

## Our Father's Son

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Characters:	<a href="#">Rick Grimes</a> , <a href="#">Shane Walsh</a> , <a href="#">Carl Grimes</a> , <a href="#">Lori Grimes</a> , <a href="#">Glenn Rhee</a> , <a href="#">Daryl Dixon</a> , <a href="#">Merle Dixon</a> , <a href="#">Judith Grimes</a> , <a href="#">Andrea (Walking Dead)</a> , <a href="#">Dale Horvath</a> , <a href="#">Jacqui (Walking Dead)</a> , <a href="#">Morales (Walking Dead)</a> , <a href="#">Amy (Walking Dead)</a> , <a href="#">Hershel Greene</a> , <a href="#">Maggie Greene</a> , <a href="#">Beth Greene (Walking Dead)</a> , <a href="#">Theodore "T-Dog" Douglas</a> , <a href="#">Otis (Walking Dead)</a> , <a href="#">Patricia (Walking Dead: Greene Farm)</a> , <a href="#">Michonne (Walking Dead)</a> , <a href="#">Philip Blake   The Governor</a> , <a href="#">Carol Peletier</a> , <a href="#">Sophia Peletier</a> , <a href="#">Tyreese Williams</a> , <a href="#">Sasha Williams (Walking Dead)</a> , <a href="#">tags to be added/changed - Character</a>
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# Our Father's Son

by [succulentrk800](#)

## Summary

The world fell apart and you're just trying to survive and keep your family alive. With your best friend, Rick Grimes, and some friends made along the way, will you be able to make it?

## Notes

TW with each chapter :) The summary is super bad I'm sorry. There will be two books. Book 1 takes place from season 1- 4 while Book 2 takes place season 5-8.

Sexism

Language

Canon divergence

This chapter is pretty mild. Enjoy!

## Couple of Raiders

"What's the difference between men and women?" Rick pondered, chewing down on the fries in front of him. You were sat in the backseat, between Rick and Shane in the front. Finally taking the chance to get some food and get a break from the Georgia heat while you waited for an update on this pursuit. Had to have gone around King County at least twice by now. Oh well, giving you a break with your brother and Mr Police Brutality at least. But hell, you Shane had plenty to say about that question.

"Shit, here we go," You mumbled, and Shane turned slightly to shoot a glare over his shoulder before turning back to Rick, who watched the small exchange with an amused look.

"Is this a joke?" Shane asked

"No, serious."

"I never met a woman who knew how to turn off a light. They're born thinking in a switch, it only goes one way. On. They're struck blind the second they leave a room. I mean every woman, I ever let have a key. I swear to God. Come home, house all lit up, and my job, apparently because- because my chromosomes happen to be different cause I then gotta walk through that house, turn off every single light this chick left on," Shane explained and you rolled your eyes, opting to stay out of it to avoid breaking Shane's nose. Not that you haven't done it before.

"Is that right?" Rick asked with a small chuckle and Shane nodded, scrunching his trash into the box.

"Yeah, baby. Alright, Reverend Shane's preaching to you now, boy. The same chick, mind ya. She'll bitch about global warming. That's when Reverend Shane wants to quote from the Guy Gospel and say "Um, darling? Maybe you, and every other pair of boobs on this planet just figured out that the light switch see, goes both ways, "maybe we wouldn't have so much global warming," Shane sounded so damn smug. Pair of boobs? Seriously?

"And you wonder why you're single," You huffed, catching Rick's amused smile in the rearview mirror.

"You say that?" Rick egged him on. Bastard. He only wanted to hear more because he knew it riled you up. You were gonna shoot him one of these days.

"Yeah. Anyway, uh, polite version," Shane hesitated slightly upon meeting your glare in the mirror. But in a split second that ever-present ego of his was back and he was smirking again. Asshole "Still man, that... that earns me this. This look and loathing you would not believe. And that's when the exorcist's voice pops out. "You sound just like my damn father. Always, always yelling about the power bill, telling me to turn off the damn lights."

"What do you say to that?"

"You know what I wanna say. I wanna say, "Bitch, you mean to tell me you've been hearing this your entire life and you are still too damn stupid to learn how to turn off a switch? You know... I don't actually say that, though," The pair actually laugh at that and you just scoff. You forgot that Rick and Shane had known each other most of their lives. Rick followed Shane around like some damn lost puppy, laughed at his stupid jokes, agreed with almost everything he said. Pissed you off to no end sometimes, but Rick was sweet. Nicer than Mr Police Brutality. He was your brother even if that meant Shane came with it. Carl more than made up for it. Well, when Rick and Lori weren't fucking him over with their crippling marriage.

"So how's it with Lori, man?" You leant forward, each arm on the back of their seats, to which Shane scowled slightly but didn't say anything. Rick went silent for a minute, looking down into his lap for a second. Shit, not good.

"She's good. She's good at turning off lights. Really good. I'm the one who sometimes forgets," The three of you exchanged a laugh, but you and Shane shared a look. He was avoiding the question. Well, time to team up with the enemy.

"Not what she meant," Shane stated

"We didn't have a great night," Rick responded, and you leaned forward waiting for more. But more didn't come without prompting apparently.

"Look, man, I may have failed to amuse with my sermon, but I did try. The least you could do is speak," Shane reasoned and Rick finally turned to look at you both.

"That's what she always says: "Speak". "Speak". You'd think I was the most closed mouth son of a bitch you'd ever hear her tellin'," Lori was definitely a piece of work. You'd known it the moment you met her. She loved Rick and later Carl, but it seemed that Rick was always having to fight to be in her favour. Huh, reminded you of your son of a bitch brother.

"Do you express your thoughts? Do you share your feelings and that kind of stuff?" You asked, placing a hand on Rick's shoulder. Shane let out a light scoff but backtracked when Rick gave him a warning glare.

"The thing is... lately whenever I try... everything I say makes her impatient like she didn't want to hear it after all. It's like she's... pissed at me all the time, and I don't know why," Hell, you'd never heard him so sad. It wasn't any of your business, not really, so you couldn't give Lori a piece of your mind. Fucking damn it.

"Look, man, that's just shit couples go through. Nah, it's just a phase," Shane's words barely seemed to get through to Rick though as he kept staring out of the window. Now you were starting to worry

"Last thing she said this morning? Sometimes I wonder if you even care about us at all. She said that in front of our kid. Imagine going to school with that in your head. Difference between men and women? I would never say something that cruel to her. Certainly not in front of Carl," How could you even say something like that to a father in front of your child?

That was messed up in every way possible. Fight all you need to, but Carl didn't deserve to be in the middle of that. When you went to give your thoughts, however-

"All available units, high-speed pursuit in progress Lincoln county units require high-speed assistance. Highway 18 south GTAAD W217 243. Proceed with extreme caution."

"Well, therapy hour's over boys. Time to get going," You grinned, strapping your seat belt back in as Rick started the car, siren blaring, and Shane leant out the window to throw the trash away.

"Aunt (Y/N)!Aunt (Y/N)!"

The guns you'd been cleaning dropped to the floor of the RV and were long forgotten when you heard Carl screaming. You raced outside, seeing Carl sprinting through camp and barreling through camp with Sophia by his side. He was grinning widely and you let out a sigh of relief, dropping your hands to your knees. He finally reached you and you gave him a tiny smile, trying to hide the panic that had just flashed through you.

"Hey, kiddo. You two doin' alright?" You asked, crouching in front of the two kids. Sophia was beaming too, and she leant over to give you a quick hug as a good morning.

"Carl!" Before either of them could answer your question, Shane had come storming over, eyes something fierce and you raised an eyebrow. What the fuck was this asshole mad about now? "Now I know I told you about not shouting unless it was an emergency."

"Lay off Shane, he's just happy," You rolled your eyes, brushing Shane off and turning back to the kids. Sophia mumbled a small sorry to Shane and wandered off, presumably to find her mom. You knew they needed reminding, but hell they were kids. He could at least be nicer about it.

"We just wanted to say goodbye before you went out in the woods," Carl muttered, looking away from Shane. Oh, you were so gonna give Shane hell later. Shouting at a kid, Jesus. You put a hand on Carl's shoulder and he looked back at you. He looked so much like Rick sometimes. The thought alone of your friend made a twinge of pain and anger flare in your chest.

"That's really sweet of you, Carl. I'll be just fine. Back before you know it," Carl launched forward, wrapping his arms around your stomach, and you nearly fell on your ass with the force of it. You hugged him back tightly. Since his dad and the world ending, he'd clung to you and Shane as well as his mom. Poor kid. You couldn't imagine growing up in a world like this. It'd change you. "See you later, trouble."

"You sure you're gonna be okay? One of the fellas could always come with you," Carol questioned, watching you pack your bag of supplies. She was being quiet, with Ed not too far away. That man made your blood boil. Carol and Sophia came out every morning with new bruises, acting meeker and meeker than they had the day before. No one dared say anything

though. No one really knew how to approach the subject. Amy and Jacqui had tried once but backed down after a detailed threat that made even Shane grimace when they told him.

"C'mon Carol, I'm good. Don't need the men to protect me. And laying animal traps is hardly a two-person job," You joked, shooting her a wink as she stifled a giggle. Shouldering the bag onto your back, you gave her a mini salute and took off into the woods.

The traps were all empty, minus one that had caught a tiny little rabbit. In the beginning, you felt bad killing the cute creatures, but after months of scavenging, slowly running out of food and nearly starving a few times, it was just food to you now. Nothing more. You let out a sigh as you set a new trap, closer to the creek you'd found, hoping something would get caught while going for water. Food was getting tight. Wished you'd taken up tracking instead of policing now. Would've been more useful now. Not that you thought about that when you started training all those years ago. A small snap of branches made you shoot up from where you were knelt fixing a trap, gun raised. There were two men stood there. How and when the hell had they gotten so close without you noticing? Damn ninjas.

"Hey, guys. I don't want any trouble. Just trying to get some food," You said softly, but the two men didn't lower their guns. To be fair, you hadn't either. One of them was holding a rifle, hair shaved down and wearing a leather vest that looked like it'd tear any day now. The other was scowling, holding a crossbow and while his hair was much longer than his companion, it was still much too short. The older one smiled, but there was little friendliness. That uncomfortable smile you'd seen a million times from catcallers in the street or some creep you'd been interrogating.

"Well, hell, darlin' we don't want no trouble nither! Just hand us ya stuff and we'll be on our way," He said, moving his rifle away from his eye but not lowering it. You looked between the pair, weighing your options. You were outnumbered, and they'd managed to sneak up to you without making a damn noise until they were right behind you. Running would do you no good. You could lower your gun, give them your supplies and possibly get out there with your life. But your people needed those supplies. No way. Looks like you were gonna have to pull a page from Rick's book and be Officer Friendly. Fun.

"I'm afraid I can't do that. Look, why don't we just lower our guns and talk about this," You responded, already starting to lower your own slowly to your holster. The younger one looked to the older one like he was waiting for his instructions.

"Ain't much to talk about," The younger one grumbled, but you caught the discomfort in his eyes. Seen it plenty of times on the field when a one suspect was just following another one around.

"I got people, a camp. They need these supplies. Maybe if you're willing to work with us, you can come back. Then you won't need to take my stuff. Supplies are gettin' really thin these days. Won't do much stealing from each other when we could help each other out," The older one watched you like a hawk. The smile hadn't left his face, but there was an interest there now. Telling them about camp probably wasn't your smartest plan, you'd admit, but they looked like hunters if the string of assorted animals on the older one's bag wasn't sign enough and damn you really needed those now.

"They welcome two raiders just like that?" He raised his eyebrows. It was supposed to be mocking but, there was genuine curiosity in his eyes and the younger ones.

"Well, maybe we can keep that between us. You didn't technically raid me so.." You shrugged and the older one made a small, barely noticeable, hand movement which made the younger one lower his crossbow. You nodded at them, and the younger one's face relaxed from a scowl to just watch. He seemed the quiet one but you couldn't tell if that was because his companion was loud as all hell yet. How had walkers not come storming your way yet? Probably because they were eating the few survivors left in Atlanta.

"You got balls, sugar tits. Name's Merle, this asshole is my worthless baby brother Daryl," You frowned slightly at his brother's introduction, as did Daryl, shaking his head slightly. You gave him a small smile before turning to Merle. You had a feeling that he was gonna be trouble but the camp needed hunters. You grabbed your gun and adjusted your bag before you reluctantly walked towards them to take them back to camp.

"(Y/N), nice to meet you," You went to walk past them, but as you reached Merle's side and stopped "And Merle? Call me sugar tits again and I'll break your nose."

# Well, That Was An Understatement

## Chapter Notes

Canon Divergence  
Canon typical violence  
sexism  
implied/referenced abuse  
choking (And not in a good way)

Knowing Glenn was going into Atlanta with the others made you feel both better and worse. Glenn knew the city like the back of his hand (perks of being a pizza delivery guy), he'd keep them out of trouble. But, equally, Glenn always seemed to end up as live bait or putting his ass on the line. Merle going along didn't help either. Not only did you have to worry about him running his mouth and getting someone else killed, but you also got to stress about whether he'd be alive at the end of it. Merle was an asshole, and you'd both knocked each other on your asses more times than you could count. But, since you'd taken him and his little brother in, and fought damn hard for it too, he seemed to have both gained this mutual respect.

You knew everyone in camp was getting pissed off with yours and Daryl's constant bickering. Every damn thing that redneck asshole did rubbed you up the wrong way. He was always starting shit or making some smart-ass comment under his breath. Even then, he kept you protected from other people's shit, from Merle's when the bastard was too high to register who you were, all these months. It was only fair you did the same. He hated you, almost entirely, as you did him, but you were civil. When you weren't at each other's throats.

"Merle, I swear to god, you get anyone killed on this trip I will beat your ass into the ground, Daryl be damned," You snarled, tugging his arm when he tried to brush past you. He was high as hell, but thankfully, he'd yet to reach the point where he couldn't tell who you were. Yet, being the keyword. Merle narrowed his eyes as he looked down at you. "Everyone includes you, dickhead."

He smiled at you slightly, and rolled his eyes, opening his mouth to make some dumb commentary but you swatted his arm and walked away to say goodbye to Glenn. The stupid kid was gonna get himself killed putting himself on the line for the others.

"Glenn, come here asshat," You called, and Glenn turned around from where he was packing stuff into the car. Everyone was on edge after a transmission had come through the CB yesterday. Morales had the dumb idea of going on a mixed supply/rescue mission and for once, both you and Lori agreed that it was a dumb as shit idea. But, you were outvoted, and then forced to stay behind. Daryl had left for a hunt, so he wasn't there to beat some sense into his brother and believe hell you tried.



"What's wrong? You need to add to the list?" Glenn asked, looking slightly panicked. You just laughed and wrapped your arms around him and pulled him into a hug.

"Good luck, Sonic. You die, I kill you myself, got it?" You commanded as you pulled away, and Glenn let out a chuckle but nodded.

"Appreciate the reference. I'll be fine, (Y/N). Don't worry about me," He replied, shaking his head but he pulled you into another hug.

"Wouldn't have to worry if you didn't keep using yourself as human bait. Go on, Sonic. People are starting to get antsy."

A loud piercing siren interrupted the peace, or as close to peace as you could get in the zombie apocalypse. You were on edge, pacing, doing any little task to disguise your worry. They'd been gone way too long. Would they even be back? They said they were trapped. But that damn siren, that sounded way too much like the one you used to use for work, gave you a flicker of hope. It kept getting closer and closer, bouncing between the hills, and you could just hear Shane and Dale bickering like children about it as you walked over. A bright red car came barrelling along the road, combined with whooping and cheering and you came to stand with Carl as Lori went to Shane. He grabbed onto your hand tightly and squeezed and you squeezed back. He'd been the most worried, even if he tried to hide it by comforting and playing with Sophia.

Just as you suspected, Glenn's voice came out cheering as the car came to a stop and people started crowding him, Amy, Shane, Dale. You could see the annoyance on Glenn's face as they overwhelmed him until the siren finally shut off and you could hear Amy just repeating questions over and over and over until Glenn finally snapped out an answer. You'd never seen him so pissed off, and everyone knew he didn't mean to but it still took you by surprise. Finally, they backed off as a cube van pulled up behind them. Andrea came running out, pulling Amy into a tight hug, and you felt Carl squeeze your hand a little harder. You knelt beside him, placing your other hand on his shoulder to hug him. Seeing people reunite any time someone was on a run or away always got to Carl. Reminded him that he wouldn't get it with his dad. You missed Rick, that stupid bastard. He was your best friend, your brother, and you just wanted him back. But you had to hide that from Carl. He needed someone to lean on.

Lori put a hand on your back, indicating that she wanted to talk to her son and you nodded silently, placing a kiss on Carl's forehead before letting his mom take him. With free arms, you finally sprinted over to Glenn, who'd been bouncing slightly and yanked him towards you.

"Told you I'd be fine," He grinned against your shoulder, sounding almost as smug as Merle. You pulled away and swatted him playfully, to which he laughed and you fake glared.

"Cocky bastard. Spending too much time with Merle," You teased and the grin on Glenn's face dropped. Your eyebrows furrowed as a look of guilt flooded his features. What happened in Atlanta? Why did he look guilty? You looked over his shoulder and spun slightly but Glenn grabbed your shoulders to move you back to him. Where the hell was Merle?

"(Y/N), I need to tell you something-"

"Dad! Dad! Dad!"

Both you and Glenn jumped at the sound of Carl yelling, immediately being put on edge. Your heart was pounding, and you and Glenn jogged over to the others. Shouting was a very effective way to put you on guard, but y'know the apocalypse does that to you.

Wait.

Dad?

You came around the corner, somehow ending up by Shane's side just in time to see someone in a sheriffs uniform, eerily similar to the one you used to wear, tackling Carl to the ground in a tight hug. Rick. Holy shit. He was alive, that son of a bitch made it somehow. Your eyes fell to Shane, who had a look you could only describe as guilt, and you narrowed them, feeling anger starting to crawl under your skin. Shane had lied to you. To Lori. And worst of all, Carl. He'd told you Rick was dead. Had he left him behind? Rick stood up, bringing Lori into the hug, and you could see Carl gripping onto him so hard that his shirt scrunched. That alone made you smile, and temporarily forget the screaming fest you and Shane were going to get into later.

When Carl and Lori eventually let go, you were next in line to sweep your best friend into your arms. You probably held him much tighter than you needed to, but it felt like you'd blink and you'd wake up from a dream and he'd be gone again. But, no, he was there, holding onto you just as tight and he mumbled something over your shoulder to Shane, which made you stiffen unintentionally. Oh, you were definitely going to kill Shane later.

Glenn kept close to you while Rick told his story of waking up in the hospital after his coma to discover the world had ended, and the dead were walking. You couldn't possibly imagine going through that, and you only admired Rick more for making this far. Without Carl and Lori, and then eventually your people in the quarry, you probably wouldn't have had the strength to do it. It still felt like a dream, but the feeling of Shane's skin against your fist earlier was a reminder enough that you were definitely awake. And the pain and rage when you'd heard they'd left Merle on that rooftop like some fucking animal. Mele was a prick, sure, and he probably deserved to be handcuffed, but being left there? Accident or not it was inhumane. Glenn was watching you out of the corner of his eye as he saw your gaze lock on Shane's. Since he'd seen you and Shane come out of the woods, a shiner on Shane's eye and your knuckles bruised, he'd been going out of his way to keep you away from Shane. More for Carl, Sophia's and Carol's sake than anything else; when you'd told him what Shane had done, he'd told you that the cop needed more than just a punch to the eye. However, everyone's eyes shifted as Ed, that fuckhead that everyone hated, stood up and shoved another log onto the fire, causing it to rise above the stones you'd set around it.

"Hey, Ed, you want to rethink that log?" Shane called to the man as he collapsed back into his chair beside Carol and Sophia, who both flinched, making your eyes narrow.

"It's cold, man," Ed snapped and you scoffed quietly. Georgia was hardly cold, especially at the end of August. At least, it wasn't compared to up north, where you used to live. Those

winters were a killer, and that was before the world ended.

"The cold don't change the rules, does it? Keep our fires low, just embers so we can't be seen from a distance, right?" You explained, trying your hardest to keep your tone calm. Flipping the table wouldn't be a good idea right now.

"I don't take no orders from a woman. I said it's cold. You should mind your own business for once," Ed shot back, and both you and Shane rose from your seats. Both of your tempers were short enough at the minute as it was and you didn't miss the way Carl, Glenn and Amy shifted uncomfortably. Rick was just watching you both, clearly not expecting to see you working together, especially after the incident earlier. Shane stepped forward, knocking into your shoulder to which she glared at his back while he towered over Ed. Carol looked over to you, fear and worry in her eyes, and your heart squeezed slightly. She was real sweet, and she had something to her, some hardened core that had been beaten far down by Ed. Your eyes softened and you gave her a tiny reassuring nod, turning to smile slightly at Sophia.

"Hey, Ed... Are you sure you want to have this conversation, man?" Shane's question was spoken gently, but there was a hardened edge to it that made Ed pause before turning to glare at his wife.

"Go on. Pull the damn thing out. Go on!" Carol pulls the log out of the fire, wincing as the fire meets her fingers and your eyes narrowed at Ed. You noticed that while Ed had been having his mini argument, Carol and Sophia had managed to move their chairs away from him. You crouched down in front of them,

"Hey, Carol, Sophia, how are you two this evening?" You smiled, despite the anger still lingering from both Ed and Shane, and you reached out to squeeze Sophia's hand to which she smiled back. Carol was smiling too, but, as it often happened, it didn't meet her eyes.

"Fine. We're just fine. I'm sorry about the fire." She whispered. You immediately shook your head.

"No apology needed," With a glance to make sure Ed wasn't watching, and it turned out he was too busy having a staredown with Shane to notice, you then leant over to whisper in her ear "You and your girl are welcome in my tent if you need it. You have a good night, okay?"

Carol's face contorted like she was holding back tears "Thank you."

As you retook your place next to Glenn, who tried to give you a smile and cheer you up, and unfortunately, you could never resist. Since Glenn had saved yours and Andrea's ass on a run to Atlanta, and you had decided to bring him, he'd gravitated towards you. Especially since you kept him safe from Merle's racist rants. Glenn was just a ray of sunshine, who could be badass when he really wanted or needed to be, and when he tried to make you feel better, it worked 98% of the time.

"Have you given any thought to Daryl Dixon? He won't be happy to hear his brother was left behind," Dale asked, glancing over to you quickly only to look back at the dancing flames when he met your scowl.

"He's not the only one," You murmured, and T-Dog ducked his head, guiltily. You were pissed off at T-Dog, that was no damn secret, but you couldn't blame him, not really.

"I'll tell him. I dropped the key. It's on me. Rick: I cuffed him. That makes it mine," He said and Glenn leant back against the log you were sat in front of.

"Guys, it's not a competition. I don't mean to bring race into this, but it might sound better coming from a white guy," Glenn chipped in, and even you had to turn to him with a look of disagreement. Daryl was a complete asshat but he didn't have the same hate crime like tendencies as his brother. However, he was good at making someone ignorant comments under his breath. Okay, maybe Glenn had a choice.

"I did what I did. Hell if I'm gonna hide from him," T-Dog shot back.

"We could lie," Amy suggested, shifting slightly so she was out of Andrea's arms, but Andrea shook her head. For once, you agreed with Andrea saying no. That shit would go down like a lead balloon.

"Or tell the truth. Merle was out of control. Something had to be done or he'd have gotten us killed. Your husband did what was necessary. And if Merle got left behind, it is nobody's fault but Merle's,"

"And that's what we tell Daryl?" You hissed, eyebrows furrowed in annoyance and confusion. How could she possibly think telling Daryl that was a better solution than lying? That man had a temper shorter than Shane's.

"I don't see a rational discussion to be had from that, do you? Word to the wise. We're gonna have our hands full when he gets back from his hunt," Dale added, finally meeting your eyes again and you gave him a tiny nod.

Well. That was an understatement. When Daryl came storming back into camp, a string of squirrels in his hand, with most of the men trailing behind him as he called for Merle, you could see the disaster waiting to happen. The dread only continued to build when Shane strutted over, hand over his holster. You couldn't help but think he was about to prove his title of Mr Police Brutality.

"Daryl, just slow up a bit. I need to talk to you," Shane stated, the other hand on his hip. You rolled your eyes at him. He was acting like it was some stupid ass walker fashion show. Daryl turned around suddenly, making Shane jump ever so slightly.

