

Reading between the lines- Chapter 8

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Caleb watched Macy practically drown her veggie pizza in crushed pepper flakes. He watched her lick the extra flakes off her fingers and then smile as the waitress dropped off her pink lemonade. He took notice that every time she had said thank you, she had sounded genuinely grateful. Her smile was vibrant, making his lips twitch up in the same gesture. When he looked up he saw Pierce's mischievous eyes shining with whatever scheme was turning the wheels in his mind.

After the game had ended, which they had won by a lucky call and a field goal, Macy decided to keep the evening going by headed to the local pizza shop which was coincidentally named Lou's Local Pie Parlor.

"So, Macy, how did you meet good ole' Vet here?"

Macy wiped her mouth, "I actually met him in New York, our mutual friends are getting married and things just sort of went from there."

Caleb knew Pierce had something up his sleeve, it was in his nature, so he put one hand around Macy and prepared for the show.

"Why do you call him Vet anyways?"

Pierce sat back in his chair, "Look at him, he's ancient."

"That's enough Novak, I hardly know Leighton, I'd like to know more," Caleb said, sitting up straight and watching the smile fall from Pierce's face.

At that moment Leighton decided to drink a sip of her lemon water, "There's not much to tell actually, small town gal with big dreams, I guess."

Macy could feel the pull between Leighton and Pierce, it was undeniable. Only problem was that they refused to acknowledge it, both of them on separate sides of the booth. Leighton had an uncanny way of never knowing the distraction she caused and maybe that's what Macy appreciated most

about Leighton's beauty, she didn't know the power it held. She was humble.

Pierce watched the way Leighton folded her pizza, her pale lips opening and her pink tongue wrapping its way around a string of cheese and felt his belt buckle area become a little snug.

She's eating pizza, Novak, not wrapping her beautiful lips around your...

"Well, it's getting late and I need to get up early tomorrow. Macy, tell Lou to put it on my tab, he owed me anyway," she said standing up, "Pierce, it was nice meeting you."

Everyone said their goodbyes and Pierce stood transfixed by the way that even in dim lighting, Leighton seemed to glow.

"I agree, it is getting late, so I'll leave you two lovebirds to your own devices."

The only thing audible on the boardwalk was the loud thumps of Caleb's feet. He looked to his left and watched Macy's gold sandals dangle from her pink tipped fingers. Macy was hitching a ride on his back, but he was okay with it because it gave him an excuse to wrap his hands around her soft thighs.

Once they reached the bottom of the steps that lead down to the beach, he let her go and sat down at the last step, slipping his boots and socks off.

"Thanks for the piggy back ride, Tiger, but you should hit the gym, I heard your struggles," she said, blowing him a kiss and running towards the shore before he caught her.

Caleb stood and watched the waves crash in, the roar was calming in an unsettling way. He sat down behind Macy with his legs circling around her body, she turned slightly, giving him a chance to look at her face. The more he looked at her, the heavier his body felt. He felt as if his limbs became lead, his heart had ached, and his stomach had started to grow a pit. He felt as if he was completely shattered, as if he was broken into two pieces and she was the only one that knew how to put him back together. But then in the irrevocable glowing of the moonlight, she looked up at him and smiled.

His plan to feign ignorance had failed, pathetically. He had pretended up to this date that his heart wasn't for the taking when she had exposed herself to him. She had laid down all of her cards down in front of him. When she met him, something changed inside him, and whatever it was, it made him need her. For whatever reasons, his rule had always been to never fall in love. To keep his heart sacred, but as much as he tried to hide the fact, he was hers. She was his exception.

He started to plan how he would give her up.

Macy looked up at his profile, committing it to memory, his angled nose, gaunt lips, precise cheek bones, everlasting lashes. Silence had dawned on them, except for the dull roar of the waves.

His ice blue eyes met hers, changing the air around them. A charge so powerful she heard the soft humming of her skin. His hands ran over her skin, slow and deliberately. She closed her eyes and he pulled her in closer and buried his face in her hair, nuzzling her neck. She tilted her head to the side and he moved her hair to one side, grazing his lips on her neck. His hands untying the thin straps of her summer dress. His tongue making its way from one shoulder to the other while his hands scooped the dress down to her waist. He scooted somewhat and kissed the top of her spine and ran his fingers down her bare sides, a quiet moan escaping his lips when he felt her delicate hand rub his erection through his jeans.

