

**Title:** No Going Back

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**Rating:** Teen

**Characters:** Tig, Kozik, Ally Lowen

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**Author notes:** This story is a prologue to the stories in the *Two Brothers*-verse, which covers—among many other things—Kozik and Tig's backstory.

**Summary:** Tig's first *Nay* was painful, but didn't come as a surprise to Kozik. His second *Nay*, however, cut deep. Kozik seeks out an old friend who may understand, and quickly discovers you can never go back to the way things were before.

### **No Going Back By Scribblesinink**

"I loved her too." Kozik waited to see if Tig would offer him any kind of response. As the silence lengthened, Kozik hunched his shoulders. Finally, he walked away from the swings. He'd tried; he'd really, really tried. But it was clear Tig would neither forgive nor forget.

A few minutes later, he was on his bike, revving the engine and roaring out of Teller-Morrow. He had no idea where he was going; he just needed to get away from the club house.

Perhaps it was because the memories of those days, a decade ago, had been rekindled and sent him back into the old patterns that went with them. Or perhaps he simply wanted to torture himself further by remembering exactly how much he'd lost through his own stupidity. Either way, two hours and a rambling track through the dark night later, Kozik stepped onto the porch of a small bungalow in Lodi that he hadn't visited in years, and knocked on the door.

He waited a few minutes, receiving no response. He debated with himself: knock again? Maybe she wasn't home. Or perhaps she was asleep; it was pretty late, after all. Or hell, maybe she'd moved someplace else entirely. What the fuck was he even doing here?

The porch light flickering on above his head kept him from making a decision. He blinked in the sudden brightness. Then the door clicked and was pulled open. Kozik squinted at the woman who'd opened it.

"Kozik."

Ally didn't sound very surprised to see him. She would've heard he'd was back in Charming, of course. She'd been at the club house on business several times since he'd come down from Tacoma. But he'd somehow kept missing her.

Once his eyes adjusted to the light, he looked her up and down. Damn, she still

looked good. No, better than good. Time had been kind to her: still sexy as hell, despite the unflattering gray cotton leggings and faded green, oversized shirt, which looked as if she'd slept in it.

"Hey." All of a sudden, Kozik was lost for words. He snatched at the first thought to pop into his mind. "You should be more careful about opening the door after dark."

Her mouth curved with a hint of a smile. "Heard the bike." They were silent for a moment. "What're you doing here, Koz?"

"I—." Abruptly, Kozik broke off. What was he doing, standing on her stoop in the middle of the night? Again, the first thing that came to mind won out. "Tig's never gonna vote me back in."

He hated saying it out loud. Hated how it made him sound like some whiny kid. But he'd been so *sure*. After scheming together to convince Alvarez to play dead for a day, after working their fuckin' asses off to get Tara back before Jax came home, he'd truly believed—.

Tig's first *nay*, a few weeks ago, had cut him, but it hadn't been unexpected. Tonight, though? A second rejection? That had felt like someone ripping his heart out and stomping on it.

"I see," was all she said in response.

Not for the first time since he'd gotten to know her, Kozik marveled at how well she understood everything he wasn't saying. For someone living on the Samcro fringes, she'd always been good at picking up on the club's unwritten rules, at understanding them, even when they'd bothered her or had made trouble for her. Perhaps that was what made her such a good club lawyer. She got the rules, but she didn't judge them for it.

"Wanna come in?" Ally pulled the door open wider and led him toward the living room. She flicked on lights as she went, confirming his first impression: she'd been asleep. Coming to a stop in the middle of the room, he peered around, curious to see what had changed in the last eight years. He recognized the coffee table and the pillows on the sofa, their bright colors only slightly faded. Something about the room wasn't how he remembered it, though, and it took him a few moments to figure out what it was.

"You got a kid?" he blurted.

She smiled over her shoulder. "Three-year-old boy."

Of course. The Matchbox cars and garage set should've been a dead giveaway. "And his daddy?" Kozik doubted she'd have invited him in if there was a husband sleeping somewhere down the hall.

Ally gave an unladylike snort. "Ran for the hills the instant he found out I was pregnant."

"Asshole."

"Good riddance, is what I'm thinkin'."

Kozik grinned back at her. "Didn't figure you for the type. Thought you were smarter than that."

"Hey, if you came here to insult me, you can haul your ass right back out." There wasn't any fire in her tone, however, and she knelt to pick up a stray car, putting it back with the rest of the set. "Birth control can fail for anyone. Doesn't make you any more or less smart than anyone else."

"Right." He rubbed his neck. "Sorry. That came out wrong." Like everything else he said these days.

"Anyway," Ally waved him toward the couch. "Coffee? Or beer?"

He considered a moment. "Beer, please."

She turned toward the kitchen. "Coming right up."