"About what?" Daryl responded, and you met his eyes. He was trying to ask you what was going on since he knew Shane would take too long but you just nodded towards Shane. You'd let him explain. You'd love to see him get punched again.

"About Merle. There was a... There was a problem in Atlanta," Shane continued. Fucking hell, could he just hurry up?

"He dead?"

"We're not sure."

"He either is or he ain't" Daryl was just as impatient as you were, and hell you couldn't blame him. If you found out something had happened to Rick (well, technically you'd been there and it had been the same thing) or Glenn and Shane was acting all coy about information, you'd be pissed too.

"No easy way to say this, so I'll just say it," Rick started walking over, but Daryl immediately glared at him. Hell, you'd almost forgotten he didn't know about the Rick situation.

"Who are you?" He growled, and you saw the way his knuckles turned white because of how tightly he gripped the line of squirrels.

"Rick Grimes."

"Rick grimes, you got something you want to tell me?"

"Your brother was a danger to us all, so I handcuffed him on a roof, hooked him to a piece of metal. He's still there," Well, at least he didn't beat about to bush. But apparently, everyone felt the air ruffle as Daryl squared his shoulders.

"Hold on. Let me process this. You're saying you handcuffed my brother to a roof and you left him there?!" Carol flinched in the corner of your eye and you were about to step in when Rick nodded and Daryl pulled out a knife, lunging for him.

Immediately, Shane tackled him and Rick disarmed him. You huffed, really hoping Daryl could have gotten at least one hit in on Shane. You thought that was the end of it but Shane wrapped his arm around Daryl's neck. That was a step too far in your books, regardless of how much Daryl pissed you off. You were only giving him a pass this time because it was his brother. You glared at Shane as you charged forward, ignoring Lori's hand on your arm as she tried to stop you. Rick crouched in front of him like he was about to start talking but he didn't get the chance as you kicked the back of Shane's knee, the one Rick had told you he'd broken in high school, knowing it was much weaker. As expected, Shane folded in on himself like fucking origami and Daryl took the chance to break free, taking a deep breath in and unintentionally pushing Rick on his ass.

"Choke hold's illegal," Daryl huffed out and you couldn't stop yourself from laughing at that. Shane and Rick got up and while Rick looked as indifferent as always, Shane was looking at you like you'd just murdered his puppy.

"Back the fuck up, Shane. You may have gotten away with that bullshit before, but you will *not* get away with it here," You growled, stepping between Daryl and Shane every so slightly and Shane's expression only got darker.

"What I did was not on a whim. Your brother does not work and play well with others," Rick explained and you folded your arms over your chest. Even Daryl couldn't deny it and by the frustration on his face and his silence, you were right.

"It's not Rick's fault. I had the key. I dropped it," T-Dog admitted guilty, stepping out of the group and Daryl turned on him.

"You couldn't pick it up?" He snapped

"Well, I dropped it in a drain," T-Dog said, picking at the end of his shirt slightly.

"If it's supposed to make me feel better, it don't," Daryl snarled, but the malice in his voice was draining. That line between his rage and him hiding his emotions was a thin one and he was starting to cross it. You'd seen it once before, on a bad night after Daryl had had a nightmare that made you go over to the Dixon tent. Merle was on a hunt, so he couldn't take care of his brother, which you assumed (and hoped) he did. He didn't talk much, but he let you sit there with him. Civil, when you weren't at each other's throats.

"Well, maybe this will. Look, I chained the door to the roof... So the geeks couldn't get at him... With a padlock. It's gotta count for something," Daryl didn't respond to that for a minute, looking down. After a second, he scrubbed at his eyes furiously, but you didn't miss the stray tear that managed to escape his fist. Damn it, there was that squeeze again.

"Hell with all y'all! Just tell me where he is so that I can go get him."

You had been right. Dale's words were definitely an understatement.

# Nightmare

## Chapter Notes

Canon typical violence  
Canon divergence  
Language  
Alcohol consumption

\* \*

BIG PAST ATTEMPTED RAPE/NON-CON DESCRIPTION TW

\* \*

"Dixon! Hey, Daryl!" You called, speed walking to keep up with the redneck as he stomped away to the minicamp he and Merle had set up slightly away from the man camp. You'd been a little pissed off that they decided to keep their distance, which meant they were harder to keep track of, but Shane had been more than elated. Shane had made himself clear in his disdain for the two men, and he'd damn near burst a vessel screaming at you after you brought them back to camp.

"Fuck off. Don't need you fightin' my battles. Don't need yer pity neither," Daryl snarled, dropping his crossbow on the floor a bit too aggressively. His glare had fallen on you, but there was fear behind it. God, how long had it been since he'd had someone to talk to that wasn't Merle?

"I'm not trying to pity you, asshole. You act like you're the only one who cares about what happens to Merle but you're not! I'm on your side, even though you're acting like a child right now," You responded, jaw clenched. You were trying to keep your patience. Daryl was only lashing out because he was angry, and God knew he had every reason to be. But hell, he made it so difficult to be patient.

"Stop actin' like you give a shit about Merle! Yer just some pig bitch," He snapped back, turning to face you and pushing your shoulder lightly.

"Don't tell me I don't care about Merle. We both know your brother is an asshole, but he's saved my hide more than a few times, so step the fuck off," You said, glaring back now. "And I'm not a cop anymore. I'm just a survivor same as you."

Daryl kept your gaze for a minute, fire burning in them as his fists clenched, but eventually, he scoffed and turned around, storming into his tent.

"I need you here, (Y/N). Shane needs someone to keep him under control. You were always good at that," Rick stated, as Daryl, Glenn, T-Dog and Rick got ready to leave. You'd already given Glenn plenty of shit for agreeing to go, even though you know full well he was more than capable of saving their asses and himself. Daryl was steering clear of you, pissed off about your small argument from earlier in the morning. You felt like you were going to scream and the frustration was clearly obvious on your face by the way Rick narrowed his eyes at you.

"Rick, he's perfectly capable of leading on his own for a few hours!" You argued, waving your arm slightly in anger.

"No. Four is enough. If you won't do it for Shane, then I want you to watch over Lori and Carl. They need you," He said, and you huffed annoyed, knowing full well he was using that against you. They, particularly Carl, were your weak spot and with a sigh, you realised that he'd got you.

"Fine. But you keep Glenn safe. Make sure Dixon doesn't do anything stupid," You warned, narrowing your eyes, and Rick gave you a small smile, shaking his head.

"Nothing will happen to them."

But despite his words, you couldn't ignore the bad feeling sitting in your stomach as he walked over to the cube van that Dixon had started slamming the horn on.

Everything went so wrong so quickly, and now you were crowding Sophia, Carl and Carol towards the RV, as you shot walkers. You'd never seen so many outside of Atlanta, let alone anyone near the quarry. This was supposed to be safe. The kids were supposed to be safe. But here you were, dodging and shooting. Carol, Carl and Sophia scuttled into the van, with Jacqui, the Morales children and Lori, and you fell into the somewhat semi-circle outside with Shane, Dale and Jim, taking down walkers. There were too many, and the screaming and gunshots only pulled more out of the woods. However, just as you thought you were about to get surrounded, Rick, Glenn, Daryl and T-Dog came sprinting from the woods, guns blazing. Daryl's crossbow was thrown over his shoulder, and you didn't miss the small, but still noticeable gash on Glenn's shoulder. But while Daryl was busy taking out a walker that was too close to Morales, he'd missed one creeping upon him. It opened its jaws to take a chunk from his bare shoulder and you didn't hesitate to raise your gun, and a bullet landed right between its eyes. Daryl met your eyes and gave you a nod of respect while he finally lowered his own gun. The threat was gone for now, but you knew you couldn't stay here anymore. Carl came tumbling out of the van and embraced his father, while Glenn ran over to hug you, and by how tightly he was gripping your shirt, you knew something had gone south in Atlanta. Well, you knew that from the minute they arrived based purely on the fact that Merle wasn't with them. But if someone hurt Glenn, they were going to feel your wrath.

Daryl was the one that found you. You knew going out here was stupid, especially on your own, when no one knew where you were. But you just needed to be away from the others. Your nightmare hadn't been that vivid since you were a teenager. Why now? It was like you could feel it all over again. His hands all over you, and his hand over your mouth, while you struggled against him. The nightmares faded over time, they still happened, but they faded until that night. Maybe it was what had happened at camp, or just a bad twist of your brain,



but either way, it led you to sit on a rock down by the water, watching the approaching sunrise over the trees. You'd heard his footsteps long before he sat next to you, and you knew for a fact that he'd done it on purpose because that dude was a ninja when he wanted to be. He slumped next to you, and for a while neither of you said anything. Just wallow in each others company and the upcoming sunrise.

"Y'alrigh'?" He finally asked, but his eyes didn't move from the skyline and you sighed quietly. Your hair was still standing on edge from the sudden awakening, despite it being more than an hour ago at least by now.

"I will be. Just a nightmare," You replied, and Daryl's head tilted towards you, so you turned slightly to meet his eyes. His stare would have been intimidating weeks ago, but now you were used to the intensity of the Dixon stare.

"Wanna talk 'bout it?" By the expression on his face, he caught your look of reluctance. You'd never really told anyone about it besides Rick, Lori and Glenn. And Glenn didn't even know the full story yet. Dixon could use it against you. But he didn't seem like the type.

"I lived with my brother when I was a kid. He was 13 years older than me, and he had his asshole buddies around all the time. They'd just let themselves in, sometimes when my brother wasn't even home. I hated them. They were loud-mouth, sexist creeps, so I just stayed in my room," You started to explain after a pregnant pause and by the way, Daryl's shoulders tensed slightly, you knew he could guess where you were going. Your skin felt too tight, and you could feel those ghostly hands on your hips again. Shaking your head, you tried to ignore the feeling as you continued. " When I was fourteen, my brother was having a party and one of his friends managed to sneak into my room."

"Ya don't have to tell me if ya don't wanna," Daryl stated, eyes full of concern, sympathy and anger and while you desperately wanted to stop, because saying the words out loud made it feel like you were back in that dingy old room, somehow you trusted Daryl with it.

"I woke up to his hands trailing over me, and when I tried to fight back and scream, he pressed one hand to my mouth and held my hips in place with the other. He kept telling me how good I'd feel and how he was glad he could finally get what he wanted while he groped my chest. My brother came in just before he managed to get my shirt off, threatened to kill him. Only good thing that bastard did for me. Nightmares happen all the time, but it hasn't been that vivid in years," Daryl didn't say anything for a few minutes, and you tore your eyes away, choosing to watch the sun in the water. Words couldn't quite describe how you were feeling. Dale had been right. Words are meagre things.

"Hope he's dead. Yer brother shoulda killed him right there. I woulda," Daryl grumbled, and you didn't miss the rage making his voice tremble slightly.

"If he's alive, he'd probably be in Virginia. And it's not like I'm going back there any time soon," You replied, trying to lighten the mood slightly, but that wasn't a conversation you could easily come back from. And you both knew it.

"I'm here if ya need it," he said and turned back to the sun which had already risen and transformed to that early morning sun. "C'mon, people be risin' now. Gotta get back."

Burying the bodies of your people was a lot faster with the holes Jim had dug yesterday. The walkers had gotten him, but Rick was holding out hope for the CDC, but even though you knew it was most likely a pipe dream, you couldn't help but hope with him. You didn't know Jim all that well, but he seemed sweet. Didn't deserve to go out like that. The only good thing the walkers had done was get rid of Carol's abusive husband. Carol had taken the pickaxe from Daryl and brought it down on Ed's head herself and you shared a concerned but mildly impressed look with Daryl. How you'd ended up in the truck with Daryl was beyond you, but anything was better than being in the car with Mr Police Brutality. Thankfully, Daryl didn't say much about your confession. Hell, neither of you said much at all. He'd explained what happened when they got to Atlanta, you'd apologised and the rest of the journey was just silent. Not that either of you minded. It was better than being at each other's throats.

You didn't trust Jenner. Something was off about him, but you couldn't place what it was. Neither you nor Carol were exactly happy about finding out you were underground either. Claustrophobia was a bitch. Especially in the apocalypse apparently. Glenn and Rick were hovering, and while they meant it to be kind, it only made you feel more trapped. You were trying your hardest not to think too hard about it, and they were definitely making it difficult. But you couldn't deny how good it felt to get a good drink, laughing with your friends and family. You were wedged firmly between Glenn and Lori and while part of you knew drinking wasn't the smartest plan, seeing everyone so happy for the first time in who knew how long made it worth it.

"You know, in Italy, children have a little bit of wine with dinner. And in France," Dale was already pouring the wine into Carl's cup and immediately Lori put her hand over his cup

"Well, when Carl is in Italy or France, he can have some then," Lori responded, chuckling and you saw T-Dog's grin widen in amusement. And Shane was watching them, with a strange look in his eyes that meant nothing good.

"What's it gonna hurt? Come on," Rick nudged and with a small roll of her eyes, Lori removed her hand from Carl's cup. The room went silent as he took a sip and you were the first to burst out laughing when he pulled a face of disgust. "That's my boy."

"Well, just stick to sour pop there, bud," You reached over Lori to tap his nose, which he scrunched and stuck his tongue out playfully. Daryl snuck around you to place a hand on Glenn's shoulder.

"Not you, Glenn. Keep drinkin' little man. I wanna see how red yer face can get," He said, refilling Glenn's glass and you laughed as Glenn shook his head. You met Daryl's eye as he went to return to his chair, and his lips quirked up into a half-smile.

Maybe this wasn't so bad. Maybe you'd be okay.

Maybe.

# Doesn't Take an Idiot

## Chapter Notes

Minor/somewhat major character death  
Canon typical violence  
ATTEMPTED RAPE/NON-CON  
referenced past character death  
Mention of vomit

You let out a sigh as the heavenly feeling of hot water on your skin. God, how long had it been since you's had a shower? Honestly, you didn't want to think about it. The warmth of the shower seemed to form a cocoon around you and you wished you could just stay there forever. Alas, it was becoming an increasing concern that the others still needed the water, so when the water ran clear you finally stepped out. After redressing in your (mostly clean) clothes, you moved to open the door, only to find Shane already half opening it. For a split second, you thought it had been a mistake, and you expected him to scuttle out like he didn't know you were in there. But he just stopped and stared. His eyes raked over you in a way that made your skin crawl.

"Showers free, Walsh," You said, quickly moving to walk out the door but Shane caught your arm in a vice-like grip making you wince. Oh yeah, that was going to bruise in the morning. With his foot, he pushed the door shut and you felt your heart start pounding as nerves wormed their way up to your spine. Shane's eyes were dark, his pupils blown, and it was more than obvious that he was drunk. And as you'd learnt over the years of working together and a broken jaw, drunk Shane meant nothing good. "Shane, let go of me."

"The hell is wrong with you women? I saved you and Lori when y'all were too scared to move your asses! Both of y'all should be on your knees thankin' me," Shane growled and you tried to pull your arm away, however that only seemed to piss him off and you were shoved into the nearby wall. He leant closer and, just as you suspected, there was whiskey on his breath. You knew that scientist giving your group alcohol was a bad idea.

"Walsh, let go of me or I will break your nose," You warned quietly and Shane chuckled. Fuck.

"But`darlin' what if I don't want to? You owe me," With that, he buried his face in your neck, teeth digging in hard enough to draw blood and when you opened your mouth to scream or shout, he slammed a hand over your mouth. Your hands shoved against him desperately, scratching lines down his arm with your dull nails as your muffled protests and shouts vibrated against his hand "Stop fightin' me!"

He'd managed to pull your jacket off and started to unbutton your shirt when you finally managed to shift enough to sink your teeth into his hand. A warm, metallic taste entered your mouth as Shane let out a loud curse of pain. You then slammed your head into his nose. He let go for a split second, shouting out again, and that was all you needed to bolt out of the door, shirt still unbuttoned and jacket hanging from your shoulder when you ran straight into someone.

They stumbled back but caught your arms to steady you but instinctively, and still fueled by panic, you tried to push them away until you finally caught a look at them. You met Glenn's worried eyes and you could only imagine what you looked like as you relaxed in the safety of your best friend. It was just Glenn. Glenn was safe. You were safe. He opened his mouth to speak when Shane came storming out of the bathroom, door slamming hard behind him, practically seething, and Glenn seemed to understand immediately. He sobered within a second and pushed you behind him ever so slightly. Shane scoffed, shaking his head, which made him flinch due to the number you'd done to his nose. When Shane turned around and wandered down the hall, you noticed bleeding marks on his neck, as well as the ones you'd gifted on his arm. You didn't even want to know where he'd gotten them from, but you'd been a cop long enough to assume you hadn't been the only one Shane had tried that on that night. Vomit rose in the back of your throat at the thought, but you pushed it away as Glenn spun back around. He gently took your arms, forcing your gaze away from the threat. Your heart was still running a marathon, a vice on your lungs and nerves turned your stomach into tight knots.

"Do you want to stay with me?" Glenn offered, worried eyes meeting your own and you finally allowed yourself to take a deep breath, fighting that vice, and calm your heartbeat before you nodded and without another word, he slipped his hand into yours and carefully tugged you to his room.

Even with the comforting presence of Glenn beside you, sleep didn't come easy. You got maybe two hours tops, unable to stop glancing at the door. What if you went to sleep and Shane came in? Or walkers managed to slip past the defences? Hell, somewhere near 4 am, you even started wondering if your brother, or Shawn, his pervy friend, would waltz in. Though, your brain did let you rationalise that one. Glenn woke up not long after you gave up trying and let out a small groan which only made you laugh. You sometimes forgot how young he was, despite his baby face but his lightweight nature served as a perfect reminder. It reflected in the way he flinched and screwed his eyes shut as the lights automatically turned on. After a few minutes of childish whining and groaning, you coaxed him to join you in having breakfast. In all honesty, you'd much rather stay in your room, to avoid Shane and the pit that had been building in the pit of your stomach all night deepened at the thought alone. But he couldn't win. You wouldn't let him. You wouldn't give him the satisfaction.

You placed a glass of water in front of Glenn with some pills Jenner had given you while T-Dog placed a plate of eggs in front of him.

"Don't ever let me drink again," Glenn groaned into his arms, barely moving his head to shovel in some food. You smiled as the others laughed, though it dropped when you met Shane's eyes in passing.

"The hell happened to you? Look like you got your ass handed to you on a silver platter," T-Dog asked when Shane came to sit at the table. Shane cast his eyes down to his food and took a sip, and all eyes fell to him. You watched carefully, as did Glenn, despite his squinting in the light.

"Must've done it in my sleep. Banged my nose getting out of my car yesterday, bruise must've caught up to me," You'd learnt pretty quickly that Shane was a terrible liar. The only reason he got away with half the shit he did on the job was the charm, definitely not his lying abilities.

"Never seen you do that before," Rick commented and neither he, not you and Glenn, missed how Shane's shoulders tensed slightly before he played it off as a roll.

"Me neither. Not like me at all," His eyes turned to Lori, and it clicked. That's where the scratches on his neck came from. That feeling of wanting to be sick rose again, but once again you pushed it down, electing to go get some more water instead. Jenner came in, like a miracle, and defused the tension, muttering a quiet 'morning' under his breath.

After questioning from Dale and Andrea, he leads your group to the main computer area you'd first entered yesterday. Daryl, Carol and Sophia came out of hiding by that point and while Carol greeted you with a pleasant smile, and Sophia a hug, Daryl just watched you.

Daryl wasn't an idiot. Despite what everyone said about him, he saw everything. And he noticed how the bite mark that peaked from underneath your (actually Glenn's - you'd snatched it when he wasn't looking) jacket the second you entered the room. He saw how you shifted away from Shane thought he was sat on the other end of the table. Noticed how you gravitated towards him, Rick and Glenn. Saw the scratches on Shane's neck and arms, the bandage around his hand and the killer bruise on his nose that he knew meant it was broken. Noticed how Shane refused to meet your eyes. Saw how Glenn put himself between you and Shane at all times. It didn't take an idiot to figure out that something had happened between you and Shane. And it didn't take an idiot to figure out what that 'something' was. And that it was nothing good. Never was when Shane was involved, it seemed.

The monitor lit up, a video of, what you assumed was, a PET scan and your eyebrows furrowed in confusion. Daryl crossed his arms beside you, and Glenn leant on the console on your other side.

"What are those lights?" Shane questioned, and you watched as the brain flashed and glittered with specks of light.

"It's a person's life...experiences, memories. It's everything. Somewhere in all that organic wiring, all those ripples of light are you... the thing that makes you unique. And human," It sounded almost poetic, and Jenner spoke with such tenderness that you had a creeping suspicion that this was going to go south really soon. The way he spoke made it sound like he had a connection. And that could potentially make him a loose wire.

"You don't make sense ever?" Daryl asked, sounding confused out of his mind and you let out a tiny snort, to which Daryl glared down at you but you just smiled back. The confusion on his face was just too rich.

"Those are synapses, electric impulses in the brain that carry all the messages. They determine everything a person says does or thinks from the moment of birth to the moment of death," Jenner explained and his eyes turned to the screen. Your smile turned to a frown. There was pain etching the edge of his voice. He'd lost someone. Hadn't you all?

"Death? That's what this is, a vigil?" You piped in, and Jenner's eyes didn't move.

"Yes. Or rather the playback of a vigil."

"This person died? Who?" Andrea asked. Part of you forgotten just what she'd lost. You'd forgotten that not everyone had the shitty relationship with their sibling as you had with your brother. Amy and Andrea had been close in the end. To Andrea, she'd lost her everything.

"Test Subject 19. Someone who was bitten and infected. And volunteered to have us record the process. Vi, scan forward to the first event," Vi whizzed the footage forward at Jenner's command and the lights had started to darken, turning black. Tainting their beauty.

"What is that?" Glenn asked, eyes wide.

"It invades the brain like meningitis. The adrenal glands haemorrhage, the brain goes into shutdown, then the major organs. Then death. Everything you ever were or ever will be. Gone," Jenner answered, and you felt an unease start to settle in the room. The test subject in the video coughed silently as the darkness spread further and further into the brain until it was almost entirely black. Then the whole brain faded away into the pitch black and the test subject stopped moving. They were gone.

"Is that what happened to Jim?" Sophia questioned innocently, looking up to her mother, who was stood beside Daryl, and Carol nodded. Andrea turned away and Lori moved to her side, while Carl wandered over to you. You wrapped your arms in an x shape over his shoulders and chest, holding him close. He needed the comfort. Jim had been sweet. You hadn't really spoken to him much, but that didn't make his loss any less painful. Or Amy's.

"She lost someone two days ago. Her sister," Lori explained to Jenner's concerned glances. Jenner walked over to her, a look of understanding replacing the concern. But something still wasn't sitting well with you about this guy. He'd shown all of you unnecessary kindness, and yet you couldn't deny the feeling that he was hiding something. It unsettled you.

"I lost someone too. I know how devastating it is. Scan to the second event," The monitor changed again and Andrea's tearful eyes turned back to the screen, appreciating the tiny distraction. "The resurrection times vary wildly. We had reports of it happening in as little as three minutes. The longest we heard of was eight hours. In the case of this patient, it was two hours, one minute... Seven seconds."

The light's started to flicker again but instead of white light, it was a sickly orange light, that only stuck to the bottom end of the brain, rather than branching out. Carl pressed further into your arms, and you felt knives stabbing into you when you looked over to Shane. He was looking at you with an expression that only read murder but he looked away with a puff of his cheeks. That pit of nerves twisted in your stomach again, but you looked back to the monitor, squeezing Carl lightly.

"It restarts the brain?" Lori's voice bordered on amazement and you couldn't lie and say you weren't feeling the same. If the whole brain restarted, they could evolve and develop, maybe even change back, right?

The thought seemed so pointless now. What did it matter if you were going to die here? You couldn't breathe, couldn't get your lungs to actually fucking *work*, and your nails were digging into your palm so deep, you could feel the slickness of blood. The world around you faded to white noise, and while you could hear people shouting you couldn't pick apart what they were saying. Everything felt too tight. Walls were closing in around you, and the hands holding onto your shoulders did nothing to help. Of course, that would be your fate. To die in such a way that you feared. The bomb itself, or whatever it was - you'd been too busy failing to fight a panic attack to really take in the words, didn't scare you. Being stuck underground, with no access to outside, trapped with the fire that would tear you apart, making your heart pound harder, to the point where you thought it was going to break through your ribs.