Caleb couldn't take it anymore, he lifted her easily and onto his lap, momentarily breaking their contact. Their eyes met and something was different in her expression. She look exposed, scared. They've had plenty of sex before, it was easy for them to take their clothes off and give into their desires, but to mix their emotions. That was true nudity. He leaned to kiss her and then tore himself from her face, holding his breath. She cupped his jaw and softly nodded, all of his doubts vanishing.

She shoved his shoulders, pinning him to the sand with her own body and lifting his shirt over body. Her mouth slanted over his, lips to lips, coaxing, teasing, and aching. She let her body take its own accord, her hands roaming his chest, up his neck, into his hair. Her nimble fingers tunneled into his hair. Her tongue petting his lips, then stroking his tongue. His immense hands fisted at her hips, holding onto to sanity, while the kiss rode the edge of madness. With ardent mouths and frantic hands, they consumed one another. Macy's obsession with a primal need to take and be taken had overcome her.

As soon as her next breath came, she was below him once more. He leaned down, pressing his lips against hers in a delicate softness. Together they rose to their knees, but their lips never breaking. He scooped her dress over her head and he unbuttoned his jeans, but didn't take them off. She laid back onto the sand, wrapping her legs around his waist and dragging him down. His tongue found her again and with one hand he gripped the lace panties around her hips. She let out a long breath when his fingers touched her no way anybody else had, her back arched and her knees tightened.

With her toes she shoved his boxers and pants down to his thighs and he positioned himself above her.

"Macy," he whispered, "Condom."

She looked up at him and wrapped her arms his neck, "It's okay."

He leaned down and kissed her forehead. She closed her eyes.

"Look at me Macy," he said softly.

His eyes were intent, but soft. He pushed himself into her slowly, her thighs tightening. He rocked into her, over and over again. She dug into his flesh with her finger nails and dragged down, causing him a burning pain with a beautiful feeling. Her hands traveled to his butt and she pulled him into her. When it became too much for them, they met thrust for thrust one last time, and finished with quivering muscles and aching bones.

With one last heart pounding thrust, Caleb collapsed beside Macy in the cool sand. The warm summer night was a bit chilly and he used her dress and his shirt to cover her body. He lay back down, supporting his head with his elbow, gazing at her drooping eyelids. Her face had so closely resembled Casey's and with that revelation his throat became tight with emotion.

"Sleep now," he said, and gently kissed her nose, "I'll be here when you wake up."

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Macy was folding towels fresh out of the dryer and listening an Eddy Bravo podcast, when her cell phone run from the kitchen counter.

She put down the towel down and answered on the third ring, "Hello?"

There was a grunt on the other side, "Hello? Yes, Ms. Cunningham?"

She leaned against the counter, "This is she, and how can I help you?"

A male cleared his throat, "This is Dr. Sanders, from the Children's psychology offices in Laguna, California. The board had recently reviewed your resume, it's quite impressive. I'd just like to let you know, you were one of the four students chosen to do your required volunteer work and then plan a career with our offices."

Macy's hand dropped to her heart, "I am speechless, Dr. Sanders, this is such a wonderful opportunity."

Dr. Sanders chuckled, “You have met all criteria, please email the offices with your answer before September 10 th .”

Macy smiled, “Of course, I will. Thank you and have a nice evening.”

Macy jumped and paraded like school girl, when she saw Caleb’s bike sitting in the driveway. He’d been gone four days; he’d been back in two. Just then her phone vibrated in her hand. A reminder popped on the screen to take her birth control pill. She was halfway to the bathroom when her stomach dropped and nearly fell out of her ass.

“Oh shit.”

She scurried up the stairs and to her restroom, opening the medicine cabinet and staring at the two weeks full of pale pink pills in two neat rows.

Caleb reached for the picture of Macy he kept in the breast pocket of his jacket. They had taken a strip of photos in the booth on the boardwalk. He ran his fingers over the candid version of Macy and her silly faces. He had been gone nine days even though he promised her he would only be gone six.