He plopped down on the couch, sinking deep into its cushions, and listened to her pattering around in the kitchen: the sound of the fridge door opening and closing, the clink of bottles, and the soft snap of caps being removed. A moment later, she returned, holding two Buds. She offered him one, before settling herself on the other end of the sofa, turned half toward him and with one leg tucked under her. She took a swallow and grimaced.

"Still not much for beer, eh?" Kozik arched an eyebrow in her direction. Ally had never liked the taste—a source of endless teasing.

"Nope." She put the bottle down on the coffee table. "Always got a couple for unexpected guests." She flashed him another wry smile. "So, why *are* you here?"

She wasn't talking about him returning to Charming. She was talking about him showing up on her doorstep in the dead of night, eight years after they broke up. "I—." Like before, he didn't have an answer. He took a swig from his bottle, licked his lips, and admitted, "I got no fucking idea."

She chuckled and drew up her other leg. The room grew quiet around them, the silence broken only by the ticking of the clock on the wall and, once, a passing car, its headlights playing briefly through the living room before it was gone.

"I fucked up, Ally. I know that. Knew it then, know it now." Kozik planted his half-finished beer on the coffee table next to her abandoned one and scrubbed both hands across his face. He was so tired of all this shit. "With you, with Tig. With Missy. I guess—." He dropped his hands, his fingers plucking at the frayed

edge of his sweatshirt as if they had a will of their own. "I guess I hoped—."

"Tig would forgive you?" Ally's voice was soft, and he gave her a quick sideways glance. She was looking back at him steadily. "You know that man can hold a grudge like no other."

"I know. But it ain't that. It's—." Kozik broke off again. He could've lived with Tig still being mad about Missy, might even have welcomed it. But it was more than that. "He doesn't trust me no more. Maybe never will again." He let his head fall back against the sofa and released a long breath. "And if you don't trust a brother...." He shrugged.

"Ah." Again, Ally got what he was trying to say without needing further clarification. "Kozik, you and Tig were so close back then. Closer than brothers. Maybe you need to give him some time?"

"How much time?" He disliked himself for sounding plaintive, but he couldn't help it. "It's been eight fuckin' years."

"Eight years you guys spent apart."

Kozik barked a laugh and closed his eyes. "I can't just hang around in Charming for another eight years. Tacoma wouldn't let me, and I'm not a bitch beggin' for scraps."

But he had no fuckin' clue what his next move should be. Tacoma had already voted on his transfer, but with Charming not accepting him....

He could go Nomad, he supposed; it had worked for Happy. But he wasn't Hap; he needed a home base, a place to call his own. Tacoma had been that place for a good long while, but the Washington charter was growing too thick for his taste. He preferred his charters smaller, more neatly organized.

"Sides, Tig's gonna be up in Stockton." For fourteen months, if Jax pulled off the scheme he'd cooked up. Years, if he couldn't. "Not much chance for mending fences."

"Hey." It wasn't until he felt her fingers lightly pressing on his wrists, warm against his skin, that Kozik realized Ally had scooted over to kneel next to him on the couch. "You can't know that."

Opening his eyes, he turned his head toward her. She was doing her part to keep the club out of jail, and she was damned good at it, and maybe she knew something he didn't, but—.

He caught a whiff of shampoo, and of woman, and—it was wrong; it wasn't why he'd come here. But before he'd even knew he'd moved, he'd angled further toward her, knuckled her chin up and captured her lips with his own.

After a couple seconds, she pulled back slightly. "We shouldn't—," she muttered

against his lips.

"I know." He caught her bottom lip with his teeth, knowing she was right but unable to help himself

Again, she pulled away. "Kozik, I'm your lawyer."

"No, you're not." Pretty damn ironic that Tig voting against him meant there would be no conflict of interest if he fucked her tonight. His hand found its way under her T-shirt shirt, rubbing slow circles on her skin, and he felt her stomach muscles flutter under his palm. "I ain't Samcro, remember."

"Right." She let out a breathless little laugh.

Encouraged, he let his hand slide further up her flank until he reached the soft swell of her tits. She wasn't wearing a bra and he cupped the firm flesh in his hand, massaging gently, memories of how she liked it quickly coming back. She uttered a soft moan, arching further into his grip as he rolled a nipple between thumb and forefinger. He held still for a moment, offering her a wordless last opportunity to pull herself together and end it. But she didn't move away. Instead, she lifted herself up and swept one leg over his thighs until she was straddling him, her hands tangling in the short spikes of his hair.

"Kozik...."

Was her whisper a plea? A warning? He wasn't sure. He also didn't care. He pushed both hands down under the waistband of her leggings, fingers digging into her bare ass as he drew her to him, grinding her against the hard-on pressing at the zipper of his jeans.