There was a distant sound of clanging, but you found it hard to tell if that was the warning bells in your head or actually happening around you. What you could tell, however, was when the room quietened down because your brain got slightly less muffled, and it became easier to tell the difference between your head and the world. It got real quiet, despite your gasps and wheezing and suddenly your arms were getting yanked up as someone spoke, but you kept your eyes squeezed shut and pushed against them as panic strike down your back. A sharp slap to your cheek made you jerk away and apparently snapped you out of your frenzy, if only temporarily.

"C'mon, woman, we gotta go!" Daryl's southern drawl flowed into your ears and he dragged you down the corridor as you tried to take gulps of air to fight the burning sensation in your chest. You reached the rest of the group, just in time for Rick to scream at you to duck, and Daryl tugged you down, using his body to cover yours. An almost unbearable heat and a loud bang made your ears scream, a high pitched ring vibrating through your ears, but you barely had time to dwell on it as you were forced outside. Finally, after what felt like an eternity, your brain seemed to clear from the previous panic and you kicked your own ass into gear, racing towards Daryl's van, taking down walkers along the way. Both you and Dixon clambered inside, and once again he pushed you down, slamming the door shut just in time as an explosion shook the van, rocking it slightly, and that unpleasant heat returned tenfold. With a deep breath, you peeked over the dashboard, seeing the charred remains of the CDC laying in the ash, as well as Dale and Andrea, rushing to the RV on shaky legs. Had they tried to stay behind? Gotten stuck? Hell, it didn't matter now. You were alive.

# She'll Be Fine

## Chapter Notes

- canon divergence
- canon typical violence
- reference of suicide
- mention of past child abuse/neglect
- mention of past attempted rape/non-con

In the whole two days you spent travelling, Daryl didn't try and talk to you besides what was necessary. But that didn't stop him from watching. You knew he was probably pissed about the CDC, having to save your ass, and for some reason the idea of him being angry at you made you feel anxious. It wasn't like you hadn't spent most of the time at camp at each other's throats. What was wrong with you? Why did it make you feel shitty now? Dumb fucking emotions. His silence definitely made the car journey awkward, but you still didn't have the energy to try and fix it. After his somewhat cold shoulder, he finally turned to you, when Rick had finished talking over the radio.

"What the hell happened back there?" Daryl questioned, and even he winced at the harshness of his question but narrowed his eyes at you all the same. He knew what a panic attack was, you'd had to talk him out of one after a nightmare. It had been a long time since you'd broken down like that. It didn't happen after Rick got shot; when walkers attacked the quarry; when you got stuck in Atlanta one day with Merle and T-Dog (an absolutely *great* combination as you'd discovered), not even when you got attacked on the job. You couldn't exactly blame him for the question.

"Claustrophobia is a bitch," You responded, partly joking but Daryl's frown only deepened. "C'mon, Dixon, we did just get told we were gonna die."

"Ain't never seen ya like that before," He stated, not bothering to be subtle in his poking. His words were valid, but you couldn't help frustration from seeping in, though not at him. Moments like that in the CDC, where you nearly got people killed helping you? It just served as a reminder of everything your brother had done and just how much it had fucked with you. You thought you had been over it. And the fact that you hadn't only pissed you off more. You should be over it, why weren't you? Years had passed, you'd come to terms with what had happened. Your brother couldn't bother you anymore, so why weren't you over it.

"Never been threatened with a bomb before," You answered watching a tiny cluster of walkers fly past the window and Daryl released a huff.

"Not even as a cop?" He looked back to you when you snorted, looking like a deer in headlights.



"Christ, Dixon! I worked in King's County. How many serial bombers do you think there are there?" Daryl shook his head at you but you caught his lips twitching upwards as he turned back to the road and your grin grew. There was a loud beep from behind that pulled you to a stop. You and Daryl clambered out of the truck, as people started piling out the RV behind you and Shane appeared from his car. You tensed slightly when he started approaching you, Daryl and T-Dog, who'd wandered over to you two for some reason, but you willed away the rising anxiety in your veins with a small gulp. Daryl eyed you over his shoulder but didn't say anything, though how his expression told you he wanted to. Rick pulled up in the little honda, Lori, Carl, Sophia and Carol stepping out once it stopped followed by Rick who walked over to Shane with confused eyes.

"Run outta gas. Need to climb in one of y'all cars," Shane stated, and though he was talking to Dale and Daryl, his eyes fixed on you, expressed exactly which car he wanted to be in. You held his gaze with a glare, determined not to back down and you saw frustration build behind his eyes.

"You can come in the RV with us, right Dale?" Though Andrea's question came from a place of less than appropriate ambition, you silently thanked her and relief flooded through you. Dale hesitated before nodding, moving to check the engine since that thing kept breaking every two seconds.

"RV's near outta gas too. Gotta siphon some out of one of the cars," T-Dog added and Daryl turned to him before glancing at Merle's bike.

"Take the truck. Me and (Y/N)'ll use the bike. Uses less gas, lasts longer," He said and you narrowed your eyes.

"There's no way you're getting me on that thing," You stated, folding your arms and Daryl looked over at you with a vague look of amusement

"What's the matter? Ya scared of a bike?" He teased, chuckling when you shoved his shoulder lightly.

"Shut up. Don't trust your driving," You shot back and Daryl shook his head with a small smile but you knew he'd made his decision and you'd either have to cramp in the RV with Shane or ride the death bike with Daryl. In terms of sharing the RV, you weren't even sure that Glenn would let you, not that you would ever want to. You'd rather slit your own wrists.

Being back on a bike was definitely an experience. On the one hand, the last time you'd been on a bike was with your brother, when he'd left you on the side of the road when you complained. Despite Daryl's presence, a twinge of anxiety knotted your stomach, though you knew he'd never abandon you as your brother had. And you couldn't deny how nice it felt to be close to Daryl, even if it meant you were clinging to him like you'd fall off the bike at any second. Should it feel good to be this close to the man whose throat you'd constantly been at recently? Probably not, but it was the apocalypse, and any human affection felt more important now. It wasn't anything more than that.

"Get down!" You exclaimed in a hushed whisper, grabbing Glenn by the scruff of his shirt and tugging him under the car with you. What you'd thought was just two or three walkers in

this desolate car graveyard the RV had broken down in had turned out to be what you could only describe as a herd. Your heart was hammering and your breath got caught in your chest. Glenn was letting out shaky gasps beside you, attempting to quieten his breathing. He held your hand like you were his lifeline and when you looked away from the rotten shuffling to him, you saw the terror. He was shaking like a leaf and you squeezed his hand tightly, a silent reassurance. He was just a kid still, really. He should still be in Atlanta, delivering pizzas and using fake IDs and partying or whatever the hell he did before everything. The all too familiar stench of death and decay brought tears to your eyes as you both resisted the urge to gag. Time seemed to stretch, and you had no idea how long you'd been there with Glenn clinging to you like a little kid. Eventually, the groaning and growling faded until just the stragglers remained but you stayed until you heard a high-pitched yelp and the rustling of grass, like someone running.

Despite the shaking of your hands, you managed to peel Glenn away, though he tried to pull you back, and crawled out from under the car. You were met with the sight of your group clustered around the dip down to the woods. Lori was holding onto Carol rightly as she sobbed and you felt your heart drop. You jogged over, Glenn shakily following behind but you saw no sign of Rick or Sophia. As soon as he saw you, Carl sprinted to you, nearly knocking you over with the force of his hug and you lifted him up like a toddler. His legs wormed around your stomach and his arms wound around your neck, like a koala. Something was wrong.

"What's going on?" You asked, holding Carl a little tighter and Andrea looked over her shoulder, her face and neck covered in dark walker blood, with a half glare which only confused you more. Glenn placed a hand on your back as he passed you to stand with Dale and T-Dog, who had a hastily wrapped bandage around his arm.

"Sophia ran into the forest with two walkers on her tail. Rick's gone in after her," Lori said and Carol let out another sob in her arms and your blood ran cold. Immediately, you walked over to Shane, who watched in you in surprise, and you tried to ignore the creeping sensation up your spine

"Take Carl, I'm going after them," You demanded, trying to pass Carl over to his 'uncle' but Shane shook his head, one hand on his hip.

"Nah, you're staying right here. We all are. Can't risk losing anyone else in the woods," Shane replied, using the cop tone you knew too well and cold blood turned hot. You glared at him, which he returned immediately, in that famous Mr Police Brutality look.

"We can't let him go alone!" You snapped. Shane took a step forward and alarm bells started blaring in your head, causing you to step back. Carl's fingers dug into the back of your shirt a little tighter and you hesitantly looked down at him.

"Don't leave, Aunt (Y/N). Please," He begged and your shoulders slackened. You couldn't leave him like this. He was scared for his dad and his best friend. Someone had to be there for him.

"Alright, kiddo. I'm here," You kissed his forehead before Carl buried his head into your shoulder again. Lori gave you an appreciative look as she guided Carol to the RV and tried to

reassure the poor mother. When Shane finally left to talk to Dale and T-Dog (though not before he gave you a long look that made your skin crawl), Daryl stalked over, with narrowed eyes.

"Are you fuckin' insane?" Daryl snarled, body tense and fire dancing in his eyes. You returned his annoyed look, readjusting Carl slightly.

"Watch your mouth," You warned, looking down to Carl with a pointed look.

"Ya coulda been killed tryin' to get that kid!" He shot back, gesturing to Glenn with a wave of his arm.

"The same way you put your ass on the line to help T-Dog?" Daryl visibly ruffled at that, and if he were a cartoon there'd be smoke coming out of his ears. "Why do you care, Dixon?"

"Ain't no point in losing two people, s'all," He replied, tone lowered considerably, which made you slightly suspicious and you narrowed your eyes as he looked away.

"We're not losing Glenn," You said sharply, much sharper than you intended and you saw Daryl clench his jaw, mumbling under his breath. With a swift punch to the car beside him, which made you jump lightly, he turned and stormed back to the rest of the group. You let out a huff of frustration and walked over to the car Rick and Lori had been using, opening the door. Carl let out a whimper when you started to unravel his limbs for your body, but he let you sit him down on the backseat of the car. You crouched down in front of him, taking his hand, which he squeezed tightly.

"What's going on in that head of yours, kid?" You asked softly, and Carl's eyes welled with fresh tears, which you quickly wiped away with your free hand. He leant into your hand on his cheek and you felt your heart crack.

"I should've stopped her. Sophia was next to me," Carl stated, bordering on a sob, and you placed a hand to the back of the boys head, pulling him to your chest.

"Don't do that, kid. It ain't your fault. There was nothing you could've done and even if there was, I would never want you risking your life," You whispered, holding him tightly and he shook his head against your chest.

"Will Dad find her?" He asked, and you stopped. The world was dangerous for kids on their own before, but now? She barely stood a chance. If those walkers got to her first...

"Of course he will, kiddo. Your dad and I had to deal with missing kids all the time before, and he always found them and got them home. Sophia will be fine."

Wouldn't she?

# Walker Guts

## Chapter Notes

canon typical violence/gore  
canon divergence  
referenced/implied past attempted rape/non-con#  
Shane is a dick

It was about an hour later when Rick came back, calling on you, Glenn, Daryl and Shane for assistance. A pit rose in your stomach upon the realisation that Rick was alone. And there was that little voice. The one who nagged, poked, prodded, with the thoughts you didn't want to consider. Sophia was just a little girl. She had no chance of surviving out there before the apocalypse, let alone now that the humans were eating their own. Carol had fallen asleep somewhere between Rick leaving and coming back, and you thanked whatever was up there that you didn't have to be there when someone broke the news to her. Lori kept Carl distracted so that you could make a quick getaway, but you knew the kid would be glued to you as soon as you got back.

"You're sure this is exactly where you left her?" You asked, jeans sticking to your shins as you stepped through the shallow water. As you ducked down to look under a collection of roots, Daryl dropped down from the bank into the water beside you, making it splash onto you. You shot him a glare but he just rolled his eyes, coming over to investigate the overhang.

"I left her right here. I drew the walkers away off in that direction, up the creek," Rick responded, pointing upstream. Shane was still on the bank, searching for footprints or any clue of where Sophia had gone and you stepped beside Rick to put a hand on his shoulder. He physically relaxed ever so slightly, but there was still the beginning of a panicked frenzy dancing in his eyes.

"Without a paddle - that seems where we've landed," Daryl commented, walking beside you and Rick when Rick started to pace the opposite direction towards Shane.

"She was gone by the time I got back here. I figured she just took off and ran back to the group. I told her 'run that way and keep the sun on her left shoulder,'"

"Hey, short round, why don't you step off to one side? You're mucking up the trail," Daryl snapped at Glenn. Glenn's eyebrows furrowed slightly as he looked to you and upon your nod, he moved over to the side, holding his gun a little tighter.

"Assumin' she knows her left from her right," Shane leant down to be closer to Rick and your body automatically took half a step back, which didn't go unnoticed by Daryl and Glenn.

"Shane, she understood me just fine," Rick snapped back. With a small sigh of defeat, you folded your arms and turned to Rick.

"Hate to say it, but he's right. Sophia was tired and scared," Rick turned his eyes to you, incredulously. He knew he was fucked when you and Shane started to side together.

"She had her a close call with two walkers. I'm kinda wonderin' how much of what you said stuck," Shane added and Rick shook his head lightly. You'd barely noticed that Daryl had wandered away slightly until his voice sounded from behind you.

"We've got clear prints right here. She did like you said, headed back to the highway. Let's spread out, make out way back," He explained before using one of the looming branches to pull himself back to the bank. After shoving his crossbow on his back and getting his footing, he leant forward and extended his hand to you. You gave him a small, appreciative smile and grabbed his hand, letting him help you up.

"Thanks, Dixon," You murmured while Rick started talking to Shane but he just shrugged.

"Ain't nothin'," Daryl said as you copied his previous actions to help Glenn up. Glenn nodded at you briefly before walking ahead to Shane and Rick who had already gone storming ahead. Y'know, without the guy who could actually track. You glanced at Daryl before jogging to the others, Daryl taking the lead so that he could continue searching for footsteps. It wasn't long after that he found some more, shooting an annoyed glance over his shoulder at Rick and Shane's bickering.

"She was doing just fine till right here. All she had to do was keep going. She veered off that way," He pointed to the right, opposite the direction of the highway and you shared a look with Glenn. Something told you her chance of survival had gone from low to slim.

"Why would she do that?" Glenn asked. You turned suddenly when a twig snapped nearby, too far away to see anything, but close enough to let you know you were on limited time.

"Maybe she saw something that spooked her, made her run off," Daryl explained, standing back up, trying to follow the footprints, without turning around, you tilted your head over your shoulder towards him.

"A walker? Might be some stragglers from the herd," You offered but Daryl shook his head.

"Don't see any other footprints. Just hers," He said as Shane ran a hand down his face.

"So what do we do? All of us press on?" Shane asked, and while he may have sounded somewhat curious, there was an edge of frustration, like he was already sick of searching.

You wouldn't put it past him - there was a reason he was never sent on missing children jobs with you and Rick.

"No, better if you and Glenn get back up to the highway. People are gonna start panicking. Let them know we're on her trail doing everything we can. But most of all, keep everybody calm," Rick directed, and Shane's eyes narrowed immediately

"You don't want me to bring (Y/N)?"

"No, she's better here. She can keep an eye on walkers while Rick and Daryl search for footprints," Glenn said, much too quickly for it to be casual. Great, a white knight routine.

You'd be lying if you said you didn't appreciate it if it kept you away from Shane.

Said man let out a long sigh before shaking his head sharply and looking back to Rick.

"I'll keep 'em busy scavenging cars. Think up a few other chores. I'll keep 'em occupied. Come on," He gave a small gesture to Glenn and took off, without checking if he'd followed. Glenn instead came to your side and pulled you into a quick hug, telling you to be safe, before he followed after Shane.

Well, digging out a walker's stomach and cutting it up to see what it had eaten wasn't something you'd put on your bucket list. Though from the dark, drying blood on your hands and splatters on your shirt, it had definitely happened. You still hadn't gotten the smell out of your nose. The smell of rotting, death and decay seemed to linger for hours after your last encounter with a walker. But the only positive outcome from your further search had been that the walker you'd cut up hadn't eaten Sophia, though that wasn't to say another one hadn't.

No, fuck, you couldn't keep thinking like that. Take each small victory as it came.

Regardless, returning to the highway Sophia-less, while Carol came running to the barriers wasn't a journey you wanted to ever have to take. The look of heartbreak on her face nearly sent you 180 back into the woods. If it weren't for Carl jumping over the barrier to grab you into a tight hug, you might've. But, you had to be realistic, the trail went cold, it was nearing dark and Carl needed you here.

You trusted Rick and Daryl to explain to Carol as you climbed over the barrier, taking Carl by the hand so you could find Glenn without dragging him. Rick gave you a quick nod as you raised a hand in thanks.

"How're you doin', kid?" You asked quietly once you were away from the small cluster at the barrier. While on the road and in the quarry, sometimes you'd get the most honest answers from him when you were away from the ears of his mother and father, or the people who'd tell them what he'd said. Carl let out a small sigh as he looked up at you, squinting slightly in the setting sun.

"I'm doing a little better, I guess. I still wish that I could've done something to stop her," He mumbled and you stopped, letting go of his hand to crouch in front of him and putting a hand on his shoulder.

"Carl, listen to me. I'm glad you stayed where you were. What do you think would've happened if you'd gone out to help her? With all those walkers around?" You asked, and while it sounded much harsher than you'd intended, it clearly got the point across.

"I could've gotten hurt," He replied, glancing away from your eyes until you put a hand on his cheek to bring his gaze back.

"That's right. That doesn't mean you can't feel guilty, hell, you'll probably feel guilty for a long time - that's just human nature. It means you care for her very much. But it's not your fault. There's very little *any* of us could've done to stop her running into the woods, much less with the two walkers on her heels" You said, running a thumb over a new tear that had formed and escaped "I love you too much to let you go running into danger, kid."

"I love you too, Aunt (Y/N)," Carl gave you a small smile before wrapping his arms around your neck, and you hugged him back just as tightly. Someone clearing their throat just behind you pulled you away from Carl, and you turned, rising from the crouch to face Glenn who gave an awkward smile.

"Sorry to interrupt, Rick said you were looking for me?"

"Yeah, I was. Kid, how about you run to your mom, see if she needs any help with Carol? Or if Uncle Shane has a job for you?" You suggested and the 10-year-old hesitated, before letting out a short huff and walking around to his mom, who was sitting on the barrier next to Rick. You watched until the second he reached Lori. With the herd that had come storming through, and with Sophia now missing, you couldn't be too careful. Maybe it was paranoia, but could anyone really blame you? From now on, all eyes were on Carl, at all times. Glenn seemed to share your sentiment because he was still watching Carl when you turned back to him.

"Shane was talking about you, while you were gone," Glenn stated, folding his arms over his chest as he leaned on the car behind him, finally turning his eyes back to you. You raised an eyebrow with a sarcastic chuckle, stuffing your hands in your pockets.

"Oh yeah? What'd that asshole say?" Glenn's jaw tightened slightly and he adjusted the cap on his head to shield himself from the sun. "C'mon, spit it out."

"He went around the group, asking everyone what he thought of you. Tried telling Carol that you'd seen Sophia and let her go, told Lori you were trying to turn Carl against her. Said to Dale that you'd tried to shoot him once," He explained after a beat, the irritation evident in his eyes and the way his lip twitched slightly. "Even tried to convince Andrea that you'd attacked him at the CDC. But even she's not blind to what happened there."

Instinctively, you rubbed the bite wound Shane had given you on the crook of your neck. It had faded a little over the few days it had taken to get here from the CDC, but you knew it'd linger long after it healed. Fuck, compose yourself (Y/N). Sure it was just Glenn, but your family were nearby. You didn't need them seeing that fleck of weakness. Fake it until you make it as you'd learnt all those years ago.

"C'mon Glenn, he's just bullshitting. The group will have pieced it together, either with me or Lori, by now. He's all talk, always has been. Unless he starts acting on them, try not to take too much notice. No one else seems to," You sighed, but Glenn just narrowed his eyes at you, fingers flexing on his arm.

"How the hell is he still in the group? I think the only person who likes him is Andrea,"

"He's still here because, as much as I hate to admit it, we need him. He's strong and we don't exactly have many fighters in this group, do we? And Andrea being the only one who likes

him is a severe underestimation and you know it. He's Rick's best friend, he and Lori still have some strings attached, and he's Carl's uncle. While I'd happily dump his ass on the side of the highway, until we can find some sort of stability, we're stuck with him."

Glenn looked almost more pissed off with your answer, but he nodded in agreement. He had enough trust in you to know what you were doing when it came to Shane. Didn't mean he had to like every decision you made.

"I just don't want you to get hurt because of him. Or anyone else. Because it's not a matter of if. He's unstable and has been unwinding every day since Rick joined us. I know you've seen it. It's a matter of when. You mean too much to me, (Y/N), to let him do anything to you," It wasn't lost on you how similar it was to what you'd said to Carl. A part of you, that pathetic part you'd left behind when you moved to King's County, couldn't find the truth in his words. He was just saying it to get your trust, he didn't mean anything by it. He said it so he could get something from you later down the line and then leave. But what could he get from you now at the end of the world? Being on your own was practically a death wish nowadays, and your group shared any supplies you found. There was nothing you had personally that he could take from you.

He'd meant every word, and somehow that was the hardest pill to swallow.



# Bad Feeling

## Chapter Notes

Missing child  
Canon divergence  
Canon typical violence  
Reference to past attempted rape/non-con

Everyone grouped the next morning, knives gathered, and guns allocated to you, Rick, Shane and Daryl or whoever was on watch. Shane had really cracked down on guns in the group, only letting the people who actually knew how to shoot have them. Part of it was due to Andrea's failed suicide attempt at the CDC, nearly getting Dale killed with her, you noted spitefully, you suspected, but Shane had given no real reasoning behind the command. And hell, you weren't going to disagree with him when he was right. Barely anyone knew how to shoot a gun and you didn't fancy facing another herd because someone got a little trigger happy. Daryl and Rick lead the front, with you in the rear. Like shepherding sheep, T-Dog had joked lightly, and you were ashamed to say you'd laughed slightly.

Carl trailed just behind Rick and Daryl, with Lori and Shane bookending him. Glenn walked in front of you, glaring daggers at Shane any time he turned around, even if he hadn't turned to look at you. T-Dog, Dale, Carol and Andrea made a little cluster in the middle, letting Rick, Daryl and you lead them, calling out in hushed shouts of Sophia's name.

"I bet this isn't much different from when you worked in King's County," Glenn said quietly, eyes still scanning for any movement and he slowed to walk beside you.

You let out a quiet chuckle, readjusting your gun in your hands "Nah, we spent more time searching the back alleys and abandoned building. Most of the kids who went missing just suffered from overly strict parents. They just wanted a break. Can't say I blame them."

"What, so they'd just run away?" Glenn asked, eyebrows furrowed like he couldn't understand it. You wished you had that level of innocence.

"Yeah. They'd come back after a few hours, maybe a day or two at most. Wouldn't you do the same if you were practically locked in your house?" You shot back and Glenn went quiet for a minute, scanning the group carefully before turning back to you.

"Is that why you left Virginia?" He asked carefully. Truthfully, you couldn't blame him for asking. Glenn knew very little about your life, and he didn't push or prod with the information he did have. It would hardly be fair for you to get mad at him. That doesn't mean you'd answer him though.

"C'mon dude, why is this getting turned on me?" You brushed it off quickly and nudged Glenn's side. He smiled, but it was just politeness from the way it barely reached his eyes. And he didn't push any further.

"Suddenly, delivering pizzas in Atlanta doesn't seem so bad," Glenn joked back. A silent thank you was exchanged by patting his shoulder but the group slowly coming to a stop in front of an orange tent made you pause, gun up to eye level and ready. Glenn and the others raised their knives, and Rick held his gun close.

It was hard to make out exactly what Rick and Carol were saying, but Daryl slowly approached the tent, Rick following behind her, ready to shoot if he had to.

