

Snakebyte: Chapter One:
On the edge of a broken heart.

I tripped over a tequila bottle on my stumble to the bathroom. Light streamed through the window hitting my eyes with its full force. I winced. The morning was going as well as could be expected considering the empty tequila bottle. A long hot shower improved things enough that I could clean my teeth without throwing up.

The phone in my room rang as I emerged from the steam.

I threw two aspirin into my mouth and swallowed fast before they made me gag, ignored the phone, picked up the empty tequila bottle and went down stairs. Drinking alone in my bedroom, that's a new low. I placed the bottle in the recycling bin outside the backdoor with utmost care.

No sudden movements or loud noises.

Fragile best described my being.

Self-inflicted is another way of putting it.

The lid on the bin closed. I opened it again and peered inside. I counted four tequila bottles. Four. They were on the top and clearly visible. The bin was over three-quarters full of empty bottles, both wine and tequila. Not good. Seems I'd been drinking myself into a stupor for quite some time.

No wonder I felt so ill.

I headed to the kitchen and made coffee.

The kitchen phone rang. I ignored it. The coffee maker grumbled, hissed and spat. I leaned on the kitchen counter and stared at the flashing amber light on the phone while the smell of fresh brewed coffee filled the room.

Coffee.

The amber flashing light taunted me.

Somewhere down the hall, I heard my cell phone.

"I'm not fucking home!" I hollered into the empty house. My fingers dug into my temples trying to work the headache away that spiked shards of glass into my skull with my yelling. "Oh God," I groaned. "Never again."

The phone on the counter rang again. My hand flew out and smacked it. The phone fell and smashed onto the floor. Pieces of phone bounced across the tiles and pain soared through my head.

“I said, shut up and I meant it.”

My cell phone started up again. I poured my coffee and went to my office. From the shelf above my desk, I took a pair of sunglasses and put them on. There was a bottle of aspirin on the shelf. I took two with my coffee. The message light on my office phone flashed. Every phone in the house held messages and was alternating between ringing and flashing. I sipped my coffee and pressed the power button on my laptop while I considered sitting at my desk.

I tried my chair. It felt normal. I set my coffee on the left of my laptop. It felt normal. Absently my right hand pressed the message button on the phone.

The robotic voice announced, “You have seventy-five messages.”

“Seventy-five,” I whispered to the computer.

It didn't care. The screen changed. Skype signed in automatically. An orange square flashed in my task bar. Twenty-six Skype messages. A quick right-click and ‘quit Skype’ got rid of that problem until next time I fired up the laptop.

The phones down the hall started ringing again.

Being a sucker for punishment, I clicked on my email program icon. I finished my coffee before the hundreds of emails finished downloading. Glancing at the subject lines as I scrolled told me all I needed to know.

Everyone was sorry for my loss.

Fuc'n awesome.

Didn't bring her back. Didn't make it go away. Didn't help at all.

The date at the bottom of the screen caught my eye. It was confusing. My last real memory was second week of April. The computer said it was now late May.

Where had I been?

I pulled my drawer open. My gun, a paddle holster, my badge, handcuffs in their black leather case, my belt. My life or at least the bit that made sense.

With a shove the drawer slid shut, paused, and then bounced back.

I lifted my holster and gun then laid them on my desk. I unfurled my belt. The badge fitted beautifully into my shirt pocket.

The phone rang. My hand hit the speaker button without conscious thought on my part.

“Conway,” I said.

“You all right?” Kurt replied.

“That’s the question you’re going with?” I asked deleting a bunch of emails.

“I don’t know what else to say.”

“Me neither.” I stood up, and threaded my belt through the loops on my jeans and fastened the buckle. I slid the holster into place. Life felt a little more normal as I pushed my gun into the holster.

“You are coming into work today?”

“Yes.”

That was the plan when I stumbled out of bed and it hadn’t changed.

“I’ll pick you up.”

“Thanks.”

“You’ve got time for another coffee.”

“Good. I need it.”

There is a good chance I’d fail a Breathalyzer test. That wouldn’t go well. I hung up. The amber light still flashed telling me I had messages. I hit the reset button. It was a better option than having to delete the messages one by one. I didn’t want to hear them I just wanted them gone.

The decision to go back to work was easy because it was nine times better than rattling around an empty house with tequila as my new best friend. I gave alcoholism the old college try but it was a fail. Time to pull my shit together and face the world.

Copyright Cat Connor 2013.

