

Title: Longing

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Rating: Teen

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Author notes: Part of the *Two Brothers* 'verse, exploring the past history of Tig and Kozik's friendship. Thanks to Tanaqui for betaing.

Summary: Kozik's not as good at hiding his thoughts or feelings from Tig as he thinks he is.

LONGING **By Scribblesinink**

"Will you stop doing that?" Though the words were gruff, Tig sounded more amused than irritated.

Kozik gave a guilty start. Caught up in his own thoughts, and surrounded by the rattle of air tools, he hadn't heard Tig approach. "Do what?" He had to raise his voice over the sudden noise of a set of straight pipes mixing with the air tools. Glancing past Tig, he thought he recognized Happy roaring into the compound.

"Drool over the damned bikes as if they're two-bit hookers and you haven't been laid inna month." There was open laughter in Tig's tone now.

Flustered, Kozik ducked his head. Seeking refuge under the open hood of the truck he'd been working on, he deliberately turned his back to the line of bikes neatly parked at the rail. "I got no problem gettin' laid."

"Yeah, noticed as much." Tig plonked his ass on the bumper next to Kozik, his body casting a shadow over the engine.

Kozik grumbled in annoyance under his breath, both at Tig blocking the light and the remark about his sex life. Like Tig had any right to speak about what he did in his free time. If it were up to Tig, Missy would be abandoned to her own devices many a Friday night, while Tig was busy tapping two or three of the many women who were always hanging around the club house.

For a minute, Tig remained silent. Kozik didn't speak either, hoping that if he ignored Tig, he'd go away and let him work in peace. But no such luck.

"You miss it, don't ya?" Tig's voice was quiet enough that nobody but Kozik would hear.

Kozik gritted his teeth. Shoulda known better: Tig never could take a hint. "Miss what?" He leaned further into the engine, fiddling idly with the wires, though he wasn't really paying attention to what his hands were doing. He was stonewalling, of course; he was perfectly aware what Tig was talking about. And worst of all, that Tig was right.

"Ridin'," Tig said softly. "Knees in the breeze. Freedom of the road."

Kozik's hands paused on the connection he was testing. He pulled in a deep breath, the air smelling of oil and exhaust. "Yeah," he agreed, with a long sigh. "I do." He straightened and turned to face Tig, no longer ashamed to admit how much he missed his old Panhead.

"So, we gotta get you a new ride, man." Tig punched Kozik's shoulder lightly.

Kozik scratched at his brow with a thumb, his gaze automatically drawn toward the bikes again. The rider who'd just come in had backed in line and taken off his helmet and was now making a long-striding beeline for the club house. Kozik had been right; it was indeed Happy.

He wiped an arm across his face. "Might be a while." The sun was warming the air again now winter was progressing toward spring and he was starting to work up a sweat under the tin roof of the work bays. "Clay ain't a cheapskate, but the pay around here ain't that great, either. Not that I'm not thankful for the job," he added quickly. Without Tig, he wouldn't have a job at all. Probably been dead by now.

Yet working at T-M had proved to be far harder than Kozik had expected. Sure, he liked having a routine in his life again, and he enjoyed the work: figuring out what was wrong with the cars and then fixing the problem was right up his alley. What he *hadn't* counted on was the hunger that would surge through him each and every time one of the club bikes came through the compound with its pipes' prattle rebounding between the buildings.

"Was thinkin', maybe I can get a fixer-upper," he confessed. He grabbed the bottle of water he'd left on the work bench earlier and, uncapping it, settled himself next to Tig on the bumper. "If Clay'll let me use the shop's tools, I could work on it after hours." From what he'd seen, somebody or other was always tinkering with their ride. Both club members and guys hanging around the club house without being affiliated.

"Shouldn't be a problem," Tig confirmed.

But getting access to tools wasn't Kozik's main problem. "Gotta find a bike first," he pointed out with a wry laugh. Needed to find the cash, too, but he wasn't

gonna tell Tig that. He took a swallow of water and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand.

"Ask Bobby." Tig scrunched his eyes to slits and glowered at a garage customer who'd walked over to admire the line of Harleys gleaming in the sunlight. "Says he knows a guy who knows a guy. Out in Modesto. Might have an '86 Low Rider that don't run he's willing to sell cheap."

Kozik's heart started beating faster in his chest, but he quickly got a hold of himself. Best not get ahead of things. As casually as he could manage, he asked, "How cheap?"

Tig shrugged. "Didn't ask." He paused for a moment, and then added more quietly, "Could front you the money, if you need it."

Kozik nearly choked on the final mouthful of water. Tig wasn't looking at him; instead he was still scowling at the curious customer, who seemed unaware of Tig's irritation.

"Thanks, but no thanks, man." Kozik coughed to clear his throat. "I'll figure it out. Ain't taking your money."

Tig barked out a laugh and thrust away from the car. "It'd be a *loan*, asshat. And if you think I'm gonna keep cartin' your ass all over town on the back of my bike like some kinda bitch, you got another think coming."

Kozik snorted and capped the empty bottle. "Like you been doing every day for the past three months?" After that first morning out to T-M to ask Clay for the job, Tig had refused to let Kozik ride anywhere with him. Kozik had made do: hitching rides with the other mechanics, taking the bus once or twice, and hoofing it the rest of the time.

Tig smirked. "My point exactly."

Kozik looked back at the bikes, his throat tightening. What would it be like, to ride a bike of his own again? Given time and the right tools, he could get just about anything running again, for sure. He swallowed the lump in his throat, wishing he hadn't finished the last of the water. "Thanks, man."

"Don't mention it." Tig shrugged as he walked away. "Talk to Bobby. He can tell you where to go." He stopped at the bay doors and turned back. "And quit ogling the bikes. Someone might get ideas." Kozik hurled the empty bottle at him and, laughing, Tig batted it away. It clattered along the concrete.

"Asshole," Kozik muttered, once more bending over the engine. But something warm and soft had uncoiled inside him, slithering through his belly. He was due

a break in a few minutes; he could look up Bobby then.

Who'da thought it four months ago, huh? But, Jesus God, he might be riding again soon...!

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