Carol was fucking unarmed, and she was approaching fast on Daryl. Even with Rick right there, if a walker were to jump out, there's no guarantee that they wouldn't take a chunk out of her if she got too close, even before he could do a damn thing about it. Rick was supposed to be the smart one, goddamn it. But there was nothing you could do at the back of the group, and you sure as hell weren't gonna abandon the sheep.

You watched Daryl walk into the tent, while Carol called out softly, asking if it were Sophia and such, but you could hardly focus on that when your heart was stuck in your throat. Sure, you and Daryl didn't exactly have the best relationship, though that was becoming more debatable after you'd spilt your guts about your brother's rapey friend, the thought of him getting hurt was daunting.

No, he was capable of taking down a walker. He'd be completely fine. Daryl had survived with just Merle before your run in near the quarry, and now he had a whole group that could help him. This was safe. He was safe.

Lo and behold, Sophia wasn't inside. Just the rotting corpse of some guy who'd taken the easy way out. At one point, you might've called him a poor bastard, now you just saw him as lucky. Hell, what did that say about you?

But then begs the question, where the fuck was Sophia?

As if the universe was sending some sort of message, loud chiming sounded off in the distance.

Bells. Holy shit, those were bells.

You barely had a moment to compute it before the group was taking off. For fuck's sake, would it kill them to think it through? Glenn looked over to you and shrugged before jogging after them and you let out a quiet groan and followed. You passed through more trees, because y'know it's a fucking forest, before you reached a clearing, with a church dead centre, surrounded by graves that made you more than a little anxious. The last thing you needed was a hand shooting from a grave, like the night of the living dead.

As if you weren't living that already. Your dumbass people, love them as much as you do, hadn't seemed to notice the lack of steeple. There was no way the bells could be coming from that church.

Shane, goddamn it, also came to the same conclusion as Rick steamed ahead.

"Rick, wait for the rest of us!" You shouted over the group, but he was already barreling through the doors before you'd even cleared the graveyard. Jesus, you were all for getting Sophia back as quick as possible- you'd spent months with that sweet girl, and she'd taken a real shine to you as you had to her. But not getting yourself killed in the process would be lovely.

Rick stopped still, so suddenly he nearly went ass over tit, in the doorway of the church after throwing the doors open and you finally caught up. You put a hand on Glenn's arm as you pushed through the group until you reached Rick's side. In each of the pews sat between 2-4 people. Well, possibly people, possibly walkers. Rick turned to you and holstered his gun, but you shook your head, retrieving his gun out and putting it in his hand. Now wasn't the time to get stupid just because he had a little hope.

You raised a fist, banged it on the door frame and brought your gun up, safety off. Slowly, they all turned, and just as you'd silently suspected, they were all walkers, now acutely aware of your group stood in the doorway. You sighed, put your gun away and instead grabbed your knife. If you had all hands on deck, there was no need to waste any bullets if you didn't need to. Knives would do just fine. A bolt shot over your shoulder and into the head of the walker which was making its way to you. You turned to Daryl and nodded in thanks before approaching one of the walkers, grabbing a fistful of what was left of its hair and jabbing the knife through its temple.

Shane shoved past your shoulder to take out another one and you let out a quiet huff, resisting the urge to roll your eyes and the fighters of your group barrelled inside to take out the rest. Daryl came up behind you and placed a hand on your elbow once the walkers had been taken care of and the others began searching the church. When you looked at him, he nodded towards Shane subtly but you shook your head.

It was a dick move but it didn't exactly put you in any danger. As much as you wanted him gone, your people may have been more than a little pissed off if you or Daryl suddenly shoved your knife through Shane's eye. Daryl grunted quietly before heading back outside with Rick as he went to investigate the ringing bells.

"Hey, Jesus. Wish I could say it was good to see you," You commented as you came to stand beside Carol in front of the large Jesus statue at the top of the church.

"(Y/N), could you- could you please just give me a minute alone?"

"You got your knife?" She nodded and you hummed in agreement "Alright we'll be just outside. Holler if you need me."

Giving her shoulder a firm squeeze as you passed, you headed outside to the rest of the group, where they were gathered debating the fucking legitimacy of the bell.

Surely, you had bigger fish to fry, yknow like walkers, the rapidly approaching nightfall and Sophia fucking Peletier. The bells were fake. Was there really any more that needed to be said about it?

Daryl was leant against a tree nearby and gave you a quick nod when you exited the church. You tilted your head to him before approaching Glenn.

"Hey, Sonic," He looked to you and gave you a small smile, arms unfolding to rest one over your shoulder easily. Part of you debated shrugging him off since the Georgia heat was already doing enough to make you swear your tits off, let alone the additional body heat, but you let him stay anyway. With the potential loss of Sophia, you figured he needed it. Just like you did.

Shane ran a hand over his face, glancing around the faces of your less than merry band and let out a long sigh as Carol came out to join you. Carl stuck by his mama, his hands stuck in his pockets as he glanced between his uncle, his dad and you.

"Lright, y'all gonna follow the Creek Bed back, okay? Daryl, you're in charge. Me and Rick, we're just gonna hang back, search this area another hour or so just to be thorough,"

"Splitting up? In this?" You asked, making your objection loud and goddamn clear. It'd be night soon, and lord knows the dark meant danger. You didn't want Rick in that, much less with Walsh.

"You sure?" Daryl agreed quietly, pushing himself off the tree while Shane turned to look at him, exasperation written on his face. Better than a smug ass grin, you supposed. Or those eyes, staring at you like you were a four-course meal.

You tried to suppress a shudder at the thought, and the growing feeling of a ghostly hand over your mouth.

"We'll catch up with ya."

That finalised it apparently, seeing as how the rest of your group looked around at each other. But despite the decision, you couldn't help but feel uneasy even still. Carl did very little to help that either.

"I want to stay too. I'm her friend," Carl stepped forward, pushing the hair on his forehead. Lori looked down at him, before looking to Rick, who just shrugged with a small smile. Lori placed a hand on his head

"Just be careful, okay?" You couldn't help but disagree with her choice but hey, the kid had to learn and who were you to get between him and his mom. Carl nodded a promise, and gave her a tight hug, then ran to you, almost knocking you backwards *again*. Not that you particularly minded, though you couldn't help but chuckle when Glenn swayed back with you. You squeezed Carl, and he squeezed right back, so hard that it almost hurt. Like he knew you were anxious about his departure. Damn kid was perceptive sometimes.

In the corner of your eye, you saw Rick and Lori arguing about his gun and you were half a second away from just throwing your gun at Lori until Daryl handed her his spare. Merle's gun was now held in his hand.

And when you and the group ventured into the woods and towards the highway with Daryl in lead, you couldn't get over the feeling of dread in your stomach.

# The Kid

## Chapter Notes

- Canon divergence
- Canon typical violence
- Mentions of previous character death
- References to child injury (Carl)
- Mild implication of panic/anxiety attack

At some point on the way back to the highway, Glenn had taken your position in the rear and nudged you forward. Somehow you came into step with Lori, and she glanced over at you. You and Lori had never really gotten along, but since you were designated babysitter for Carl, there was some civil territory at least. Lori had always found some sort of issue with you. It was probably you running your mouth about her and Rick, and their treatment of Carl.

Looking back now, yeah that was definitely it. Even now, you knew you'd most certainly stuck your nose where it didn't belong, even if you had good intentions.

Shit, you could hardly blame her.

"Thank you," Lori mumbled quietly and you turned to look at her, eyebrows furrowed in confusion. There was a very small list of things she could possibly thank you for, and even then, she'd have to be scraping at the bottom of the barrel.

"For?" You continued, stepping over a large, broken piece of log that Daryl had called back a warning for seconds prior.

"Helping with Carl. Rick and I can't always be what he needs, no matter how much we wanna be. You and Shane, you're there when we can't be," She said, and though she looked away while she spoke, you could hear the Genuity. And that's all you needed, so you didn't press.

"Ain't nothing. Wanna keep him a kid as long as we can. He's gonna grow fast, especially in this world," You replied with a shrug. Carl was a sweet kid, he didn't deserve this shitty childhood, but this was the hand you'd all been dealt. The group could only do the best they can for that kid.

"It's just not the life I imagined for him y'know? I mean, I saw him getting married, having kids. Seeing him at prom, his graduation, seeing him off to college. Anything but this,"

"Lori, I'll be honest, my childhood wasn't exactly sunshine and roses. You and Rick may not be perfect parents, but I'd have been damn lucky to have you. And Carl is. The world's gone to shit, but if he's got you two? I'd say he has a pretty good chance."

You didn't like Lori much, so where in the living fuck has that come from?

It wasn't like you'd lied. You'd have killed for parents like them.

Lori didn't say anything else, but she gave you a small smile and nodded before walking ahead to wander beside Carol and you fell back in line with Glenn

"Looked like you and Lori were having a heart to heart there. Thought you didn't like her?" He asked, scanning the group as you got closer and closer to the highway. You huffed out an amused laugh, shaking your head.

"Suppose you could call it that. Can't afford to have enemies nowadays," Glenn looked over to you with a look you couldn't figure out before turning back, and a small smile crept onto his face

"Unless it's Shane," he mumbled, already chuckling to himself before he could finish and you joined in, laughing quietly, still aware you were out in the open.

"Unless it's Shane."

It wasn't long after you heard a singular shot. A shotgun. And the group all turned, before continuing forward, except Lori. She knew something was off, and you couldn't deny the twist of anxiety in your stomach.

"Probably just put down a walker," Daryl stated, brushing past Lori and continuing on but you and Carol exchanged a look.

"Please don't patronise her," You shot back. Even Glenn looked insulted that Daryl had assumed so low.

"You know Rick wouldn't risk a gunshot to put down one walker. Or Shane, they'd do it quietly?" Lori replied before looking back in the direction of the gunshot. Carol walked over to you and pulled the hand away from your mouth. You looked down and saw your nails half bitten, and you didn't even fucking remember doing that.

"You're gonna get an infection if you do that," She said quietly, turning your hand over in hers as Glenn said something from beside you, and placed her other hand on top.

You smiled, squeezing her hand lightly and she gave you a small smile back. Worry still lingered in her eyes, but, at least to you, it seemed that her acting like a mother hen to the group was helping her cope. Even just a little.

"Nothin' we can do about it anyway. Can't run around these woods chasing echoes," Daryl stated, adjusting his crossbow.

"So what do we do?" Lori asked as she glanced back over her shoulder again.

"Same as we've been. Beat the bush for Sophia, work our way back to the highway," He replied, already turning around and starting to walk without so much a glance at the others.

"I'm sure they'll hook up with us back to the RV," Andrea attempted to soothe. Lori let out a small sigh before following after him and Glenn quickly followed. But when you went to join them, you were stopped by Andrea approaching.

"I'm sorry for what you're going through. I know how you feel," Andrea reached forward and gave Carol's arm a small rub. An awkward-looking one for that fucking matter and you took yourself back to Glenn, Daryl and Lori to avoid laughing.

"I suppose you do- Thank you. The thought of her, out here by herself... It's the not knowing that's killin' me. I just keep hopin' and prayin' she doesn't wind up like Amy, "Yours and Glenn's eyebrows shot up in surprise and Carol soon caught onto what she said as her hand shot to her mouth "Oh, God! That's the worst thing I ever said.

"We're all hoping and praying with you, for what it's worth," She said, though it was almost forced out through her teeth.

"It ain't worth anythin'-" You muttered, rolling your eyes and Daryl quickly walked between the two

"It's a waste of time, all this hopin' and prayin'. We're gonna locate that little girl. She's gonna be just fine. Am I the only one Zen around here? Good lord," He snapped, immediately storming back in the direction of the highway and you stifled a smirk at the irony of his sentence. The Dixons were the least zen people you think you'd met in your entire life.

Apart from one, maybe.

The sun was starting to set when you decided you were just running in circles.

"We're gonna lose the light soon. I think we should call it for today," You turned and stated. Daryl gave you a firm nod while Carol anxiously began twiddling her fingers.

"Let's head back," Daryl agreed, shouldering his crossbow, and bringing his knife out instead.

"We'll start again tomorrow?" Carol asked quietly and Lori quickly moved over to squeeze her shoulder.

"We'll find her tomorrow," But the sound of a heavy horseshoe made you turn, bringing your gun up quickly when you saw a girl approaching on a horse. She looked panicked and frantic and none of that helped ease the nerves in your stomach or the unease of a stranger.

"Lori? Lori Grimes?" She called as she approached your group, further tightening that ball in your stomach.

"I'm Lori," Lori rushed over, pushing Carol towards you and Andrea.

"Rick sent me, you've got to come now!" She demanded. Rick? Shit, shit, shit, something must have happened. Maybe something to do with that gunshot.

"There's been an accident. Carl's been shot. He's still alive but you've got to come now, Rick needs you!"



And just like that, you were hearing static, frozen in place. Daryl and the girl were speaking but you couldn't hear a word. Glenn put his hand over your gun, forcing you to lower it before slowly taking it from you

"Which one's (Y/N)?" It all came back a little too quickly. The birds squawking in the trees were too loud, the chirping of crickets, the sound of Glenn's quiet breathing beside you, your heart pounding in your chest. It was too much, but you pushed through enough to look at the girl as Glenn nudged you forward, but kept his hand on your lower back in comfort. The girl met your eyes as Lori climbed on the back of the horse.

"Rick said to put you in charge. When you get to the highway, backtrack to Fairburn road. Two miles down is our farm. You'll see the mailbox - name's Greene," Without a further word she gave the horse a starting kick and took off with Lori. And it took you less than a second to pull out your knife and start jogging towards the highway. You couldn't even check to see if the others were behind you. You had to get to that farm. To Carl, *now*.

Daryl grabbed your elbow before you could get too far, tugging you back with a force like thunder.

"Don't be a damn idiot, sunshine. I know ya love that kid, but don't you start takin' off on ya own. That's how ya get killed and I ain't in the mood to explain that to yer cowboy buddy," He snapped, and you glared at him, shaking his hand off your elbow. and bringing your knife up, even if it was a little drastic.

"Don't you fucking touch me, Dixon. I need to get back to that damn highway, whether you're with me or not. Nothin' is gonna stand in my way right now, not even you," You snarled back. His face turned sour, eyebrows furrowing further but he quickly glanced at your knife and backed down. His lips were still turned in a borderline snarl and he looked like he wanted to swing at you, but Glenn quickly stood between you, placing a hand on Daryl's chest to push him back.

"Fighting won't get us anywhere. We need to get to the highway now," You gave him a smug look before Glenn turned to look at you, eyes narrowed and sharp "And together."

You met his narrowed gaze before letting up, sheathing your knife and putting your hand out to him and he hesitantly put your gun back into your hand. Sharply, you turned to Carol and Andrea and nodded toward the highway, grabbing the sleeve of Glenn's jacket and tugging him along with you. Now you were together. Jackass.

You needed to see the kid now.

# Hanging out

## Chapter Notes

- Canon divergence
- Canon typical violence
- Implication of past suicide attempt
- Implication of domestic abuse/neglect.
- Reference to walker suicide

Carol's sobbing was keeping you awake, even on the roof. Not that you could sleep anyway, not with your nerves fried the way they were. Your foot bounced restlessly, gnawing on your nails. Curled on the roof, Glenn watched you from the corner of his eye. He thought you didn't notice but, a wild comparison to earlier, every sense is on high alert. Daryl and Dale had said, rightly so, that it'd be safer to wait it out until the morning when you could actually see where you were going. Still, even if you saw the logic, didn't mean you were happy about it.

T-Dog being in the condition he was didn't make you feel any better either. The wound was already infected, and you needed to get it checked out as soon as fucking possible. Which wasn't soon enough apparently.

And then there was Carl. You'd tried not to think about it too much and yet, here you were, ripping your fingertips to shreds. Was he dead already? Bled out from the wound? Infection? You were just glad he wasn't alone. He had his momma and dad, and hell even his uncle. Even if you held Shane in the deepest fucking disdain (putting it lightly), you knew he'd go to the ends of the earth for that boy.

One thing you had in damn common.

It wasn't all that surprising when Daryl emerged from the RV, his crossbow and flashlight in his hands.

"Where you off to, Dixon?"

"None of your business, sunshine," He spat the last word with venom, clearly still ticked off from earlier. At this point, you were too stressed to hold a grudge against him, even if it was going to piss you off in the morning if he didn't call it off. And when did he start with that sunshine shit? Was it just to fuck with you? God, you really didn't care anymore.

"Don't be a dick. Just wanted to know if I could help," You shot back, rubbing a hand across your face, and he let out a huff, jaw set.

"Goin' out to do another sweep for the girl. Ain't no one gettin' any sleep anyway, no point wasting hours," He said, finally looking up at you. Glenn shifted beside you when you picked up your gun, checking the clip.

"The hell ya doin'?"

"I'm comin' with," You replied. Wasn't it damn obvious? Daryl rolled his eyes but nodded, gesturing you along. You climbed down the ladder, but Glenn grabbed your wrist.

"Be careful. Gotta get back for Carl," And him, you heard, despite him not saying it. His eyes were scared, even if he put on a brave face and he turned to Daryl, giving him a hard stare. Admittedly, it did look a little ridiculous considering his baby face and somewhat innocent demeanour but you chose not to say anything.

"Hurry ya ass up or I'm leavin' ya here," Daryl snapped and you glared at him over your shoulder and quickly squeezed Glenn's hand, albeit with some awkward repositioning on the ladder. You slid down, catching the flashlight Dale threw to you from his little camping chair.

"You sure that's a good idea right now?" Dale asked cautiously.

"We'll look out for each other. Shine some light on the forest. If she's out there, it'll give her something to look at," You nodded to Dale and after a second he let you go, though he looked like he'd much rather you'd stay there. And you're sure he would, but you couldn't spend another minute just sitting around. You needed something to keep your mind busy, even if that meant walking into the forest with Daryl fucking Dixon.

Daryl stormed ahead of you, and you let out a long sigh. You couldn't believe he was still angry at you for walking away as if he hadn't done it a million fucking times before.

Actually no. You could.

"You think we're gonna find her?" You asked after a few minutes of stifling silence. Daryl glanced back at you for a long second before finally slowing down enough to amble alongside you, crossbow thrown over his back.

"Do you?" He returned and you nodded immediately. How could you give up on that sweet kid now?

"Ain't like it's the Himalayas or some crap. It's Georgia. Kids get lost and they survive. Besides she's 12. If she was younger, she might've lost hope already, "You weren't ready to face the fact you only believed she was alive because you didn't know what you'd do if she wasn't.

"Probably holed up in a farmhouse somewhere," He mumbled in agreement "Hell, I was younger than her and I got lost. Nine days in the forest, eating berries, wiping my ass with poison oak."

"Your family find you?" You asked, giving him a sympathetic look. Hell, you knew what that was like. You'd had your fair share of instances like that.

"My old man was off on a bender with some waitress. Merle was doin' another stint in juvie. Didn't even know I was gone. I made my way back though. Went straight into the kitchen and made myself a sandwich. No worse for wear. Except my ass itched somethin' awful," You couldn't help the snort that escaped you, and you quickly covered your mouth with your spare hand

"I'm sorry, that's a terrible story," You said through a smile, muffled from your hand, but when you thought he was gonna explode, he cracked a smile, letting out a quiet laugh.

"Only difference is, Sophia's got people lookin' for her. I'd call that an advantage," He said and stopped, looking down at you properly "And your boy-"

"He ain't my boy," You interrupted quickly. You loved Carl like your own, but you couldn't disrespect Rick and Lori like that. They were his parents, not you.

"He's yours. Lori's and Rick's too. But we're gone get to that farm in the mornin', and he's gonna be fine. Stop worryin' yerself 'bout it," Daryl quickly took off again.

"Easy for you to say," You murmured with a roll of your eyes. But you appreciated his attempt at comfort anyway, you just wished it was as simple as that nowadays. There were no hospitals anymore. There was no guarantee he'd be fine.

All you had was hope.

And distractions.

"I tried to sneak out the house once when my brother was drunk. He was being a dick, and I couldn't deal with it that night. Little 8 year old me thought I was so sneaky. Instead of being the fucking ninja I thought I was, I ended up falling out of the window and breaking my collarbone," Daryl let out a chuckle when you'd caught up with him, meeting your eyes for the first time and you smiled back, feeling an odd warmth in your chest. "Didn't want to get my brother though so I walked 10 miles to the nearest hospital. The doctor was so impressed, he agreed not to call him, and somehow let me walk the 10 miles back home once I'd been patched up."

"How the hell he not get in trouble for that?"

"Welcome to Virginia," You replied quickly, smirking slightly in amusement, but it turned solemn when you remembered what happened next. "Brother didn't find it quite as funny when he got the bill for my treatment."

"What'd he do?" He asked carefully, an edge of anger in his voice as he pieced together what followed wasn't anything good for you. Wasn't exactly wrong.

"Doesn't matter. No point dwelling on the past. Just thought I'd share my embarrassing story since you gave me a glimpse of yours," You quickly shrugged off. Daryl stared you down for a second, making your stomach twist with anxiety, but he didn't push any further, thank fuck.

You continued on in silence for a few minutes, until you heard the familiar growling of a walker, and you pulled out your knife as Daryl swung his crossbow into his hands. A few seconds of searching quickly revealed a walker, hung from a tree by a noose and you grimaced.

Sure, it wasn't anything new to you. You'd seen it millions of times while working in King's County, but every single time hit you as hard as the last. Its legs were chewed down to the bone up to his thigh and there was a piece of paper pinned to the tree he hung from. Daryl leaned forward, cautious of the walker, even if it was out of reach, there was no saying how stable the rope was or how long it'd been there.

"Got bit, fever hit, world gone to shit, might as well quit'. Dumbass didn't know enough to shoot himself in the head. Turned himself into a big swingin' piece of bait and a mess," He stated, looking up at it and you looked away jaw clenching. God, why did it have to hit every damn time? You'd seen this before, it shouldn't bother you anymore. Yet here you were, weak as you'd always been. "You alrigh'?"

"I'm fine. Just need a second. How'd you learn to shoot?" You asked, squinting into the darkness, looking anywhere except the walker.

"Gotta eat. That's one thing these walkers and us have in common. I guess we're the closest he's been to food since he turned," In the corner of your eye, you saw Daryl move closer, taking a more detailed look at the walker's chewed up legs. "Look at him, hanging up there like a big pinata. The other geeks came and ate all the flesh off his legs-

"Quit it, Dixon," You stopped him sharply. Sure, it was a walker, but it had been a person. Suicide, regardless of his hopelessness considering being bitten, wasn't something to be taken lightly in your books. You finally looked back at him, eyebrows furrowed. God, you were so tired. "Put it down."

"Nah, he ain't hurtin' anybody. Ain't gonna waste an arrow either. He made his choice. Opted out," Daryl turned around, probably to head back to the highway but you took a few steps closer, swallowing that awful sickly feeling in your throat. This could've been you. If you'd never moved to Georgia, you would've been in its shoes. Granted you wouldn't have come back at the time, but that didn't change it. He made you jump by appearing by your shoulder and you fought the rising urge to hit him. "Why're ya so bothered anyway?"

Turning back to him, you met his eyes and held them for a long second "An answer for an arrow."

Daryl let out a long sigh before bringing the crossbow up and shooting a bolt right between its eyes.

"Whenever Rick and I, or Shane and I had to go to a scene and we'd find someone hangin', I had to leave. My reaction ain't nothin' new. Let's just say I've got a much too close association with ones who hang like that," You replied but Daryl didn't look satisfied with your answer, and you folded your arms "I ain't spillin' anymore of my guts to you, Dixon. Not yet. Don't know you enough."

He gave a nod, face understanding, in the way a Dixon expresses their emotions but still shoved his crossbow back on his back. "Waste of an arrow."

And off he went, leaving you with an odd feeling in your chest and nerves pooling in your stomach.

# Relief

## Chapter Notes

- Canon divergence
- Canon typical violence
- Mention of kid injury
- Mention of death/murder
- References to past attempted rape/non-con

"Where the hell's Glenn? And T-Dog?" The lacking presence of your two friends didn't miss your attention, and Daryl quickly put his hand on your arm, squeezing lightly.

Andrea and Dale were standing outside, talking about something and you watched as Carol quickly ran into the RV when she didn't see Sophia with her. You felt for her, you really did, but you needed to know where Glenn was. People kept going missing, your family were all over the place and you wanted to hold onto who you had left.

