with sweat.

She tilts her head back against his shoulder, blue eyes rippling with a loose tranquillity that is echoed in her lopsided smile and boneless frame melting against his. For a while they stay like that, eyes locked in a post orgasm haze as the aftershocks of pleasure ripple through their slack bodies.

He feels high, head light and spinning. He feels reborn, like a phoenix rising from the ashes of this Godforsaken world. He feels *alive*, heart threatening to beat its way out of his chest and into hers.

Leaning forward, he presses his lips against hers and kisses her, slow and soft, without any heat. When their lips part he does it again- *because he can*. Beth laughs and he kisses her teeth, the side of her mouth, her cheek, before resting his head on his hand and watching her.

She's smiling wider than he's ever seen her, eyes bright and glistening. He feels a flurry in his chest knowing he had something to do with that.

Daryl watches Beth's lips move and feels panic grip him by the spine as he starts to make out the words.

"If this is my last night on earth," Beth says softly, her hand coming up to cup his face, fingers smoothing the frown lines forming on his brow.

"If the world ends tomorrow," She continues, eyes rippling with emotion, "I want you to know I would die happy 'cause I got to spend tonight with you."

His arms tighten around her body and he buries his face in her neck. The rhythm of her pulse throbbing beneath his lips soothes him; each beat evidence that she is alive. He feels a shiver run through him as the spent adrenaline leaves his body. *Jesus Christ*.

It takes a moment, for the panic to subside and her words to sink in, but then slowly and all at once he gets it. She doesn't need him anymore, if she ever did. She survived out there on her own because she's a fighter. She's stubborn, alright. *She even argues with death*. This girl went through hell and just kept going. *Even came back from the dead*. She doesn't need him, but she *wants* him.

Leaning forward Daryl kisses the pink line on her cheekbone and then the one on the side of her forehead. Finally, he presses his lips to the small circular scar on her crown.

“Then imma make you feel like this every night in case it's *my* last chance,” he promises.

End Notes

I would love to hear what you guys think! I hope you enjoyed reading it as much as I did writing it!

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!