Pierce was sitting next to him, stock still and silently breathing. That was the thing about Pierce, he was a shadow. Lurking in the dark, waiting for a mark, never breaking a sweat. Caleb knew he was good in the darkness, but Pierce was the son of darkness and death. He was undetectable, making him irrevocably lethal.

They were sitting in a car, tucked into the crook of an abandoned building, in the paved roads of Columbia. The man who was being hunted was named Manuel Garcia. He was reported to have paid some dangerous people to track down Michelle Westbrook, the team’s new “addition to the family.” Blake and Cade were both of rooftops gathering Intel through radio communication.

Pierce’s voice tore into Caleb’s thoughts, “Does she know who you are?”

Caleb knew precisely what Pierce was talking about, “No, why would she?”

Pierce almost laughed, “Why would she? Because you’re well known around this organization, Vet. All these bad fuckers have seen your face and someday one will want to vengeance for the legacies you tore down. That makes her, and everyone close to you, a mark.”

Caleb just sighed. “Some call it retribution; we call it revenge, but whatever its name, its evil, and you

have to be careful. She has a right to know, not only for her safety, but her sanity. Ever since Casey, you have completely shut out anyone, except us, and it's not fair to her. Because she's so perfect for you, but you won't let her love you."

Caleb looked over at Pierce, "You think it's easy, Pierce? I gave up everything for Casey, and I ended up hurt and so did she. Macy not knowing keeps her safer."

Pierce slammed his hand into the center console, "Casey didn't hurt you, Vet! She was murdered, she didn't hurt you. You have no fucking right to blame her for your insecurities, because she spent her last breaths telling you to never give up on love. And Macy not knowing who you are, or who we are, doesn't keep her safe, but it keeps her distant."

Caleb turned his head back towards the building, "That's it, Novak. I want to hear nothing more, or you'll be suspended from TITAN."

"Oh, boo, fucking who, I'll be suspended, I am your god damn best friend," he said, "At least I'll get a break from your crazy old ass."

Caleb almost smiled, "Thank you for that."

All Caleb saw before the explosion in the building was Pierce's face being impacted with an airbag. Chunks of glass cut off cut Caleb's face, but his only thought was getting to Blake and Cade. He saw Pierce easily rip the airbag and start the car in record time.

Caleb reached under his pant leg for his Baretta M9, "Drive towards Blake and Cade until TITAN sends us more recruits, we're taking these fuckers down once and for all."

Caleb felt pieces of glass in his chin, but he just silently prayed that his team would make it home safely.

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Macy involuntary reached down to rub her tummy, "What shall we name you baby?"

She was six weeks into her pregnancy and Caleb had been gone forty-eight days.

"Don't worry, baby, I've got you," she softly cooed, "We're going to be alright."

She was listening to the soft pats of the rain, watching the drops race down the window, in Caleb's

bed. She hadn't been in here since he left, but this morning her melancholy had reached its peak, causing driving her to his house. She wrapped herself in his grey sheets, which she coincidentally unmade and inhaled his scent. It enveloped her, it shattered her. She curled into the pillow that wasn't him and embraced the idea of his warmth instead, but that did nothing to comfort her.

She felt tears trickle down her cheeks, "No, don't cry."

Macy repeated the mantra to herself over and over again until she finally submitted to the tears. Not the lady-like drops, but harsh, heart shattering sobs.

She heard someone calling her name through a haze of anguish and thought she was imagining it, until a figure appeared into the doorway.

"Oh, God, Macy," said the figure. It was Leighton.

"He left, Leigh," Macy said, watching her approach.

Leighton lay down on the bed and took Macy's head into her chest.

Leighton cradled Macy's head, "I know, Mace, I know."

Macy's body was still being torn apart with vicious sobs, "Christ, he left me, and his baby. I've been strong, or at least tried to be, but I can't handle it anymore."

Leighton's fingers massaged Macy's scalp, "Let me remind you, that people need to break and they need to be weak, because without weakness there is no strength. He left, but you are still here and your baby is healthy. I am here, and I will be, so cry your mighty heart out, and just let it out."

Macy closed her eyes and felt fatigued, "He left me, Leigh, but I miss him so much."

Leighton started rocking her, "I know, Macy, I know."

"Damn you, Caleb," she whispered at no particular person, "Damn you."