"Probably took the car, went ahead to the farm. T-Dog weren't lookin' too good," Daryl replied quietly, finally letting go of the gentle hold he had on your arm when you emerged into the clearing of the RV.

"T-Dog and Glenn went to the farm. T-Dog's fever got worse. He wouldn't have lasted until the morning," Dale said when you approached. Andrea turned over her shoulder, giving you a lookup and down, bordering on disgust before turning back to Dale. You nodded to the older man and Daryl gave you a look as if to say 'see?', making you give him a playful glare. He smiled in return before entering the RV, and you climbed to the roof shortly after.

You still couldn't sleep that night.

As soon as dawn broke, you were pestering the others awake and were on the road to the farm. Daryl started up the motorbike, beckoning you over and you climbed behind him, clinging to him instantly. It'd only really been a few hours since you'd last spoken but Daryl since your discussion last night, he'd been keeping an eye on. It was subtle, but the constant glancing from the corner of his eye was hard to miss, but you elected to ignore it. Zooming ahead with Daryl, the RV and other car followed behind you as you pulled onto the farm, and Shane, Glenn, T-Dog and the girl that had picked Lori up gathered around, along with a few others you didn't recognise. With a little aid from Daryl, you clambered off the bike, and immediately Glenn rushed over, giving you a tight hug.

"Sorry for disappearing last night. No sign of Sophia?" He asked quietly, still not unwrapping his arms from around your waist. You shook your head with a sigh before pulling back and knocking his cap upwards so it nearly fell off.

"How's the kid?" You pushed anxiously but Rick and Lori walked out with an older gentleman before he could give you an answer. Oh shit, oh fuck. Glenn took a step back, nervously twisting the end of his sleeve and Daryl's eyes locked onto you as soon as they walked out. Slowly, he reached out and took your hand. You probably would've keeled over from shock if you hadn't been so focused on the next words that would come from their mouth.

He had to be okay. God, please let him be okay.

"How is he?" You questioned quietly, gripping onto Dixon's hand like your life depended on it. Because depending on their next words, it might.

Lori gave a small smile and Rick gave you a firm nod "He'll pull through, thanks to Hershel and his people."

"And Shane," Rick added, "We'd have lost Shane if not for him."

You didn't know if it was relief, leftover anxiety or just a general build-up of emotions but your eyes immediately watered even as you grinned and you turned and pulled Daryl into a hug. He immediately froze, and you almost pulled back, quickly realising your mistake, but he relaxed and pulled you closer, letting you release your tears onto his shoulder.

Part of you wondered what that meant.

When you let go, you raced to Rick and he clutched onto you, placing one hand on the back of your head as your hands balled into his shirt "What the hell happened?"

"Hunting accident. That's all, just a stupid accident," He replied and you narrowed your eyes, pulling back. Hell, you'd love to have a conversation with whoever accidentally shot Carl Grimes.

Well. Apparently, the guy was fucking dead. One less thing for you to deal with you supposed.

No, that was insensitive to Otis and his family. Glenn and Rick had quickly introduced you to the family. Hershel was the gentleman you'd seen walk behind Rick and Lori, the one who'd saved Carl's life. You'd already given the man a large hug, one he returned although quite awkwardly. The girl who'd collected Lori was Maggie, and the young blonde girl and the young man were her little sister, Beth and Beth's boyfriend, Jimmy. Then there was Patricia, Otis' wife.

You gathered around a makeshift graveyard before you could see Carl, even though you were itching to go see that boy. As disrespectful as that probably was to that Otis fella.

Shane, you finally noticed, was wearing clothes almost three times his size, and he was leaning more on one foot than the other. Like he'd sprained it or broken it or something. And his hair was completely shaved down. He must've noticed you staring at him and met your gaze. But there was something in them. He was hiding something, and it was nothing good.



Hershel was making some prayer, now docked out in a suit, but you couldn't pay attention. There was something wrong with Shane. He was never that quiet. You weren't particularly worried about him. Bastard could choke for all you cared, but the Shane Walsh approach when having a breakdown was to lash out.

You didn't need a repeat of the CDC.

Daryl, who was standing beside you, sandwiching you between him and Glenn, moved your hand from your neck. Shit, when did you start rubbing it? It was starting to scab over now, no bandage needed, though Beth and Maggie had given you a wary look when they saw it. Probably thought it was a walker bite.

If it had been, you'd be fucking dead already.

Shane was spouting on about something, you realised. Saving Carl, and Otis sacrificing himself for the boy. But it didn't sit right. Every word he said, the phrasing of it...

He wasn't completely lying to the group, but he sure as hell wasn't telling you everything. From the look on Dale and Daryl's faces, they saw it too, despite Patricia and the Greene family being enamoured by his words. Now you just had to figure out what it was he was hiding.

"Hey, (Y/N)!" You spun around at the call of your name. Glenn had his arm up, waving you over to where he and Carol were starting to unload stuff from the RV. "Could you help us get all these tents out? Just need an extra set right now."

"No worries," Immediately, you grabbed some of the equipment, waiting for Glenn to grab a box before walking alongside him as he led you to a clearing underneath a cluster of trees. You glanced over to Shane briefly, only to find him already staring at you, and you shot your eyes back to Glenn, lowering your voice. "Don't look at him, but I think Shane's hiding something."

Of fucking course though, Glenn being Glenn, his head whipped to look at Shane before he realised his mistake and ducked his head back to you. "Sorry..."

You just rolled your eyes in exasperation but nudged him with your hip playfully. He smiled down at you from underneath his cap before he set the box down next to some logs he and Carol had arranged in a circle. They'd probably put a fire in the middle for food and warmth. You set your stuff down gently and finally turned to your friend, pointedly keeping your back to the creep in question.

"I know Shane's shady as fuck, but what could he be hiding?" He made an awkward greeting nod towards Carol as she passed before looking at you again "He saved Carl's life."

"So he keeps saying," You huff back. Folding your arms to suppress that rising anxiety in your stomach. What if you were just being paranoid?

No. You know what you saw. You had years on the field watching people for the kind of signs that would indicate lying, and Shane was ticking every box. Glenn sighed, rubbing the

bridge of his nose.

"You think he killed Otis?" He asked and you brought a hand up to rub your temple. Slowly, you started heading back towards the RV to grab more equipment.

"I don't know, but my gut keeps telling me that Otis' death wasn't the sacrifice Shane keeps claiming it to be."

"Well, I don't know what to think. But I trust you, and your instincts. Kept me alive so far," He stated, bumping you with his elbow and you gave him a smile. You knew he trusted you, but hearing it out loud made your heart warm. It'd only been a few months since he'd saved your ass in Atlanta but he already meant the world to you. If anything were to happen to him, you might turn murderous. Hell, you almost did when Rick finally told you about what had happened in Atlanta when they went to rescue Merle.

Regardless you scoffed lightly, even though he knew you appreciated the comment. He had a way of reading you like that. "If I remember rightly, you were the one who dragged my ass out of that convenience store in Atlanta. Moved so damn fast I thought I was gonna start seeing gold rings."

"That's why you started calling me Sonic? Seriously?" He gawked but he was laughing through his words. You couldn't help but laugh with him. Even if you were in the worst mood, he always made you feel better. What an asshole.

"Well, if the shoe fits," You shot back and he put his foot out, making you trip up and have to catch yourself on the RV. you flipped him off over your shoulder, hearing him chuckle behind you.

Together, with the aid of Carol, you unloaded the RV until it was empty.

"You want help settin' up?" Carol shook her head at the question, shooting you a smile, though it barely reached her eyes.

"That's alright, hun. Thanks for helping unload. I think you're wanted over there," She replied sweetly as she and Glenn got to work on setting up the tents. You nodded at her politely before jogging over to the truck Hershel, Rick, Maggie, Andrea and Daryl were starting to gather around as Rick beckoned you over.

You came to stand beside Daryl, leaning on the hood and he raised his eyebrows at you in acknowledgement. Maggie unrolled a map in front of you.

You almost jumped out of your skin when you felt breath on your ear "Shane's comin'. Been starin' at ya like yer meat." Shit, it was just Daryl. God, you hated how it initially made your heart spike.

Just as Daryl warned, Shane came limping over, that far away look in his eye and instead of standing beside Rick as you thought he would, he made his way to stand next to you. It took every muscle in you not to flinch when his arm brushed yours, so you fixed him with a cold

glare instead. It took less than a second for Daryl to 'drop' his knife and reemerge between you and Shane, separating you. Hell, you could've kissed him just for that.

Wait, wait, wait, kiss him? Where the fuck did that come from?

Shaking away the thought, you tried to focus on the map as Maggie started pointing out potential areas Sophia could be. When you looked over to where Carol and Glenn were setting up briefly, all you saw was Glenn frozen. And he was staring Shane down, holding his eye contact with stern determination.

And if you'd looked to your left, you would've seen the same look coming from Daryl.

# Nice Guy

## Chapter Notes

- canon divergence
- canon typical violence
- mention of child abuse/neglect
- mention of child injury (carl being shot)

You'd managed to convince Hershel to change his mind about the strict no-guns rule. You could absolutely see from his perspective - it was his farm, that had his family and you were just a group of strangers. For all he knew, you wanted to overtake it, even despite everything that they'd done for Carl.

Speaking of, you were absolutely itching to see that little guy. He had to rest, you knew that but fuck it was killing you not being able to see if he was alright. It wasn't that you didn't trust Rick and Lori's word when they said he's gonna pull through but it was eating away at you every second you were away.

That alone was enough to enable you to ignore Shane, who was still eyeing you like the fucking creep he was. Motherfucker thought he was being discreet too.

But despite all that, you now had to give your people gun training, which, admittedly you should have done long ago, but it wasn't like you had the opportunity. Regardless, now you just had the rifle on the RV for watch purposes and your pistol was placed on Hershel's truck. A sign of trust, you supposed.

"We're runnin' short of supplies. I should make a run into town," Maggie commented as the group dispersed to just you, Hershel, Rick and Maggie.

"Not the place where Shane went?" You questioned. If she was going to where Shane had been, maybe you could check out just how much of Shane's story had been bullshit.

"No, there's a pharmacy just a mile down the road. I've done it before," She replied and you couldn't help but deflate slightly. Even still, you stifled a small smile, seeing a perfect opportunity. Glenn had had eyes for Maggie as long as you'd been here, glancing at her every chance he got. Boy was crushing and didn't even realise it. It was sweet. Slowly, you turned, placing a hand on your hip and wiping a hand over your mouth to hide your grin.

"See our man there in the baseball cap? That's Glenn. Our go-to-town expert. Saved mine and Rick's asses in Atlanta, excuse my french, sir," You quickly added, looking towards Hershel and he frowned but nodded thanks "I'd ask him along, just to be cautious."

Hershel and Maggie shared a look before she started to make her way over to Glenn. You leant against the truck, watching in amusement.

Oh, this would be hilarious.

You couldn't quite make out what they were saying, but he looked like a deer in headlights when she approached, and whatever she said took him off guard since his eyes widened almost comically and he was visibly sweating. That boy had it bad. Part of you was curious to see if they went anywhere.

Hmm, maybe not.

Eventually, you found yourself sitting outside the farmhouse, waiting on word from Lori. Hershel was expecting you to move on as soon as Carl was better, which was a whole other fucking deal but hell, you could deal with that after you'd seen Carl. As soon as Patricia and Beth had approached saying he was starting to rouse, Lori and you had taken off to the house. Beth seemed sweet, bless her. A little naive and much too innocent for the world she was living in now, but you suspected Hershel had played a big part in keeping her relatively clueless. She was young, she had time to learn.

Your fingers and fingernails were bitten to shit and your foot would not stop bouncing for the life of you. God, you had to see that kid.

Dixon came storming out onto the dirt road, crossbow tossed onto his back and beelining for the woods.

"Dixon, where you off to?" You called, picking at the end of your jacket. He spun on his heel, looking mildly startled before he shrugged, slowly wandering over a few steps.

"Gonna take another look for the girl. Be back before dark," He replied with slightly narrowed eyes "Already had this talk with yer man Rick. If ya want me gone, ya can just say it. No point beatin' around the damn bush."

A frown found its way onto your face as you rose, eyebrows furrowed "Woah, Woah, Woah. Don't you be puttin' words in my mouth. I don't know what Rick said to you, but I know damn well I don't want you gone. Now, stop moping. If you wanna talk about it, you talk properly instead of snapping at me."

Daryl's glare was downright vicious as you poked his chest lightly but he said nothing, clenching his jaw and looking away. He had a habit of doing that when he was biting back words. Something he'd only really started doing since Merle got separated. Oddly enough, the more you thought about it, the less you missed that asshole. It was barbaric that he got left there, of course, but you wouldn't be particularly upset if you never ran into him again. Maybe that made you cold. Maybe you didn't care all that much anymore.

Lori, with the excellent fucking timing she seemed to possess, exited the house, nodding towards Carl's room before making her way out wordlessly and heading towards Shane and Andrea, who were sitting outside the RV. You have a deep sigh, before pushing your hair

back quickly. Every bone in your body was itching to see the kid, but you wanted to look for Sophia. If Daryl could just wait.

"10 minutes. Give me 10 minutes with Carl and then I'm coming with you,"

"Naw. Better on my own," He huffed, like a petulant child and you rolled your eyes, giving him a stern look.

"10 minutes," You insisted, already turned towards the door and behind you, he kicked the dusty path.

"Lright. If you ain't here in 10, I'm leavin' without ya," He replied grumpily, and his quick submission almost made you laugh. A week ago he would've told you to go fuck yourself. Hell, maybe he still would.

But you doubted it.

Carl Grimes should not be that pale. Or that lifeless. If it weren't for the rise and fall of his chest, you would've mistaken him for a corpse. That alone was enough to break your heart. His eyes fluttered as you came to sit on the bed beside him, and that small smile was enough to put a bandaid right over that crack and you couldn't help but smile back. You took his hand gently, squeezing it.

"Hey, kiddo," You greeted, eyes watering slightly, though you quickly wiped your eyes with your spare hand. He squeezed your hand back

"Hey, Aunt (Y/N)," He replied. You brought his hand up and gave his hand a soft kiss "I'm glad you're okay."

"I'm okay? Kid, you're the one who got shot!" You said, chuckling slightly and he giggled when you tapped Rick's hat, that was resting on his head. "Nice hat. Is it the Grimes gunshot club symbol?"

"You know it," He stated, grinning weakly. You were glad to know he hadn't lost his sense of humour, even when he'd nearly shaken hands with the Grim Reaper not even hours earlier. But the quietness of his voice and the slight shaking in his hands was enough of a reminder. How close you'd been to losing him. And Shane, hate him as you did and hiding what he was, had saved Carl's life. "What happened to T-Dog?"

"It happened on the highway. He cut his arm tryin' to get away from walkers. Daryl had to help. Must've gotten infected, but he'll be okay. Hershel's got him some medicine. Don't you worry about that right now. You, my little buddy, "You pressed on his nose lightly and he giggled again, "Should be more focused on gettin' yourself better."

"Daryl's been nicer since Merle went away. Less mean to you. Still mean to Uncle Shane, sometimes," He observed quietly, looking towards the window as if he could see Daryl through the curtains.

"To be fair, kid, your Uncle Shane can be mean to him," You said back with a small laugh and he gave you a look that said he agreed, even if he didn't want to say it out loud. "But you're right. Daryl's a good man, kid. Always was. Merle just made him seem bad, I guess."

"I thought family were meant to make you better?" He asked and you almost forgot he was a kid. A kid with the innocence only a kid could have. He was so damn grown-up when he wanted to be, it was easy to forget he was a teenager sometimes. You let out a sigh, brushing back some strands of hair from his sweaty forehead.

"They should, kid. But not every older brother is meant to be a brother, even if every little brother or sister deserves an older sibling, "Carl's eyebrows furrowed like he didn't understand but something seemed to click as he looked back to you.

"Like when you told me every kid should have parents but not all parents should have kids? Like Sophia's dad?" You nodded

"Exactly. My brother was a lot like Merle. He raised me when our dad didn't. But he didn't do a good job," You explained, being very careful about your wording, not wanting to reveal too much to him. It was a lot for a kid, and a bit too fresh of a wound. Even if it had been years.

"But you're nice? You've always been nice. When you'd let me stay when mom and dad were fighting. We'd sleep in your bed and eat ice cream and watched cartoons. Sometimes we'd have pillow fights," You grinned at the memory, holding his hand a little tighter. Those nights always sucked, knowing he was only there because Rick and Lori's fighting had been too much. Usually, it was Shane who'd drop him off after getting a call from Carl on their house phone. But you'd have so much fun, even if the reason he was there was shit. He always seemed so much brighter when he left, giggling and smiley. Acting like the kid he should be.

"Yeah. But I'm nice because I got away. Ran away at 18. Daryl got away, so he's getting better."

"I'm glad he stayed. He's got a cool crossbow," You chuckled, dropping your head slightly.

"Yeah. He does. Speakin' of, I've got to head off, kid. Daryl and I are goin' to look for Sophia a little more," You explained and Carl's face fell slightly but he nodded.

"I'll miss you. Be safe. And if you find her, tell her I said hi," He asked and you nodded, kissing his hand again.

"You keep fightin', young deputy," You replied, tapping the hat again before rising and walking out after blowing the kid a kiss from the doorframe and closing the door. Though as you stepped through the door, you nearly punched someone when they appeared in front of you.

It was Daryl. Speak of the devil and he shall appear, you supposed. He had a smug little smirk on his face that you knew meant trouble, arms folded over his chest.

"So, I'm nice, am I?" Daryl questioned, mocking your voice and you gave him a semi-hard shove, glaring at him, though there was no venom in it.

"Piss off," You snapped back, pushing past him to the entrance of the house. You picked up your gun from the collection Hershel had on his table, leaving a note beside it, so he didn't think you'd gone rogue or some shit. Daryl let out a boisterous laugh from behind you, jogging forward so he was right behind you.

"Hell naw, sunshine. Yer stuck with the nice guy now," He commented, still smirking like a bastard and you could have killed him at that moment as he overtook you, laughing to himself and heading towards the woods.



# Assholes

## Chapter Notes

Canon divergence  
canon typical violence  
mentions of child abuse  
descriptions of child abuse/neglect  
Walker child  
Panic attacks

Eventually, Daryl stopped chortling and chuckling much to your appreciation. Though, that didn't stop him from smirking on the occasion when he saw you scowling.

"The kid doin' aight?" he asked after a bit of silence, and you glanced over briefly, smiling slightly without realising it.

"Yeah, he's good as he can be. Sense of humour survived, "You commented, laughing quietly at the boy's reply after you commented on the wound he shared with his father.

"He's a good kid," He replied, face scrunching up in the sun. It made him look... sweet. Not the almighty, tough man Daryl Dixon you'd come to know. He was beautiful.

You tried not to dwell on the thought.

"He said similar about you," Daryl turned, giving you an odd look before his lip quirked up again. Hell, you didn't think you'd ever seen Daryl Dixon smile as much as he had in the past two hours.

"What? That I'm a good kid?" He scoffed, chuckling again and you jabbed him with your elbow.

"You know that's not what I meant, asshole," You shot back, and he nudged you back with his unloaded crossbow. Fuck, that thing hurt, even if he didn't mean it to. "He said you were a good man. And as you clearly heard, I agree with him."

"Don't ya be goin' soft on me, sunshine," He said teasingly, but he refused to look at you. And.. holy shit, was he blushing?

"Startin' to sound like your brother, Dixon, "You teased, approaching a clearing in the woods. The sun was in the very beginnings of sunset, just starting to dim enough to show the approaching dusk, but still giving you at least an hour before dark.

"Naw, ya said I was nice when I weren't with him," Just as he had earlier, his voice pitched up to mock your voice. Immediately, you gave his arm a light punch, hard enough to feel the pressure of the hit but not hard enough to actually hurt. He laughed quietly in response, even if he gave you a playful glare. But his smile quickly fell and you knew you wouldn't like what he was going to say next. "So, yer brother was like Merle huh?"

The sigh you let out made him shift and he quickly added something about not needing to say if you didn't want to. But, Dixon knew what he was like. He wouldn't judge anything you said or give you those pitiful looks that make you want to peel your skin off. If there was anyone you felt comfortable enough to spill a little more, it was him.

"I already told you we had about the same gap as you and Merle. A couple of years older than Merle. Our momma died givin' birth to me, and I think he always blamed me for it. Our dad did. Started drinkin', I got taken away for neglect and given to my brother as soon as he turned eighteen, "You explained slowly, carefully. He'd always blamed you for that too. Said you took the best years from him with that responsibility looming over your head.

"Yeah. I get it. My daddy was a drunk too," He added, in his own way of comforting you. And it did, a little. Knowing you weren't alone in it, even if your situations were a little different.

"Made sure I was fed. 'Homeschooled' me and then took me to high school. Did the basic shit, but fucked me over in everything else," A bitter laugh escaped you "Of course, he sent me to the same high school that he worked for so he could keep an eye on me. A fuckin' pe teacher too."

Daryl let out a laugh at the disdain in your voice when you said it "The asshole routine don't exactly sound like it's gonna be paired with pe teacher."

"Tell me about it," You fell silent again when an abandoned house came into view. That was all you'd tell him for now. Maybe when you knew him a little better. Daryl shared a look with you and gave a small gesture towards the building. You both approached, careful not to step on any twigs if you could avoid it. Didn't need a walker hearing you and jumping out, taking a chunk with it.

When you reached the door, Daryl and you came to either side of the door, backs to the wall and you banged your fist against the doorframe hard. After a minute of no movement from within the house, you stepped ahead, gun raised and safety off, with Dixon just behind you. As you reached the corridor, Daryl made a small noise and jerked his head, indicating he'd explore the ground floor. You nodded, heading up the stairs slowly, ears peeled for the familiar growling and moaning associated with walkers. Something in your gut was twisting. Something about this place wasn't sitting right with you, and you were dying to know why. For the sake of your safety and Daryl's. Making your way through the bedrooms, one bathroom and an empty storage cupboard, you found no sight of Sophia nor walkers. Or any life at all really. The place had been raided, picked clean until just the barebones remained.

"Clear," Daryl's muffled voice called from downstairs and you heard his footsteps further downstairs as you approached a closed door. There was a light tapping from behind it, and that sickly feeling returned tenfold. Using one hand to open the door, you pushed it open and

you were nearly sick at the sight behind the door. A walker, barely older than 7 or 8 when it was alive curled up just behind the door, groaning quietly, reaching out for you.

To make matters worse, when you managed to push it away with the door, as gently as you could, you saw its foot was chained to a radiator just behind the door. How could someone do this to their kid? Abandon them, lock them in a room and leave them for dead. From how skinny it was, you guessed the kid had starved. You'd rather rip out your own lungs than see anything like that happen to Carl, so how could anyone be so cruel?

Daryl's hand on your shoulder made you jump, and you spun around, gun raised until you realised who it was. His eyes held concern, even if he masked it with a look of disinterest. Every day it was getting easier and easier to see past that mask. That barrier. You might've wondered what that meant if you hadn't been fighting the urge to puke. Sure, you'd seen it before on the job. But usually, you got there just in time and could find the person who did it. Now, they were gone. Ran away. Hopefully bitten, or worse if they got what they deserved, but you were willing to bet good money that they didn't. It was a kid. A goddamn kid.

"I'll take care o' this," Daryl muttered, using the hand on your shoulder to manoeuvre you behind him. Your jaw clenched and you let out a sharp breath. You understood the cruelty of family much more than the average person but it still baffled you. What did any kid do to deserve that kind of cruelty? What did *this* kid do to deserve this?

Daryl returned with a bloodened bolt seconds later, and you hadn't even fucking noticed that he'd gone. You needed to bring your head back into the game. Painful as the situation was, you were going to get yourself or Daryl killed.

"Shit, sorry," You muttered, lightly banging your head on the door frame in frustration but Daryl was quick to place his hand where you'd just banged your head, so when you tried again you just met his hand. Stunned, you pulled back, confused by the skin on skin contact until you saw his hand.

"Don't be doin' that. Don't hurt yerself. It's alrigh', shit's tough. Ya dealt with plenty already," He replied quietly, before closing the door with the kid behind him, hiding your view of it. Thank god. "C'mon, found somethin'."

Daryl led you downstairs, and you were grateful for the distraction. That kid could be Sophia. Turned, in some house, some fuckin' barn or something for all you knew. God knows if you'd find her. You don't know what you'd tell Carol if you didn't.