Her fingers were on his belt, and he was dipping his head to nibble along the skin of her collar bone, when suddenly, she froze. He raised his head. "What—?"

"Shh." Ally cocked her head, listening, and then Kozik heard it too.

"Mommy?" A small boy's voice, muffled by the walls.

"Sorry." She groaned, briefly resting her forehead against his, before taking a deep breath and swinging off of him. "Duty calls."

As she padded away to see to her son, Kozik adjusted himself in his jeans, glad they were on the baggy side. He reached for his beer and took another long swallow, emptying the bottle. Maybe getting interrupted was a good thing. He hadn't come to pick back up where they'd left off so unhappily eight years ago. And even if he had gotten laid tonight, he was damned sure Ally'd've kicked him out the door in the morning. It had been obvious, back then, that she saw no future for them. He had no reason to think anything had changed.

He sighed; the sex between them had always been great, hadn't it? And it hadn't been all there was, either: he'd been prepared to give her a crow. But none of

that had been enough. Ally had wanted more than to be a Son's old lady. Was she happy with her life now? Her career? Being a mother?

He listened, her words barely audible, while she talked to her kid. He could hear the smile in her voice as she earnestly promised there was no monster under his bed. Minutes ago, he'd told her she was smart. He'd been right, too; she'd been smart enough to refuse to compromise, smart enough to understand how much the club had meant to him so there was no possibility of him being the one to do so.

He thought about sneaking out while she was occupied—he shouldn't have come in the first place—but she was back before he could leave. She rolled a shoulder apologetically, not quite shyly. The gesture told him she'd reached the same conclusion he had: they'd been caught up in the moment but they shouldn't rekindle something they were long since done with.

"Kid okay?" he asked.

"Yeah. Just a bad dream." Walking further into the room, she picked up the beer bottle she'd abandoned, along with his empty one. "Koz.... You know we shouldn't—."

"I know." He started to get up. "I should go."

"Kozik?" Her voice was soft. "What *did* happen back then?"

He raised his head, halfway to his feet, to look at her. "You were there, you saw."

Ally clutched the bottles in her hands. "Not what I meant. Why...?"

He sank back down, rubbing his palms on his knees, thinking. He'd never told her. Never told anyone. Didn't really wanna talk about it, even now. But she deserved to know the truth. "That night.... The lynch mob. The shoot-out. Brought back memories." A chill was running down his spine even now, all these years later. He wasn't afraid of many things, but that night he'd been scared shitless.

She sat down next to him, setting the bottles back on the table. "Memories?"

He nodded, not quite looking at her. "Somalia." And then, as if the name was a magic word, the entire sordid tale came pouring out of him. How they'd been on patrol in the streets of Mogadishu, almost two decades ago, accompanying an aid convoy. How the front truck had broken down, in the middle of the street. The baying mob swarming over it in an instant. The heat, the chaos, the smell. The sound of gunfire, his finger on the trigger. And the stink of blood in the air, the buzz of flies, once it was all over and they were surrounded by bodies: men, women, even children.

"I'm sorry." Ally's voice was choked, and Kozik blinked back to the present, to

her living room, smelling faintly of citrus and soap. He brushed a hand across his face and it came away wet, and he realized there were tears on his cheeks. He'd seen and done a lot of shit during his years in the Corps. But for some reason, Mogadishu had been what had tipped him over the edge. It was how he'd ended up with a fuckin' monkey on his back.

"Anyway," he cleared his throat, "it's no excuse."

"Maybe not." Ally batted away tears of her own. "But it's an explanation." They sat in silence for a while, each busy with their own thoughts, listening to the hum of the fridge clanking to life in the kitchen. "You ever tell Tig?"

"No. Wouldn't make no difference, anyway." The reasons didn't matter; what mattered were the facts. Tig had saved his ass when he'd been on the fast track to an early grave from snorting heroin. Had put his faith in Kozik. Called him brother. And Kozik had betrayed that trust, and Missy had died. Nothing in the world—excuse or explanation—could change that.

Ally dipped her head in acknowledgement, not arguing. "What you gonna do?"

"Promised Tig I'd hang around for a while. Help out. Then—." He gave a shrug. "Dunno. Nomad, maybe." Another lengthy pause, and Kozik again pushed to his feet. "I really should go. Let you get back to bed."

Ally got up too. "You shouldn't be alone. Not tonight." He shot her a look but there was no pity in her eyes. He didn't think he could've stood it if there had been. "Stay." She gave him a faint smile. "Couch is quite comfy. I'll get ya a blanket and pillow."

Kozik hesitated only a moment. "Thanks."

A few minutes later, in the dark, he'd kicked off his boots, shrugged out of his cut, and settled himself on the sofa. She was right: it was comfortable. Shame she was alone with the kid; she'd make a good woman for someone.

For the right dude.

Which would never be him.

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