The something he'd found was a pretty sure sign that Sophia had been here. Tucked away in a snack cupboard, underneath the shelves was a cluster of blankets of pillows. Only really comfortable and accessible for someone around 4'7/8, which was about Sophia's height. The shutter-type doors that hid the hidey-hole had a dent in them as someone had tried to break through. Probably a walker, if the footsteps of aged blood were anything to go by. But while Daryl was investigating the blankets, you followed in the footsteps of their origin. That sinking feeling returned when you reached an open door, leading down a set of stairs.

"Hey, Daryl? Did you check down here?" You whisper called, and despite how quiet you'd been, you soon realised your mistake. In the basement, there must have been a doorway or a

hatch leading to the outside of the building. Hell, you hadn't thought to check the perimeter of the garden, so the level of screwed you were was potentially catastrophic. "Shit! Daryl, move, move!"

You scrambled back to the kitchen, grabbing onto Daryl's arm as a mini horde of walkers came tumbling and stumbling behind you. You never thought they were that fast, but apparently, these guys must have eaten recently. You didn't think you'd ever been so scared when you'd had to outrun walkers during one of your first runs into Atlanta, but apparently, this had proven you wrong. Daryl gripped onto the edge of your jacket as you ran, keeping a firm grip on you, as you raced towards the back door, your closest exit. But a small group of walkers cut you off when they started banging on the backdoor. Fuck, where were these assholes coming from?

"Turn around! Back upstairs! Fuckers are blockin' the front door. Go!" Daryl shouted over the deafening groaning. The walkers weren't running, but they definitely weren't walking as slow as you'd started to get used to. You ran up the stairs, grabbing hold of Daryl's hand, tightly. When you reached the top, he overtook you, leading you to a door. No, no no no no no no, different door, different fucking door! You couldn't go in there.

"Daryl! Daryl! I can't, we gotta go back, into a different room," You snapped and he narrowed his eyes like you'd lost your mind.

"Woman, does it look like we can go back? Stop bein' a damn fool and get in!" He barked, yanking on the edge of your shirt and pushing you inside the door. Hell, he was right. There was no safe way for you to turn around without walking straight into the snapping jaws of a walker but you'd prefer that to this. You couldn't do it. Not this. It was so dark, no space. You couldn't breathe. Every inch of skin was much too tight and you had to press yourself against the wall. Daryl slammed the door shut. You knew it was just until the house cleared enough for you to get out through one of the windows or, hell, even the door if you were lucky.

At some point, your hands dropped your gun, stupid in hindsight considering the walkers outside and the safety being off of it but you couldn't breathe let alone think. Your hands drifted up to grip on your hair to ground yourself, lowering yourself to the floor, beside your gun. Daryl was saying something to you, and there were walkers outside but it was all static to you.

Gentle hands took the ones from your head and you couldn't stop yourself from lashing out. You couldn't let him hurt you again. You wouldn't, so you scratched and scratched wherever you could reach. But, your brother's touches were never gentle. This wasn't right. Why was it gentle? Shakily, you let them take your hands when you heard a hiss from your scratching and you gasped a breath in when your lungs would let you. Whoever was holding your hands was running gentle circles with their thumb, mumbling something quietly. One of the hands brought yours to their chest, holding it there over their heart.

Through the fog, there was a gentle "C'mon. Listen to my breathin', sunshine."

Slowly, the sound of soft breathing broke through the barrier and you tried with every fibre of your being to try and copy them. The hand on their chest helped, letting you follow the somewhat steady rise and fall. The other hand came up to brush the hair from your face and

you flinched instinctively and they yanked their hand back before slowly trying again. And you let them. Why did you let them?

You didn't even know your eyes had been squeezed shut until you opened them, blurry with tears and aching with how hard they'd been shut. While you didn't quite know what you'd been expecting when you opened them, you weren't expecting Daryl Dixon, holding your hand, hand brushing gently over your face and eyes full of worry. It scared you, somehow. Daryl wasn't meant to be worried, or scared. Daryl Dixon was scary and tough. And yet all you saw was sickening fear.

And you let yourself wrap your arms around him, clinging onto him like the building would collapse if you let go.

# Change

## Chapter Notes

- Canon divergence
- canon typical violence
- mention of panic attacks
- descriptions of child abuse/neglect
- references to past attempted rape/non-con

It was dark by the time the walkers cleared out enough for you to sneak into the next room and out the window. The fall wasn't quite as high as you'd been expecting, and thank god since Daryl was having to drag you around. Your legs were jelly, and your hands shook violently even if you held your gun firm. A knot formed in your stomach with every step. Daryl hadn't said anything since you were in that cupboard, and you knew he blamed you for nearly getting him killed. The strap of the messenger bag you carried with you creaked under the firm grip you had on it and your fingers ached from holding on so tight but you couldn't help it. And shit, your lip was bitten raw from nerves but you couldn't stop yourself.

Goddamn it, you were out of that closet, why the fuck were you still shaking like a weak bitch? You needed to get ahold of yourself before you fucked up again and actually got Daryl killed.

Since neither of you thought you'd be out so long, you lacked a flashlight, but Daryl seemed to know where he was going, pulling you along with a hand around your spare wrist. The little you could see passed in a blur and before you knew it, you'd reached the farm. The lights inside the house were almost all lit, and you could see shadows moving in the living room and a fire was lit in your small camp. Faintly, you could hear your people talking, quiet laughter and someone waving from on top of the RV. Daryl abruptly let go of you and spun around so quick you couldn't stop yourself from taking a step back.

"Go to my tent. I gotta talk to Carol and then we gotta talk," He said firmly, fixing you with a look that meant you shouldn't argue and you nodded nervously, not finding the courage to meet his eye yet. Unconsciously, you picked your fingers, pulling at loose skin and dirt and Daryl stared for a second before taking off towards the RV.

You sat on one of the logs outside Daryl's tent, taking a long breath to still your shaking hands as you placed your gun on the floor. Peace didn't last long when hurried footsteps rushed over and Rick suddenly came into view, crouching in front of you.

"What the hell happened? You and Daryl were gone longer than you said you'd be and you look shaken as hell," Rick commented softly, carefully taking your hand, testing the waters

and you appreciated his patience. It wasn't the first time Rick had seen you post-panic attack, so he knew better than to try and bombard you with sudden touch. Made you flinchy.

You glanced at him briefly before taking your lip between your teeth and your next words were muffled from it "I'll be fine. Just my stupid brain doin' stupid shit."

"It ain't stupid, (Y/N). We both know it's called a trauma response," He chided, squeezing your hand

"It's been 20 years, Rick. I shouldn't be reacting like that anymore. It makes me a goddamn liability, "You ground out, squeezing his hand hard to avoid starting to pull at your hair.

"C'mon now. How long you been a cop now?"

"16 years," You mumbled, foot bouncing, though Rick was quick to put his spare hand on your knee to stop it.

"How many people who faced child abuse and neglect did we deal with that had gotten over it when they became adults?" You let out a huff, rubbed your eye and looked away. It felt like being scolded like a teacher, but you knew he was doing it to be kind. Rick had always been good like that, even if it didn't feel like it at the time.

"None, "You grumbled and Rick let out a quiet laugh, shaking his head slightly. Someone cleared their throat behind him, and a swift look revealed Daryl, already starting to light the mini campfire outside his tent. He was trying not to seem like he was eavesdropping without standing there awkwardly like a child waiting to talk to their teacher. Rick turned around and nodded before giving your hand another squeeze and standing up.

"Let me know when y'all are finished. Glenn's itchin' to come see you. Didn't want him to overwhelm you," He stated, brushing his fingers over your shoulder, then taking his leave. But you wished he'd stayed, wished he'd taken you over to the group even if it would've stressed you out more. You'd rather anything than be on your own with Dixon. Seeing the scratches across his arms in the newly lit fire built the guilt within your stomach. Not only had you risked Daryl's life, but you'd also hurt him in the process. God, you were such an idiot.

Daryl sat next to you, close enough to comfort you but far enough for you to move away if it became too much. Even when he was angry with you, he was always so considerate and that made you feel so much worse. His head twisted to look at you, even as you kept your eyes fixed on the slowly rising flames of the fire. Oh shit, here it comes. He was going to tell you how much you'd fucked up, and how he hated-

"How're ya feelin'?" He asked, somewhat awkwardly. Wait, what? He should be shouting at you, screaming about how you could've killed him. Why wasn't he?

"Hell, woman, I ain't gonna scream at ya for havin' a panic attack. Been there, I get it," He scoffed out a laugh of disbelief. Shit, you didn't know you'd said that out loud.

"Sorry. Force of habit, "Sheepishly, you rubbed the back of your neck before bringing the hand around to run over your face, letting out a heavy sigh.

"I guessed. Told me enough about yer brother to know. Ya claustrophobic 'cause o' him too?"Daryl readjusted so he was angled more towards you, and you finally worked up the knowledge to look at him, nodding silently. "Ya wanna talk about it?"

"It's stupid, "You replied and Daryl immediately shook his head, face contorting to a look of mild anger.

"Ya gotta quit sayin' that. It ain't stupid if it still fucks ya up in yer 30s," He shot back quickly and you almost flinched before your brain kicked in. He was pissed off that you thought it was stupid not at you. *Well, at least a little section of your sense was coming back.*

*The shaky breath you let out didn't go amiss and hesitantly, Daryl extended his hand to you. He was awkward and much too stiff, but he was there. Offering his comfort and affection, even if he struggled. The care he put in made your heartache and you were quick to place your hand in his, intertwining your fingers. "When I was a kid, I was scared of the dark. Like all kids are, y'know. But after what happened with his friend, I was terrified to sleep without the lights on in case someone tried to come in. He let me get away with it for a while, but after about a month, he told me I needed to start acting like an adult. I was fifteen. Fucking fifteen. One night, he dragged me out to his car, pushed me into the trunk of his car. Locked me in there all night, no matter how much I screamed and cried. He put me in there, to 'build character'. I was a fucking child."*

*Something was different this time. Normally, that story made you cry, made you shaky and break down. But now, you were just angry. Rage bubbled in every fibre of your being. How could he do that to you? You did everything right and he treated you like shit. Maybe you were starting to realise that he had no goddamn right.*

*It felt like a breath of damn fresh air.*

*Daryl's grip on your hand was almost excruciatingly tight, and when you looked over his eyes were locked onto the fire, teeth grinding behind the thin skin of his jaw. "No wonder ya hate the dark. I'm sorry for puttin' ya in there."*

*"We didn't have a choice, Daryl. I nearly got us killed just because I'm so weak that I couldn't get over a childhood fear," You replied, but Daryl gave a sharp tug on your joint hand.*

*"Stop it. Yer not weak, yer a goddamn survivor. Weak people don' run from the people they're scared of. If ya was weak, ya'd still be in Virginia livin' with him," He said and you were thrown back. Did he... did he think he was weak? Because he stayed with Merle? Daryl Dixon was the bravest man you'd ever met in your life. Nothing fazed him, nothing scared him. Not even his own brother. You couldn't say the same for yours.*

*"You ain't weak either Dixon. Not many people could put up with Merle Dixon as you can," You teased, nudging his shoulder and Daryl let out a quiet laugh. He shuffled closer so you were shoulder to shoulder, not that you noticed too much. His eyes were such a gorgeous*



*colour, light and dark blue melting together to create this perfect amalgamation that was just so...Daryl.*

*Wow, maybe you should be a poet with sappy bullshit like that.*

*"Maybe yer right, sunshine, "He muttered fondly before the two of you fell into a comfortable silence. Nothing else needed to be said, not right now anyway. It'd never felt like this before, with you and Daryl. You'd always been at each other's throats. It made you wonder what changed, but if you thought too much, it might just become a pity party. "Stop overthinkin' so much, woman. Just breathe for a second."*

*You jabbed him with your elbow, but squeezed his hand tightly, and rested your head on his shoulder. He tensed for a second before finally relaxing. And ever so slowly, he let himself place his head on top of yours, and you couldn't stop yourself from smiling, just a little.*

# Hershel

## Chapter Notes

canon divergence  
canon typical violence  
reference to past attempted rape/non-con  
Daryl gets shot

Apparently, you weren't as stable on your feet as you'd initially thought yourself to be. When Glenn had finally been given the go-ahead, he launched at you and grabbed you in a tight hug, knocking you to the floor. He mumbled apologies but didn't let you go. Faintly, you heard Daryl laugh from his place at the campfire. There was only so much privacy he could grant in his own camp without going in his tent.

"Jesus Christ, I was so worried. What happened?" You managed to turn him so you could look up at him without letting go, and he seemed appreciative.

You shook your head. You were so fucking tired, emotionally and mentally. Pouring your heart out a second time didn't exactly sound appealing "Not right now. Are *you* okay? You look a little out of it."

There was this look in his eye like he was dying to tell you something. Both that familiar look of glee and anxiety lingered behind his eyes and it set you right on edge. What had happened while you were away?

He nodded almost aggressively and you squinted at him, he was practically buzzing despite that tinge of fear. "When you were gone we went to get water in the well and there was this walker inside and we tried to get it out with a piece of canned meat but-"

Jesus, he really *was* buzzing. Hell, now you wanted to know what lit a fire in his ass. He was truly living up to his nickname now, you could barely understand what he was saying.

"-it wouldn't take it, so they sent me down the well. I mean, I didn't really want to but I went down and I put a rope around it and-"

Wait, wait, wait, back the fuck up. They did WHAT? You quickly pushed Glenn off, sitting up, as Glenn looked at you in shock and confusion.

"They sent you down the well when there was a fuckin' walker in there? I really hope you're jokin' right now Glenn Rhee,"

"....I'm joking?" He replied, with a forced lopsided grin and you felt your jaw grind and you shot up, strength reappearing out of nowhere. Glenn was impossibly fast in grabbing your

wrist, holding on tight even when you tried to pull out.

"Do not make me restrain you, Rhee, I swear to god. Let me go," You said through gritted teeth and Glenn narrowed his eyes, challenging you. Goddamn it, you hated it when he acted like you.

"Not until you calm down," He shot back, clearly trying to remain a peacemaker. How could he stand up for them like that?

"They sent you down that goddamn well knowin' you could've gotten bitten! I'm meant to just forgive that?" You snapped back, glaring at him when he tried to tug you back.

"She's right, kid. Ain't right," Daryl mumbled from his seat on the log, though he pretended not to be interested, when you turned, you saw his white-knuckled grip on his knife.

"We couldn't have left it in there! It was gonna mess with the water!" Glenn defended and you let out a scoff. He could've been bitten and polluted water was his biggest concern??

"That's what you care about? Why is it always you, huh? You're the damn scapegoat! Sendin' you on runs because you're quick on your feet is one thing, but lettin' you- no- *making* you go in there?"

"But I'm fine! Look at me (Y/N), I'm perfectly fine!"

"What if you hadn't been? What would you have done then?" You questioned, jabbing a finger in his chest and he fell silently, eyes darting away. The pressing feeling of eyes on you suddenly became stifling. With a deep breath, you turned to your group, who had all ceased conversation to watch you. They all looked away immediately or refused to meet your eyes and you knew they felt guilty. Funny how they only felt guilty when you called them out on it.

Real fucking funny.

The next week or so passed with little commotion. Carl was finally up and about (and being a little shit from what you heard) but it was good to see him laughing and back to his usual self. You'd been teaching him to shoot, with permission from his parents of course, while Rick and Shane had been teaching some of the others, including Beth, Patricia and Jimmy. Honestly, you thought Rick had told you to teach Carl just to keep you away from Shane? It wasn't a damn secret that Glenn had spilt what happened in the CDC to Rick, Lori and Daryl. Damn boy couldn't keep a secret to save his life, and while you wanted to be pissed off at him, it was three of the people you trusted yourself. And you didn't know if you'd have had the courage to tell them anyway, even if they'd already mostly figured out by now. Not like it was hard to piece together. Speaking of not being able to hide secrets, Glenn was hiding something. And from the way he kept glancing at Lori, it wasn't hard to tell who was involved. But no matter what it was, he wasn't spilling, yet at least.

But of course, peace in the apocalypse never lasts long, as was proven when Andrea started screaming something about a walker. It wasn't anything you were too worried about though. Andrea was a big girl, she could handle it, as she kept insisting. You were more worried

about Daryl. He'd gone looking for Sophia again since you'd found that hidey-hole and could cut down where you were looking for her. Shane and Rick had gone out earlier, but they'd long been back. You just had this god awful feeling in your stomach.

You'd gone as far as to roam the grounds to try and ease the feeling but all you did was end up bumping into Hershel.

"One of my horses is missin'. Did one of your people take it?" Rick suddenly appeared around the corner and fuck knows how he'd got there since you hadn't seen him sneak over. He shared a look with you after your slightly stunned look faded.

"Daryl told me you knew about that," You replied, folding your arms. Motherfucker. Not only was he still missing, but he'd also stolen a horse. He was not making this 'staying on the farm' business easy.

"I did not," Rick let out a deep sigh at Hershel's reply and he looked to you. You gave him a nod.

"I'll speak with him when he gets back. He shouldn't be doin' that, I'm so sorry," You stated. Hershel seemed a good man, caring for his family, but he had a habit of rubbing you up the wrong way, even if he was in the right in this situation.

"What about Jimmy?" Hershel pushed, screwing the lid onto whatever machine he'd just filled with gas. Hell if you knew. "Did you take him out today? Did he also give you the allusion of my consent?"

Damn, you really needed to start staying in the loop with this farmer family. Especially, now your brother was messing with the daughter. Which was another fucking thing on its own.

"No, he said it outright. I took the boy at his word

"Jimmy is 17. He's not my kin, but I am responsible for him. These things need to be discussed with me," He stated and it took everything in you not to roll your eyes. It was the end of the damn world, the dead were walking around, and he was worried about a boy learning to defend himself. These people needed to get a damn grip.

Rick's voice was strained when he spoke, and it was clear he shared your sentiment though, much like you, he was trying to play nice "Sounds like we need to work on our communication. What do you suggest?"

Hershel finally looked up, giving you a disproving look. Why you had no idea. You'd been a goddamn delight. "Keep it simple. I'll control my people, you control yours."

Rick gave a stiff nod and you forced a smile before turning around and heading back towards the camp. As soon as Hershel was out of earshot you let out a loud groan, pulling lightly at the skin below your eyes in frustration.

"Oh my fucking god, this has to be a nightmare," Rick let out a loud laugh, clapping your shoulder lightly. "No, I'm serious! The world is over and he's worried about the kid learning

to save his ass."

"Ain't much reasonin' with these people. But we gotta play nice if we want to stay here,"

"Honestly, Rick, I think we'd be better fairing on our own, "You replied shortly, but Rick immediately stopped you with a hand on your arm.

"Don't be doin' that. I know you ain't exactly buddies with Hershel, but we can't do it on the road. How many people have we lost already?" He fixed you with a long, hard stare and suddenly you knew what it was like for Glenn to be on the receiving end of your stern words. And shit, it was not pleasant.

You sighed "We can't stay here forever, Grimes. You know that damn well. Hershel's gonna keep cutting us shorter and shorter until we have to leave with or without Sophia. He's already nagging us now that Carl's on his feet, no matter how weak he still is."

Rick pinched his nose and nodded "I know. I know. But we have to make this work, (Y/N). Carl can't be out there. Can't say I'm thrilled about you being out there either," You let out a scoff, giving him a light thump on the shoulder.

"I'm not a child, Rick. You know I can take care of myself. Was takin' care of our people months before you came along," Rick let out a light chuckle as you folded your arms over your chest. To him, you just looked like a petulant child, especially considering the unintentional mild pout you were wearing.

"Yeah, yeah, I'm well aware. That's the problem, you take care of our group before you take care of yourself," There was nothing you hated more than when Rick Grimes was right.

"Shut up," You said with faux sharpness and Rick shook his head again with a fond smile. The moment was quickly cut short by the aforementioned Andrea shouting about walkers.

For fucks sake.

Rick went running over and you followed over. Andrea kept going on and on about how good of a shot she was, and admitted; y, she had a damn good eye, but it'd be interesting to see if she had the common sense to go with it.

Logic told you no, but it'd be interesting nonetheless.

Shane immediately came running forward and you almost rolled your eyes. Motherfucker was limping, and you knew Hershel had told him to rest but of course, he always had to play the macho. Especially if he thought Lori was watching. Yeah, you weren't blind to that either. Dale hung from the side of the RV, clinging to the ladder, as Rick started arguing with Shane about how Hershel wanted to deal with the situation.

Speaking of, Shane kept glancing over in your direction even as he limped toward the walker with T-Dog and Rick met your eye. Looks like you were joining the party. Oh, how overjoyed you were to be playing babysitter for Shane Walsh once again. It's like the world

never ended. Dale threw your gun and you caught it with a hand up, silently thanking him, before jogging to the others.

But that wasn't... that wasn't a walker. That was Daryl Dixon, covered in blood, a thick coat of grime wearing...

walker ears?

"Wait, wait, wait! It's Dixon!" You called, slowing to a stop as Shane panted and grunted in pain beside you. Subconsciously, you shifted more towards Rick. Rick brought his gun up, clearly not processing the sight in front of him before he faltered.

Daryl winced with every breath he took, and from the deepened red on his side. He was injured, and from the look of one of his bolts, dragging beside him, you'd found your culprit. Even despite that, the glare he held was as strong as ever, pointed directly at Rick.

"That's the third time you've pointed that thing at my head. Ya gone pull the trigger or what?" He growled and you couldn't stop yourself from letting out a small laugh. You stepped over, about to reach for the wound when a shot sounded through the air, followed by a sharp ringing in your ear. Daryl fell before you, and faintly you heard yourself shout out an expletive. Who the fuck fired that shot? Rick was shouting something, so it probably wasn't him. Oh fuck, oh fuck. He couldn't be dead. Daryl Dixon was invincible, he couldn't die.

You pat his face gently, anxiety welling in your stomach and suddenly your lungs felt much too tight. Until his eyes fluttered and he regained consciousness for a few blissful seconds. Instantly, you pulled an arm over your shoulder, despite knowing you couldn't hold his weight. But you'd be damned if you let someone else touch him if they'd just tried to shoot him. You'd take as long as you'd need just to get him there.

"I was kiddin'," Daryl slurred and Shane came over, grabbing your shoulder but you shoved him off.

"Don't you fuckin' touch me," You hissed, giving him the harshest glare you could muster but he just smirked at you. Rick was quick to push him out of the way, taking Daryl's other arm instead as T-Dog came to assist you with the arm you were holding. Together, the three of you dragged Daryl towards the house, where the Greene's and the women of your group, bar Andrea came sprinting over.

"Oh my god, is he dead?!" Andrea yelled as she and Dale approached and you could've gone absolutely apeshit. She fucking shot him because she couldn't listen to basic instructions and she had the nerve to be worried?

"Unconscious. No thanks to you," You snapped, and Shane came up the back, walking a bit too close for comfort. Had you not been carrying part of the weight of Daryl, you might've turned around and broken his nose again.

"But look at him! What the hell happened? He's wearing ears!" Glenn exclaimed anxiously and as the Greene's rapidly approached, you decided it might be better if they didn't find out. You ripped the necklace off of him and threw them at Shane. If that asshole wanted to be

useful, he could do that for you. He gave you a sharp look but shoved them in his pocket without a word. T-Dog suddenly stopped, halting the rest of you, and unclipped something from Daryl's crossbow strap. Hell, you hadn't even noticed.

"Guys, isn't this Sophia's?"

# Sunshine

## Chapter Notes

Canon divergence

Mention of missing child

Mild descriptions of injury and injury care (eg stitching and needles)

Descriptions of blood

Implications of past child abuse

Daryl had explained what had happened as Hershel stitched up the gaping wound in his side, you and Rick gathered around the edge of the bed with a map, though you'd been stuck to his bedside as soon as you'd placed him into the spare room. It took everything in you not to jump him as soon as he woke up, fussing and fretting until Rick had to grab your shoulder and shove your ass onto a chair while Daryl grumbled and scoffed. Much too stressed to notice the dimming of sunlight let alone the darkening of his cheeks as you fumbled. Shane had eventually joined the group in the spare room, much to your chagrin and while he was taking in everything Rick and Daryl were saying, his eyes wouldn't budge from your face even as you anxiously avoided his eyes. Every nerve felt on edge, partially from Daryl's situation, but mostly from the man situated in the corner. Lori sat beside him, which was a whole other fucking story. Despite everything he'd done, she was apparently very willing to let him back into her life and you just didn't fucking get it. Actually no, you did, but it didn't mean you appreciated it, especially if it kept him closer to you as it had been as of late.

"I found it washed up on the creek bed right there," Daryl pointed to a river on the south end of the map and you watched him wince as Hershel cleaned him up. Carefully, you moved to beside Rick and took the cloth he was holding to his head. He glared up at you briefly, to which you met with a stern look and pressed down gently. He groaned quietly, scowling but didn't try and remove the cloth from your hand "She must have dropped it crossing there somewhere."

"Cuts the grid almost in half," Rick stated looking to you, using a pencil to cross off the northern section of the map but you found it hard to concentrate on Sophia's possible location right then. Daryl said he'd been in and out in the river after he got impaled by his own arrow (which you would totally be mocking him for once he was healed up and in better spirits) so god knows what sort of infection he could have picked up. Even with the medicine Hershel had and the stuff Shane had scouted from that school, nothing was guaranteed any more. Sure, Carl had survived, but he could easily die from an infected papercut somewhere down the road.

"How's he lookin'?" You asked Hershel, biting on the nails of your other hand, though Rick gave you a disapproving look and Hershel spared a glance from his work. If you didn't know any better, you'd say he was giving you a look of sympathy.



"I had no idea we'd be going through the antibiotics so quickly. Any idea what happened to my horse?" The older man finished up, cleaning his hands in the basin opposite the bed and Daryl scoffed.

"Yea, the one who almos' killed me? If it's smart, it left the country," Daryl snapped and you pressed a little harder on the cloth covering his bullet graze and he hissed, glaring at you again but you just shook your head, though you kinda wanted to laugh at his comment.

Hershel dried his hands, shooting Daryl a vexed narrow of the eyes "We call that one Nelly, as in Nervous Nelly. I could have told you she'd throw you if you'd bothered to ask. It's a wonder you people have survived this long."

Was this guy serious? You could understand him being pissed off about the horse, and you were on his side of the argument but was the dig really necessary?

"Well, we've been doin' just fine until now. Don't need advice from a farmer," You snapped quietly, and Rick immediately glared at you.

"(Y/N), that's enough. We need Hershel's help, the least you could do is show him some respect," Hershel nodded, standing beside Rick. Now if they wanted an apology, they could go fuck themselves. You weren't gonna start brown-nosing now. After a moment of tense silence, Rick released a heavy sigh through his nose before picking up the map and leaving you in the room with Daryl. Shane took after Rick, though not before holding your eyes for a long second. Lori, Rick and Shane were talking behind the now closed door but you couldn't bring yourself to care when Hershel moved on to the gun graze.

He shoos your hand away "Thank you for holdin' that miss. Though I can't say I'm as appreciative for your lack of respect," He commented and you let out a quiet scoff. The fucking cheek of this guy.

"Far as I'm concerned, my respect is earned and not given," You retorted through puffed cheeks.

"My family and I opening my farm out to your people, giving out our supplies and resources aren't enough to earn your respect? We looked after your boy, now we're lookin' after your friend here," He replied sharply, applying medical tape to Daryl's head as you folded your arms over your chest. This guy wanted to play wise old elder? Alright, you could deal with that

"I appreciate everything you've done for us, and I follow the conditions of your land because of that. But the way you talk to some of my people don't make up that respect," You said and Hershel narrowed his eyes at you

"Speaking of the conditions of my land, I know you have something with that Asian boy, but considering you aren't married, I'd appreciate it if you could keep your physical affections to a minimum while on my property," Oh god, you couldn't stop yourself from laughing directly in his face. Something going on? With Glenn of all people? Jesus Christ. Even Daryl, as much as he groaned afterward due to the strain it caused on his side, let out a boisterous snort in response "Is there something you two find amusing?"

"Yea. That 'Asian boy' is her little brother. Well, mighta's well be," Daryl explained through a chuckle, and Hershel's eyebrows almost rose into his hairline. It wasn't all that surprising when he dismissed himself from the room a few seconds later with a mumbled apology.

"How you feelin' Dixon?" You asked gently, helping him settle into bed properly rather than lying partially on his side. He let out a quiet grunt and you felt your anxiety spike, muttering an apology.

"Thanks. I'll be fine, ain't nothin' I ain't dealt with before," He replied, waving a hand in dismissal and you tilted your head, confused. Why was he brushing off something like that? He literally had a hole between his ribs and he was acting like it was nothing. But, by now you knew better than to ask him about it outright, so you gave him a small smirk.

"You're tellin' me this ain't the first time you fell on your own arrow?" You teased and he rolled his eyes, and let out an exasperated groan

"Hit a man while he's down why don't ya?" He said and laughed, though it was quickly followed by a wince to which you placed a hand on his shoulder. It was only then you realised just how filthy he was, and it wasn't like he was in any state to shower, seeing as he could barely stand up. You eyed the pot of water and the rag in the corner of the room and wordlessly moved over, picked them up, and brought them over. Perched on the end of the bed, you put your hand out, gesturing towards the redneck's arm and he watched you curiously. "The hell ya doin'?"

"Well, you can barely stand up to shower and I don't really want any of your cuts getting infected. Besides, I wanna check for walker bites," You rationalised, placing a towel on the bed to avoid spilling any water on the bed.

"I ain't bitten," Daryl narrowed his eyes at you and you shook your head, giving him a firm look.

"I know. But I'd rather make sure you were safe than be sorry later," You explained, wiggling your fingers playfully and he glanced down at them, releasing a sigh.

There was a long pause before he reluctantly placed his arm in your hand "Knock yerself out, sunshine."

Carefully, you dipped the rag into the water and slowly wiped off as much dirt as you could get. He just watched you and had it been anyone else you might've squirmed, but this was comfortable. Daryl was comfortable. "Why'd you start callin' me that?"

You gently scrubbed at a hardened section of dirt, before wiping the dried blood surrounding a small cut. From the looks of it, he'd caught it sharply on a twig branch, probably while he'd been climbing.

"Huh?" He asked as you switched to the other side of the bed so you could clean his other arm once you'd deemed the one you'd been wiping decent enough. Voluntarily, he offered his arm to you and you got to work on that side. His right arm was much more caked, evidently being the side that had taken most of his weight when he fell, and you noticed more scrapes

on this side. Though you supposed it made sense - he was right-handed so most of his weight when climbing probably relied on his right arm.

"Sunshine. Why'd you start callin' me that?" You weren't entirely sure what made you ask the question if you were being completely honest. It was something that'd been on your mind for a while, whenever you spared a moment to think about it too much. Maybe you asked to fill the silence. Or maybe your curiosity got the best of you.

His eyes fell to the ceiling like he couldn't answer the question without looking at you. At first, he shrugged, but after a small gap, he glanced back to you, a soft look you couldn't quite recognise in his eyes "Dunno. Started as an insult, an' I guess it just stuck. 'Cuz yer like..., ya keep everyone together. Keep 'em calm, even when shit hits the fan. Somethin' like that."

Well. That wasn't quite the response you were expecting, nor did you think he thought of you like that. If anything, you thought you caused half the problems while trying to fix them. Regardless, had you been told a month ago Daryl had said that to you, you might've laughed in your own face and flipped them off. Your cheeks were burning for some unknown reason and you made a point to focus on a particular spot where dried blood has somewhat fused with the hair on his arm.

"Never knew you were such a sap, Dixon," You commented, trying to brush off how flustered you felt and he chuckled softly, hissing again when it irritated his wound.

"I ain't the one blushin' right now, sunshine," He teased back but when you worked up the courage to look at him, he was already staring at you, with a smile that seemed almost tender.

Suddenly, that nickname felt a lot more intimate than it had before.

# Be safe

## Chapter Summary

Canon divergence  
canon typical violence  
brief mention of injury

Something was up with Glenn. He looked shaken and kept looking at the barn and twiddling his fingers, before looking away quickly and checking to see if anyone had noticed. And on top of that, Carl had picked up a gun and had been carrying it around, which Lori now held in her hand. Dale, Shane, Rick and yourself were circled around her, with Carl sitting on a log just behind Rick, but still within eyeshot.

"It's my fault, I let him into the RV. He said he wanted a walkie, that you sent him for one," Dale explained, and you folded your arms over your chest. Since he'd been shot, he'd been acting different, and hell you couldn't blame him - he did get fucking *shot*.

"So on top of everything, he lied," Lori let out a frustrated sigh before sharply turning to you, so suddenly you almost jumped "What's he thinking?"

You looked over to Carl, and he gave you a desperate look. It almost made your heart melt, but these were his parents. You couldn't lie straight to their faces "Since he's been learnin' to shoot, he wants to start comin' out with me an' Daryl, once he's better, to look for Sophia. I ain't the one to make the call, but I'm happy to take him if you are."

Learning to shoot was one thing, applying that to the world you lived in now was something completely different. Maybe getting him used to it now where you had somewhere safe to return to, with food and, most importantly, medical supplies, would be a good thing? As opposed to him learning when you potentially get kicked to the road and are scrambling for supplies.

Lori shook her head and you nodded. You understood that was her baby "No. I'm not comfortable with it."

"Fair enough," You agreed and leaned back against the tree. Shane rubbed a hand over his face, eyes something vicious.

"Are you bein' serious?" He snapped

"Don't make me out to be the bad guy here. Rick?" She turned to him and he stood in silence, glancing at you and Carl before releasing a breath from his nose.

"I trust you and Daryl to keep my boy safe, but after last time, I'd rather him stay here," Rick said after a long pause and you nodded respectfully. As much as you disagreed with the decision, he wasn't your boy. It wasn't your choice.

"Alright then. I'll give you time to talk with this one," You said, patting Carl's shoulder gently, and his head snapped up to you, with an expression you could only possibly describe as betrayal.

"Are you kidding me? You're my aunt, you're supposed to be on my side!" He exclaimed and you folded your arms over your chest, fixing him with a stern look.

"Had you asked normally, I might've been. But stealing is stealing. And the decision isn't mine to make. Actions have consequences, buddy," You replied. Carl's face curled into a scowl and he turned his glare back to the ground, while Lori gave you an appreciative half-smile to which you nodded before heading back to your camp.

Cleaning guns was so painfully tedious, but apparently, it was the only job going right now, considering you and Dale were currently sitting on the roof of the RV, meticulously taking everything apart before everyone left for a shooting lesson. Lori was on the bench beside the RV, checking resources and making a list of what you all need. You barely paid any attention to her until you saw Glenn wandering towards her, looking around like a skittish toddler.

"Everythin' alright? You wanna help me?" Lori questioned, clearly noticing Glenn's nervousness and he almost jumped, as if he didn't notice her clearly obvious presence.

"Uh, no. I just need to speak to (Y/N). Been trying to find her,"

"You found her. What's up Sonic?" You called from the roof and he almost jumped a mile, shoulders tensed. When he turned around, he looked sheepish and almost afraid.

"Can we- uh- can we talk in private? Just for like two secs," Had you known better, you might have said his hands were shaking. Fixing him a small nod, you rose to descend the van while Dale patted your shoulder gently. Like he knew what was about to happen. You fought back the confusion on your face as best you could, dropping down the last of the rungs of the ladder. Just to spite you, a loose rock tilted under your shoe, and Glenn surged forward to catch your elbows. Lori gave a quiet laugh, though not one of malice and you smiled at her. Quietly, Glenn pulled you away, no time given to say a word to the mother before you were in a clearing, a reasonable distance from the rest of the skeleton crew of your group.

Letting out a huff, you turned to him folding your arms "Okay, what's up with you, sonic? You've been acting like a frightened hamster for the last day or so," You levelled him with a hard stare and he swallowed hard, eyes darting away, to which you leant over to catch it again "Cmon bud, don't make me talk to you like I do to Carl."

Glenn cracked half a smile at that, shaking his head slightly, but the smile fell as soon as he seemed to catch up with whatever it was he wanted to tell you "Well, uh. I don't really know how to put this so..."

You gave a prompting look, raising your eyebrows and he took a deep breath. Seriously, what was stressing him out so much on such an idyllic farm?

"There's walkers in the barn.."

Ah, well, that would cause quite a bit of stress wouldn't it? Your eyes widened, and you immediately grabbed the back of his shirt and pulled him closer, trying to ignore the rising panic in your chest.

"Who else knows?" You ask in a hissed whisper and Glenn gives you a look of alarm, eyes darting anywhere but your own. "Rhee, I'm being serious, who else knows?"

"Besides the family, just Dale," He murmured, biting the inside of his cheek and you nearly lost your shit. How stupid were these people?

"Wait, you're tryin' to tell me that this wasn't an accident? That some walkers didn't just wander into the farm. Hershel put them in there? Around his daughters?"

"He thinks they're sick, (Y/N). His wife, his stepson. Friends, neighbours. He thinks they're gonna get better," God this just got worse and worse didn't it? He thought they were *sick*? Did he watch the news, and listen to the radio just once before shit went to hell? Did he not listen to the story about Otis (whether you thought Shane was lying was a different matter of course)?

"What about Maggie? She's left the farm, she's seen how it is out there. Does she seriously believe they're sick after all she's seen? You an' I know it ain't pretty," Glenn closed his eyes before nodding.

"She does. She told me not to tell you but it was killing me not to let you know because you always know what to do and I just-" He was talking too fast, so rushed you could barely understand him. He needed to stop and breathe, take a second.

Placing a hand on his shoulder, you squeezed gently "Take a breather, Glenn. It's alright. We'll figure this out. You said Dale knows?"

"Yeah. He's already tried to talk to Hershel about it. Apparently, he brushed him off and started insisting on us leaving soon instead."

Great. So now you had even less time to deal with this problem. Incredible.

Lori came over and you quickly sprung apart, trying to act as if you hadn't just heard about a possible life-threatening issue on the farm, and she raised an eyebrow at you but said nothing, folding a piece of paper in her hand. When you glanced at Glenn from the corner of your eye, he looked even more nervous than before, almost sweating if you looked close enough.

"If you're done whisperin', I was wonderin' if I could borrow Glenn for a second?" She requested, giving you one of those motherly half smiles and you gave a small nod, letting go of Glenn, though admittedly you had forgotten you were holding onto his shirt.

"Yeah, alright. Gotta check on Daryl before we leave for that run anyway. See you in 20, Sonic," Glenn waved as you jogged off, but the desperate look of 'don't make me do this' made you laugh a little. Heading back to the RV, you placed a hand over your eyes so you could look up at Dale.

"Dale, you got a book I could borrow? Wanna give something to Daryl before we head off so he ain't bored," You called up and he looked down at you. A knowing smile rose on his lips as he climbed down the RV's ladder to greet you at the bottom. You followed behind him as he entered the RV, rummaging around for something to read in the various drawers and shelves stuffed full of his belongings.

"I see you two have suddenly got very close. What happened to all the screaming and snarky comments?" He started nonchalantly as he searched and you folded your arms over your chest, leaning back against the sink.

"Ain't no point startin' fights. And he's mellowed out since Merle. Ain't got much to argue about anymore," You shrugged, watching Lori and Glenn talk through the window. Whatever it was looked a little intense.

"I hear he's even got a special nickname for you. Sunlight, was it?" Dale turned his head to look at you in the corner of his eye and you shuffled slightly under his watch.

"Sunshine," You replied cautiously, narrowing your eyes. This conversation had suddenly turned, and you weren't sure if you liked this new direction.

"Ah, right. Seems very sweet for just two friends," He commented, turning back to the shelf he was searching, lifting up bits of paper and boxes.

"I don't know what you're implyin'. I call Glenn Sonic all the time," You shot back, though your voice lacked any venom.

"A video game character and an arguable reference to Apollo are two different things, wouldn't you agree?" You furrowed your eyebrows, head tilted slightly. How the hell was Apollo relevant to this conversation?

"Apollo?"

"Y'know Greek God of the sun?" Rolling your eyes, you let out a huff, turning back to the window. Lori and Glenn had separated, so now you just watched the grass blowing. Anything to ignore the heat on your cheeks, or the slight smirk on Dale's face.

"I hardly think Dixon was trying to call me a sun god, Dale," From the corner of your eye, you saw him raise an eyebrow like he didn't believe you, and if you didn't like him quite so much, you might've punched it right off.

"Regardless, it's a very couple-like term."

"Again, I don't know what you're talkin' about," You repeated, giving him a stern stare and he chuckled, raising his hands, one now holding a book, in surrender.

"Alright, I was just making conversation. Go on, give it to your "friend"," He said, handing the book to you and you gave him a half-playful glare before walking out, hearing him laugh again before you closed the door.

Walking to Dixon's tent was a painful experience. Fighting to reduce the redness of your cheeks, even going as far to scrub your forehead so it looked like you'd just gotten sunburnt on your face, was all for nought.

"Why's ya cheeks so red?" Daryl asked before you could even climb into his tent properly. Goddamn it.

"Wow, Dixon you sure know how to flatter a girl, "You quipped with a smile, trying to shake off the question and he gave you a look. "And to think, I came in here to bring you somethin' to cure your boredom."

He rolled his eyes before lazily extending his hand "Give me the damn book, woman."

You raised it out of his reach, you grinned and he let out a huff, but you noticed how the corner of his lips quirked up into a smile "Not until you apologise for makin' fun of my looks."

"Hardly made fun of yer looks, ya fool," He muttered, and you pretended to start to get up, with a look of disgust but Daryl gently wrapped his hand around your elbow and tugged. "Aight, aight. I'm sorry for makin' fun of ya beauty. Yer pretty as a sunflower. Ya happy now?"

Though he said it jokingly, you couldn't fight the burning that returned tenfold to your cheeks and the tips of your ears and you had to look away to stop yourself from smiling. Handing the book back, you gave him a small poke on his good side to try and distract him from the obvious gap you'd left in the conversation.

"Much better. The book ain't good, just wanted you to have somethin' to do while I'm on a run. I'll getcha somethin' more interestin' when I'm out, aight?" You said but Daryl just stared out you. Clearly, he hadn't taken in what you'd said and after a few seconds, the intensity of his stare was starting to make you fidgety. Your heart raced as he scanned every little detail of your face and it was only when you cleared your throat that he came back to reality. "Aight?"

"Yeah, aight. Be safe, sunshine, you hear? Don't do any stupid shit," He commented, although a tad awkwardly, given the silence he'd just created. Pushing yourself up into a crouch, you saw Glenn approaching out of the mesh window of Daryl's tent.

"How can I? I'm leavin' the stupid with you," You took his hand briefly and squeezed before taking your leave before you regretted your action. But just behind you, Daryl smiled fondly and shook his head. Fool woman.



# Pharmacy

## Chapter Summary

canon typical violence

light gore

canon divergence

reader has a bit of an attitude problem, but so does maggie

reader is a bit of a mother hen

You always thought people were exaggerating when they said that tension was thick enough to be cut with a knife. There was no way arhat could even be true, could there?

Now you could see how wrong you were.

Glenn and Maggie kept exchanging glances, though Glenn's were more on the side of worry and nerves, Maggie's was...well, pissed off to put it lightly. Riding just behind them was almost painful. Someone was dying to get words into the air and you were placing mental bets on who would break first.

"You didn't have to come. Me and (Y/N) could have handled it. You can hate me from a distance," Glenn commented as the three of you reached the road. Your horse stopped for a second, clearly spooked nu something and you leaned forward to pat it gently, trying not to seem like you were eavesdropping.

Ah. You thought you could see where this was going. The barn. The barn that's full of walkers. Walkers that might escape and kill you. That barn.

"I asked for your trust and you betrayed it," She barked harshly, finally snapping her head to look at Glenn. "Now my dad's pissed at me."

Looking down at the reigns of your horse, you fiddled with its mane, suddenly feeling very out of place. Is this what it was like for Glenn when you and Daryl used to have screaming matches? No, that was more fists flying, this was a domestic dispute.

"And don't you try an' act all innocent. I saw y'all whispering around earlier. I know he told you." When you looked up, more than a little surprised by the sudden directed attack and you put your hands up (well as much as you could while holding the reigns).

"Hey, I didn' say nothin'," You mumbled and her jaw set, turning the corner with you and Glenn in tow. Glancing over to your friend, you raised an eyebrow and he tilted his head in a subtle nod. "So your dad thinks they're sick? You think that, even after the well incident?"

Pulling her horse to a stop, she let out a sharp huff out of her nose, climbing off the horse as fast as possible. You'd come to a stop outside a pharmacy, with a little corner shop right next to it, with some old book store just beside that. Perfect, you could find something for Daryl and the kid.

"I don't know what I saw at the well," Maggie insisted and you nearly rolled your eyes. Climbing down from your horse, you set course for the corner shop. You doubted there would be much but even scraps of food would be better than nothing. If you were going to be on the road soon, stockpiling food ready wouldn't be a terrible idea. "Hey, where are you slippin' off to? Meant to be doin' a run for meds."

"Calm it, Greene. Since your daddy's gonna be kickin' us out, I gotta make sure there's enough food for my people. And things to keep the kid entertained. Do I need your written consent, milady?" You asked, giving a small bow, voice laced with sarcasm and she scoffed, storming inside of the pharmacy. Rolling your eyes yet again, you started toward the pharmacy again before Glenn caught your arm suddenly and pulled abruptly.

"(Y/N), can you just play nice for two minutes?"

"Go play house with your girlfriend, Glenn. I'm going to find food," You shot back, brushing his shoulder off as you took off to the corner shop. You weren't trying to start shit, but you weren't going to take commands from a girl ten years your junior and wet behind the ears when it came to walkers. Speaking of, you pulled your knife from the hilt on your belt and opened the door carefully. You banged on the door frame and waited. Hearing nothing, you continued on, inspecting aisle by aisle for anything. In the end, you found a few tins and cans of beans, peaches and peas, as well as three packets of chips and even a candy bar for Carl. Stuffing it all into your backpack, you took to the book store, repeating your method of walker checking before giving it the all-clear and heading inside. Since books were hardly in high supply for survival, the book store had hardly been touched, beyond maybe scraping for water that might have been left behind, or maybe even sharp letter openers, the place they were meant to be was empty. Browsing the areas, you found a book on motorbikes, hopefully, something Daryl would find interesting, a couple murder mysteries and even a few books on medicine, nursing and nature's medical herbs that you could cram in your bag. Medical books would be increasingly helpful if your group had to leave, considering Hershel was the only one with medical history. Besides, it didn't hurt to have them. Now, something for the kid. Moving to the comic area, you picked up two or three superhero comics, and even a cowboy one, just to make him laugh after the little argument earlier in the day.

You barely registered the snarl before you were knocked from your crouched position onto the floor. A quiet yelp escaped you as you fell down, immediately slamming your hands out to stop the walker from taking a chunk out of your neck. Where the hell had this fucker even come from? That question was quickly answered when you managed to crane a look over its shoulder and saw a slightly ajar door with a bathroom sign on the front. God damn it. Thankfully, there just seemed to be one, but that was the least of your worries when a sudden scream came from next door.

Maggie and Glenn.

Using the last of your strength, you managed to shove the walker off of you and onto the floor beside you and clambered up, retrieving your knife from your belt and slamming it down into its skull just as it tried to reach for you. Swiping up your bag and shouldering it onto your back, your heart raced as you sprinted out of the store and back to the pharmacy, just in time to see Glenn holding Maggie as she sobbed, a walker with its head half hanging off lying on the floor behind him. The pharmacy was more of a mess than it already had been, with shelves knocked down and bottles upon bottles knocked onto the floor. Leaning in the doorway, you let out a sigh of relief, trying to calm your frantic heart. But you barely had time to do that when Maggie suddenly yelled Glenn's name and you saw the walker climbing back up, head hanging precariously.

Ew.

With an abrupt rush, you slammed your knife into its skull before Glenn even had time to get its own out. You placed a hand on Glenn's shoulder

"Are you okay?" He nodded and you stepped over to Maggie, who was borderline hysterical. Regardless of your argument earlier, she needed someone, so you pulled her into a hug and she clutched onto you, fingers digging into the back of your shirt "And you? No scratches, bites?"

She shook her head against the crook of your neck, and you carefully placed a hand on her back. Had your hands not been covered in blood and guts from the walker that had pinned you down, you might have held the back of her head.

Glancing back to Glenn, his eyes narrowed in worry "You have blood all over your face, what happened?"

"Had my own run-in with a walker. The bastard jumped me from the bathroom and pinned me down. I'm aight, just a little messy," You replied softly before gently handing Maggie over to him and he took her, holding her tight. You picked up their discarded bags, shoving them over your shoulder as well "Got everythin' on the list? I don't know about you, but I wanna get out of here."

"Yeah, yeah we did. C'mon, let's go," Glenn replied softly, leading Maggie out as she started to wipe her tears. Poor girl. With one final glance back to the pharmacy, you took your leave, attaching the bags to your horse and climbing on. Maggie and Glenn climbed on theirs, but Maggie, now dry-eyed, had a hardness in her eye. She was pissed off. Without another word, she took off, kicking her horse into a gallop and you and Glenn exchanged a worried look before taking after her.

Well, that'll be good.

# Walker Blood

## Chapter Summary

Canon typical violence  
canon divergence  
mentions of abortion  
near death situations  
daryl is a sweetheart really  
tension  
approaching the slow burn finally

As soon as the horses were tied up, you and Glenn had to chase after Maggie, who had grabbed the pharmacy bag for Lori and stormed ahead. She slammed the metal gate behind her to give her an extra few seconds' headstarts.

Why was she even going after Lori? Everyone needed meds, it wasn't like it was her fault. Then again, everyone seemed to like keeping secrets around here, so she probably had her reasons.

"Hey! We got your stuff," Maggie yelled and Lori looked up from where she was folding laundry, and Glenn fought with the gate before pulling it open, allowing you to run through first, though Maggie managed to stay just out of reach.

"Maggie, hang on please!" Glenn called, falling in step with you before he managed to stumble on a root, and you grabbed his arm to stabilise him.

Lori looked around anxiously, and despite there being no one around, she gestured toward her and Rick's tent, starting to walk towards it "C'mon in here."

But Maggie didn't let up, reaching into the bag "Why? Nothin' to hide. We got your special delivery right here. We got your lotion," She slammed the items on the floor as she listed them, rage flowing through her. You looked at Glenn, who clearly was aware of what was about to happen by how he gnawed his lip and his fingers twitched "Your conditioner, your soap opera digest!"

"Maggie," You hissed. She was justified in her rage, you agreed, but this was too much, even for you.

"No! Next time she wants something, she can get it her damn self. We're not your errand boys," She snapped, spittle flying.

Lori's eyes softened, suddenly coming to the realisation that something must have happened, Y'know if the blood on your face wasn't enough of an indicator "Honey, I-"

Just as she started speaking, however, an item dropped out of the bag and your eyes nearly widened to saucers. Morning after pills. Holy shit. Lori was pregnant?

Maggie snatched them up before you could either say anything or stop her and Glenn had to lightly take your elbow to stop you from reaching forward and likely getting punched in the face.

"And here's your abortion pills," Maggie snarled before she turned around and shoved past you both. Lori looked on the edge of tears, and you were torn between going to Maggie or going to Lori. But what could you say to her? All you would do is ask her questions about her pregnancy and you could imagine that was the last thing she wanted right now. Eventually, Glenn made the decision for you, slowly pulling you into step beside him by the hold he still had on your elbow. You followed Maggie along the treeline before cutting her off near the pile of wood that Rick and Shane had helped chop a few days earlier.

"That was not cool," Glenn started but Maggie quickly cut him off with a sharp glare

"Which part? The part where that bitch almost got us killed?" She shot back, turning her narrowed eyes to you as you spoke.

"Me and (Y/N) should have gone alone. If you want to blame anybody, blame us," You replied, pinching the bridge of your nose. This was a headache waiting to happen, and you knew you'd probably have to go sit in the dark of your tent after this.

"Right take the blame. You know, for smart people, y'all are both really stupid," She said and you and Glenn shared a glance. Should you be offended by that or..?

"Okay, I'm confused because I think you just complimented us but you made it-" Suddenly Maggie leaned forward and kissed Glenn and part of you almost looked away. Ah, well this was a tad awkward for you. But hey, you called it. Daryl owed you a squirrel.

When they pulled apart, Maggie took a step back but took hold of Glenn's hand. "I've already lost three people I care most about in this world."

Glenn glanced at you, slightly taken aback by the comment, and you couldn't stop yourself from smirking a little "Maggie-"

"Shut up," She turned to you then and you almost took a step back, prepared for her to snap at you again. "You're both smart, you're brave. You're both leaders," You nodded, warmth filling your stomach and face at the compliments and she turned to Glenn again "But you don't know it, and the only person who wants to know it is your sister, not your friends. They'd rather have you fetchin' peaches."

"There's a dead guy in the well? Send Glenn down," You commented bitterly, arms folded over your chest and Glenn almost laughed, remembering your outburst from the other night.

"You're walker bait," Maggie added and once again, she looked at you, pointing at your chest "And you. You do so much that people expect it from you now. It's always you and Daryl lookin' for Sophia nowadays. When was the last time Rick went out? Or Shane? Thought

they were supposed to lead with you? Bein' in charge is great, you can handle it and you're fair with your people, but don't let 'em take advantage of your ability. I can't take either of you becomin' one of them," Without another word, she stormed past, leaving you and Glenn to share a stunned expression.

Huh, and here you thought she hated you.

"You, uh, you better go talk to Lori. Don't think she'll be wantin' to talk to me right now," You said after a long pause, and Glenn nodded. Before you could go find Daryl to deliver the book you bought, and then Dale for food drop off, Glenn caught your hand, and you turned to him, confused.

"She's right you know. You can rely on the rest of us sometimes. It's not you versus the world anymore. I think the incident with Daryl and that closet should be enough to tell you that. We want to help, and if no one else, me, Rick and Daryl do,"

"She's right about you too, Glenn. Don't wanna have to change your nickname to Walker Bait," You replied awkwardly, but he gave you a little smile. "And I appreciate it, but I'm doin' just fine on my own."

"I know. I know you are. But you don't have to do it alone, that's all," You smiled at him, before pulling him into a quick squeeze of a hug. He held you tightly, before poking your sides and making you yelp with a laugh.

"Dick," You commented and he laughed boyishly before waving as he head towards Lori's tent. You shook your head, a smile still planted on your face even as you made the trek to Daryl's tent. He was sat outside this time, reading the book you'd dropped off for him, although looking slightly bored. You whistled at him to gain his attention, and his head shot up, and you waved, but his eyes just narrowed in a mix of concern and annoyance.

"Thought I told you to be safe?" He called, and though he sounded irritated you didn't think it was aimed at you. You stared at him, even more, confused than you had been with Maggie as you finally got close enough to stand almost in front of him.

"Yeah, I did. What's the issue?"

"The issue is your damn face. You've got walker blood on your face and the front of your shirt. You aight?" Shit, you'd forgotten about that after everything with Maggie and Lori. That was still something you had to fully process.

"Oh, shit. Yeah, I'm aight. A walker jumped me in the store, pinned me down. Got guts on my face trying to stop it from biting me," You explained with a sigh, sitting beside him on his log and placing your backpack down on the floor. Silently, Daryl reached for something in the corner of your eye as you opened your bag. You heard him let out a quiet hiss of pain, and you immediately took hold of his arm to stop him from overexerting himself and he tensed slightly before relaxing. He had a bottle of water in his hand, and a cloth in the other, the book disregarded in the dirt. "Careful, Dixon. Don't wanna pull your stitches."

"Ain't gonna pull ma stitches. Now, shut up a second," He grumbled, like a toddler that'd been told not to do something and, hesitantly, you let him go, turning to face him a little more, watching him curiously. His hands were a little shaky but after a small pause, he poured some of the water onto the cloth before slowly reaching toward your face. He gave you enough time to pull away if you wanted. You stared him down for a moment, but you allowed him after a few seconds of thought. Daryl was sweet, besides how much harm could he do with a bit of cloth? Unless it was chloroform of course but you highly doubted that possibility. He wasn't going to do anything weird. And if he did you could just punch him in the face or kick his stitches. Win-win. Slowly, he brought the rag to your cheek, gently using the wet rag to wipe your cheek, pulling back with old blood covering the rag. He used water to wet it again, folding it slightly so he wouldn't smear it by accident and continued onto the other cheek. He leaned closer, though you didn't think he was aware of doing it from the way his tongue poked out in concentration, and you kind of wished the blood was still on your face so it would hide the redness. You didn't know why you had been acting so flustered in front of Dixon recently but it was making you want to kick yourself. Acting like a damn fool.

Though you did have to say, he looked very... nice at this angle. So poetic, right? But even with his eyebrows furrowed in concentration, and lips turned into a slight scowl around his tongue that was *still* poking out. His breath was slightly heavy, from the way he was trying to hold it so it didn't blow onto your face and you had to bite the inside of your cheek to stop yourself from smiling.

"Stop that, cain't get all the blood when you do that," He said sharply, though there was a teasing edge to it as he gently patted your cheek and you let go of your cheek, sticking your tongue out and he shook his head, but his lips quirked out "Careful, ya got blood just above yer lip. Here."

You retracted your tongue bashfully as he wiped a thumb over the top of your lip gently and you stopped breathing. Daryl was staring at your lips, but the blood was already gone. There was a look in his eyes you couldn't pick apart, and you clutched the handle of your bag tighter, nervous. It would just take a small tilt of his head and-

"Have y'all seen Lori?" Rick's voice interrupted and you both jumped back. With a startled yelp, you lost balance, falling ass over tit over the back of the log, your back hitting the ground while your legs remained thrown over the log. Despite the worry that had been present in Rick's voice just seconds prior, both he and Daryl burst out into loud laughter, so much so that Daryl had to grab his side. Asshole. Grumbling under your breath, you pulled yourself back up, folding your arms over your chest and glaring at Rick.

"I ain't seen her, sorry, man," You mumbled, giving a little shrug and Rick only laughed a little harder. You knew you were acting childishly, but the bastard deserved it for laughing at you. After a second, Rick finally calmed down, taking a deep breath and giving you a subtle nod.

"Aight, thanks anyway. She mighta gone to the bathroom or somethin', I'll find her. Can I talk to you a second?" He asked and you sighed dramatically before getting up. Wait, shit the book. Picking up your bag, you turned to Daryl, who was still watching you in amusement as

you searched your bag for the book you shoved in. With a triumphant grin, you pulled it out and threw it at the redneck, who barely caught it.

"Thought you might find it more interestin' than that book I gave you earlier. Thanks for cleanin' my face," He didn't say anything more, just grunted in acknowledgement but he was still smiling at you with that same look from earlier and you had to turn away to hide the blush rising back to your face. Goddamn Dixon.

Rick gave you a knowing smile, nudging your side as you walked beside him and you swatted his arm harshly "So what did I interrupt?"

Glaring up at him, you shouldered your bag as you both slowly wandered towards the RV and the two cars that had just returned. "You didn' interrupt nothin'."

"You sure? 'Cause if I didn't know any better I'd say you two were gettin' a little personal," He replied with a raised eyebrow, smirking at you. He chuckled when you huffed, looking away, jaw tense. It felt like getting caught with your hand in the cookie jar. "I ain't gonna tell anybody."

"Liar. You're the biggest blabbermouth I know when it comes to this shit," His smile grew when you didn't deny his accusations, and you fumbled, pointing a finger at his chest when you stopped "And you ain't got anythin' to tell anybody."

"Uh-huh, whatever you say, kid," You stomped on his foot as you passed and he hissed out between his teeth, though he laughed through it. "You see Lori, you let me know."

"Yeah, yeah, whatever, prick," You said over your shoulder, loosening the grip on your bag as you prepared to open it. Andrea, Dale, Shane and Carol were surrounded, and you did your best to avoid Shane as you stepped inside the RV, dropping your bag on the table and starting to unload. Of course, it had been hard to miss the sensation of eyes boring into you, even despite Andrea's obvious sex hair, and the hickeys on Shane's neck.

They hadn't found any sign of Sophia, though from what you'd seen they hadn't actually done much searching. Something was off, more so than it had been already with the kid gone. Shane and Dale were talking - you could see them outside the window, and Shane looked beyond pissed off, while Dale held an expression of accusation, eyebrows raised like he didn't believe whatever Shane was telling them.

From the looks Shane had been giving Rick as of late, you had a sneaking suspicion that you knew what their topic of conversation. And it was nothing good.



# The Eye

## Chapter Summary

canon typical violence  
canon divergence  
mentions of abortion  
mentions of abuse  
mentions of past attempted rape/non-con  
Carl's a sweet kid  
Daryl and Glenn are very protective <3

Rick came to you before everyone tucked away for the night, looking like he might burst into tears any second. You didn't need to say anything, just extended your arms and he fell into you, holding onto you tight, shoulders shaking. If those pills had been enough of an indication, Lori and Rick's conversation had been tough. It wasn't your place to ask whether she'd gone ahead with it, or if she and Rick had decided to keep the baby, nor was it your business. Regardless of the decision, the conversation had to weigh heavy, and Rick just confirmed that by how he gripped onto you.

"Do you want to talk about it?" You whispered, rubbing circles on his back and he heaved a heavy sigh, pulling pack and quickly scrubbing his eyes. If you saw his tears, you didn't say anything.

"I..."He looked down to his hands, which were wringing nervously before glancing at his tent, where Lori and Carl were probably asleep already "I'm so lost, (Y/N). I don't know what the right thing to do is. My wife and my son and my future baby are relying on me but I- every choice I make is just a guess. A shot in the dark."

Placing a hand on his shoulder, you squeezed, moving your head to meet his eyes "Hey. You're not alone in this. We make the calls together, you can't take all the responsibility. And Lori is an adult, she can make her own choices. As parents, your family relies on both of you, not just you. Now, you know I ain't good with words, but if there's anythin', anythin' I can do, I'm right here, aight?"

Rick nodded slowly, releasing a long breath from his nose "I know. Thank you for everythin' you've done. And taking care of my boy. I can never repay you for that. I'm sorry for not saying it sooner"

"Rick, I love that boy like he's my own. You know I'd do anything for him, no thanks required," Rick shook his head before leaning forward a placing a kiss on your forehead as he used to when you'd wake up from a nightmare or come back from a panic attack.

"Still, thank you. Now get to bed, it's past your bedtime," He flicked your forehead after a second, smiling slightly as he wiped the remnants of wetness from his face

"Oh, fuck off old man," You shot back with a grin, poking his rib and he rolled his eyes, lightly pushing you toward your tent causing you to stumble as you trip on a twig.

Well, it had all gone to hell very quickly after that. A few days were spent just helping around the farm, calming down from the events over the past few days, and for Daryl to recover. You'd had to change his bandages quite a few times, to his grumpy protests every single time, and he was almost right as rain again, though he still used more of the opposite side just to be safe.

But that morning, for whatever reason, Glenn had decided it would be a perfect time to tell everyone about the walkers in the barn. Of course, they didn't take it quite as well you and Dale did, from the way Shane jumped up, leading the way as he stormed with your people toward the barn. For the sake of your sanity, you'd tried to ignore it, purposefully avoiding going near it where you could but now you were just inches from it, it was impossible to block out the snarling and groaning. Fingers peeked out from between the gaps in the wooden panes, overgrown fingernails scratching and you grimaced, looking away.

Carl scratched the back of his head anxiously as Shane stormed back over, wedged between you and Lori "You two wanna stay here so bad, you can't tell me you're alright with this?" He snarled as he approached and you folded your arms over your chest while Rick placed a hand on his hip.

"No, I'm not but we're guests here. This isn't our land," Rick replied, not taking his eyes off the barn like he was frozen. Shane was pacing now, eyes feral and you took half a step back, feeling that nervous twitch in your stomach. Glenn subtly put a hand on your lower back, giving you a look and you nodded slowly.

"Oh, god this is our lives, man!"

"Lower your voice," Glenn yelled, glaring at the man, and he snapped around, fixing Glenn with a hard glare. He stepped forward but you moved in front of Glenn and he stopped abruptly, glaring at you in a way that screamed hatred.

"We can't just sleep this under the rug," Andrea added, rubbing a hand over her forehead and T-Dog nodded along.

"It ain't right, not remotely," Shane tilted his head, and you scoffed at his weak intimidation technique, despite the racing of your heart and he finally broke eye contact with grinding teeth. "We either gotta go in there, we got to make things right, or we just got to go. Now we've been talkin' about Fort Benning for a long time."

"We can't go, Walsh," You replied, letting your arms drop in frustration and Shane turned back to you again, following you as you moved beside Rick. Sophia was still out there for fucks sake, how could he be so ready to move? Of course, you wanted to be rid of the walker problem but there were much better ways.

"Why, (Y/N)? Why?" He snarled, getting a little too close for comfort, and you stood your ground, despite desperately wanting to. In the corner of your eye, Dixon clenched his fists, and you lifted your hand against your leg to show you were okay. Though it was nice to have him in your corner - Daryl could throw a mean punch.

Carol walked closer, folding her cardigan over herself "Because my daughter is still out there."

Shane scoffed with a disbelieving laugh and wiped his two hands over his mouth. You were chewing your own nails, and admittedly it did hurt quite a lot with how raw they still were, but it was all you could do to stop yourself from either screaming at him or having a breakdown from how overwhelmed you were. "Okay, I think it's time that we all start to just consider the other possibility."

Rick fixed the other man with a hard stare, as Carol retreated to Andrea, who held her arm comfortingly, looking hurt. Daryl in turn stepped forward, finger pointed at Shane, and veins in his neck bulging "We're not leaving her behind Shane," Rick replied sharply.

"We're close to findin' this girl! I just found her damn doll a few days ago, and (Y/N) and I found where she was hiding at the beginning of the week!" Daryl exclaimed, and you nodded in agreement. You noticed Carl take his momma's hand and even Lori looked pissed off with Shane's antics.

Shane let out a chuckle that just reeked of sarcasm, so much so that you shuffled uncomfortably. " You found her doll, Daryl. That's what you did. You found a doll. And you and her," He jolted a finger back at you, and you glared back "That coulda been any poor bastard's cubby. Remind me, wasn't that house full of walkers? Weren't you trapped there for hours?"

Shane had turned back to you, a small, self-satisfied smirk that made your skin crawl, and you scowled at him, fighting the urge to hide behind Rick or Daryl. You weren't a pussy, but after the CDC, you'd had enough of run-ins with Shane. Apparently, Dixon thought the same, because he shoved Shane's back harshly, making the man frown as Daryl exploded on him

"You don't know what the hell you're talkin' about!"

And after that, it was just carnage, Shane and Daryl yelling over each other as Rick tried to play middle man to calm them down. You rolled your eyes. Damn, this macho match was just sickening. Other priorities here, for fucks sake. So, without another word, you picked up Daryl's crossbow and shot it at the ground between them, causing all three to jump back and snap their heads to you in alarm.

That thing was heavier than it looked.

"Are you fuckin' crazy? Stupid bitch gonna hit me in the foot!" Shane almost screamed at you and you almost flinched but pushed it back, instead dropping the crossbow on the floor and approaching until you were practically nose to nose with the man.

There was a little girl out there. Your fears came second to that every time.

"Believe me, I wouldn't cry if I had. But you listen to me Walsh, and you Dixon," You turned and pointed to him, and he looked away, glaring at the floor as his jaw clenched "There is a little girl in those woods, and I will climb hell and high water if it means we find her. We *cannot* leave until we do. If you wanna leave man, you can, the car's right there. But I promise, most of us will not come with you. Now we can scream, and argue all we fuckin' want, but that is not gonna change that fact," Shane shook his head, rolling his tongue over his teeth angrily and went to shove past you but you put a hand on his chest and pressed him back to where he was. "No. Now, I agree with you, we gotta deal with the barn, but we are gonna do it the *right* way or not at all. Now. am. I. clear, Shane Walsh?"

Honestly, you thought he was gonna punch you from the way his nose flared but after a long second of staring you down, you raised your eyebrows, he relented "Yes, ma'am."

"Good," You took a few steps back and when you took a breather to look around, you realised everyone was watching you, either with shock or pride. Once Shane turned around to recollect himself, you let your shoulders drop and let out a shaky breath. Wordlessly, Daryl appeared beside you, taking your hand, though he hid it by how close he stood to you and you squeezed tightly. "Now, Hershel sees those things in there as people. Sick people"

"His wife, his- his stepson," Dale added, nodding along as his prideful look faded so he could reason with your friend and Rick looked between you and Dale incredulously.

"You both knew?"

"A few days ago I talked to Hershel."

"And you waited however many nights?" Shane seethed

"Have I ever done something that I think would put us in any danger that wasn't necessary? Do you think Dale would?" You shot back with a huff and suddenly Shane was screaming again and you hit your head off of Daryl's shoulder twice in frustration. His skin vibrated slightly as he laughed at your annoyance. But everyone was quickly shut up when the groaning from the barn grew louder, and the chains on the door rattled as walkers pressed against it. Everyone besides you, Rick and Daryl backed up and you let out a long breath. This was certainly going to be a day.

Shane had to have circled the barn at least seven times now, testing the integrity of the doors and chains. It was almost obsessive. You weren't thrilled about the barn being full of walkers either, but there was no point wasting your day worrying. Unless the doors broke down, right now you had other things to focus on. Glenn had gone to find Maggie, who, unsurprisingly, was more pissed now that everyone knew. Lori and Carl were doing their daily lessons, while Daryl had gone off to do another scout of the woods. Well, he said he had, but after about twenty minutes he went storming back to his tent, looking mildly murderous. Even Andrea had been placed on guard duty outside the barn while Rick went to talk to Hershel about the barn situations. Which left you with the boring job of cleaning the guns.

That was until Dale came in. You'd heard him call up to Glenn, who'd come to stand guard about a half hour before, hatless may you add, and Glenn rushed off.

"Everythin' alright, Dale?" You asked, glancing up from the final gun. Your fingers ached from the same monotonous task of cleaning each and every gun, and you were more than glad to be nearly finished.

"Yeah...yeah. Didn't know you were in here. Are you done with those?" He gestured to the guns and you looked down in confusion

"Uh, yeah- why, you need one?" You asked, eyebrow raised and he glanced through the open door.

"I don't trust Shane. He's hiding something and the less access he has to these guns the better. Especially after the barn," He said in a hushed voice, sitting opposite you on the table and you placed the reassembled gun down with a sigh of relief. It was good to know you weren't the only one that thought he was hiding something, apart from Glenn and Daryl, with whom you'd shared your concerns.

"He's been actin' weird since Otis. I don't think that was an accident either, but I cain't prove it," You replied, glancing at the window just in case. "Where do you wanna take them? I ain't a snitch."

"Somewhere in the forest. Have you and Rick got your normal guns?" You nodded in response, reaching to the storage container just below your feet and retrieving the gun bag.

"Better hurry. Glenn'll be back soon, and I imagine it won't be long before Shane takes the barn into his own hands," You stated, as the two of you packed the guns away. Sure, it wasn't the smartest idea with the walkers but it was the safest bet when it came to Shane. At least until he was less of a ticking time bomb.

"It'd be best if you got out of here too unless you want him hankering you for answers," He said, picking up the bag, and shoving it onto his shoulder.

"Take care, Dale. I'll go find the kid," You said, picking up the comic you'd picked up a few days before. With the commotion, you'd completely forgotten to give it to Carl. After this morning, you were sure he'd be thrilled to have something to take his mind off of the mess that was your lives right now. Giving a final nod to the older man, you stepped out of the RV, and head to where Carl was now sitting on his own, colouring a colouring book.

"Hey, bud, how you holdin' up?" You asked as you settled onto the floor beside him, tapping his hat "You seen your daddy."

"Hershel wanted him to help with something, they've gone into the woods," He replied, sounding bored, keeping his eyes fixed on his paper.

Bringing the comics from behind your back, you placed them onto the table in front of him, covering his colouring slightly, His eyebrows furrowed in annoyance before he registered what was now before him and his eyes turned wide as saucers, head snapping to you in glee. He had this big grin splitting his face and you smiled back, nudging him with your shoulder "Well, that gives us plenty of time to read these, huh?"

"Where did you even get these?!" He exclaimed excitedly as he paged through the book, not reading it yet and then moving on to the next. You shrugged a little

"Grabbed them from a book store the other day when we went on the run. Forgot to give them to you, sorry 'bout that," Carl smiled even wider before handing you one of the comics to read through and you chuckled lightly. He was just the sweetest thing.

He almost made you forget about the shit storm that was currently brewing.

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