

## Chapter 56

### GANNON

I count every strike against the old hag's back, watching as she hangs limp in the restraints. My eyes wander to the pack house from which the King has yet to emerge. My brows furrow, and I glance around at the guards. I am so preoccupied with dealing with Mrs. Daley that I don't realize the King is still inside the pack house.

I wipe my hands on my jeans, which are drenched in blood from the back spray from off the whip. "Is he still in there?" I ask one of the men standing guard by the doors. He nods his head.

"Yes, Gamma, we tried to go in, but he told us not to disturb him," the man speaks, and I raise an eyebrow at him as I climb the steps before shoving the rickety old door in. Alpha Dean and Alpha Brock are sitting on the steps in the hallway.

"Where is the King?" I ask before Alpha Dean lifts a shaking finger and points toward the basement door.

"He told us to get out and wait up here," Alpha Dean says, and by how pale he is, something has scared the life out of the old man. As I open the door, I can hear the King muttering, and I curse at myself for leaving him on his own.

Walking down the steps, I can tell he isn't in the right state of mind because of his aura, which makes my knees shake and goosebumps raise every hair on my body. That is proven more by the moment my feet touch the concrete floor, and I peer over at him where he stands by a table in the center of the dusty old room. The place is floor-to-ceiling high in boxes and files.

His entire body tenses as he senses the incoming intruder. Everyone is petrified of this side of the King. The monster that lurks beneath the skin of this man. In this form, he is a predator, the biggest predator, a lethal beast, and he shows it within seconds of me spotting him.

One minute, he is standing by the table under the hanging light. The next, his hands grip my shirt's front, and I am airborne as he tosses me. The air fizzles in my lungs as I hit a stack of boxes.

"Kyson!" I choke as his fist connects with my head. I growl before it's cut off by his hands around my throat. I grip his wrists, only for him to lift and slam me onto the table that he was standing over when I came down here.

Damian usually deals with him when he is in fits of rage, and usually, the King keeps this part of him locked up tight until it explodes as it has now.

"Kyson!" I choke out as his grip tightens; his eyes are black and plagued with the horrors of his past, where he couldn't protect his sister,

a past full of bloodshed and unimaginable horrors. A place he is currently trapped in, like the nightmares that plague him, and I have yet to figure out what has triggered him.

I tilt my head to the side just as his fist comes down on the table before punching him in the ribs. His grip never wavers as he hits me again, and I hear the wood crack as my head smashes back against the table. He will forgive me because I'm not taking a pounding from him, and he wants to burn off some anger.

From what I will figure out after, as he raises his clawed fist again, I shift under his grip, his tight grip making the transition painful as my neck elongates and the bones in my face break and move, my jaws lock around his fist catching it, and I jam my claws in his ribs.

He grunts, stunned by the sudden pain he feels, that momentary distraction making his grip on my throat lessen, and my claws slip free of him as he staggers back, allowing me to roll off the table. Only this time, I am ready and prepared for his attack.

By the time he comes back to his senses, I don't think an inch of either of us isn't torn, scratched, or bruised. His anger diminishes as his eyes settle on me, the King returning, and, damn, next time, Damian is going with him – every part of me aches and stings.

The King gasps, blinking. His eyes return to normal as he sits up from where I tossed him off. The basement is destroyed, and I take comfort in knowing I won't be cleaning it.

“Gannon?”

“My King,” I reply, baring my neck to him, hoping not to set him off again. We both breathe heavily, and I feel every bit of the 411 years I have spent on this earth.

“You want to tell me what that was about?” I ask him, trying to catch my breath as he shifts back. He leans back against the bench and crooked shelf, bracing his arms on his knees. I still don’t shift back, not yet. He is unpredictable at the best of times, an emotional, ticking time bomb running off pure instinct.

He clutches his hair in his fists, and I leave the question instead of getting up and upturning what is left of the table, the papers scattered across the floor. I am nearly tempted to drag Alpha Dean down here when he doesn’t answer when I spot some photographs. One of the women I barely recognize because she is ripped apart, but the two orphanage photos of the two little girls I recognize instantly.

“This has something to do with Ivy?”

“She belongs to that monster,” Kyson breathes, and I glance over my shoulder to find him resting his head back on the shelf and staring at the swinging light. I turn back to the paperwork, picking up scattered pieces and trying to figure out his words when I spot a photo of a woman I recognize to be Marrissa Talbot, the woman responsible for killing his sister.

It doesn't take long before I realize what he means: Marrissa is Ivy's mother.

"Fuck!" I curse, knowing full well what that woman's crimes were.

"I can't be with her, not after knowing who mothered her."

"We don't know for certain," I mutter, picking up more files only to stumble across Abbie's. I stack the documents in a pile.

"I am certain that she isn't her mother, Kyson. How you could even entertain the idea of them being the same is beyond me. Besides, that girl was a child and not part of her mother's crimes if she is, in fact, her daughter," I tell him.

"And if she is, what do I do with her?" Kyson asks me.

"Does it matter? She is your mate!" I tell him while gathering all the documents.

"I won't have a monster for a mate!"

"Ivy is not her mother? You can't blame her for the crimes of her mother. She was just a child then."

“I can’t punish her mother for her crimes, yet she left behind a daughter that I can!” he growls before storming out of the basement.

“Fuck!” I curse, gathering everything and moving after him. This is not going to end well, I think, feeling my ability to handle this situation slowly slipping away.

The dingy basement is destroyed, as if someone had set off a bomb downstairs. Shaking my head at the mess, I follow after the King. I hear him barking orders at his men, demanding to leave. I turn to Alpha Dean as he rises from where he still sits on the steps. “Couldn’t you have told us this over the phone or faxed this crap?” I ask, shaking it in the jerk’s face. He says nothing, and I look at his pathetic son.

“You’ll need to retrieve a broom,” I tell him. If it were me, I would lock the door and declare the basement no longer exists, as there’s probably no fixing this place. Kyson is still arguing with his men about hurrying and securing the place. I better get up there, I think, knowing that members of his guard may not be as prepared to deal with him in this state. He is impatient and wants to leave, but we have protocols to follow before that is possible.

I snap my fingers at the driver, who jumps into the front seat. Glancing around at the men, I say, “Forget it. Mark, go ahead of us. We leave now unless you want him tearing this pack apart.” The man runs to one of the cars. The King isn’t going to wait, and I sure as hell don’t feel like chasing him on foot if he decides to run out his anger.

Climbing into the car, I slide across the seat and shut the door. The car takes off immediately, and the King looks for clothes. After dropping the documents on the seat, I lean forward and lift the bench seat with the storage underneath. I toss him some clothes, taking a pair of shorts and a tank top out for myself.

I pull them on, jerking sideways as the limo goes around corners before tugging the shirt over my head.

The King's aura is suffocating in the small space, and Damian will kill me when he finds out, but he isn't the one sitting with him. So, I reach into the fridge and pull out a liquor bottle. I try to hand him a glass, but he twists the cap off and puts the bottle to his lips before I can. Liquor dribbles down his chin, and he pulls the bottle from his lips, wiping his face on the back of his hand, and sighs.

We all know he is an alcoholic. He has been since his sister died, and right now, I'm not helping the issue, but I can handle him drunk; it takes the edge off. I don't feel like going round two with him right now, and it sure as hell won't be the first or the last time I watch him find himself at the bottom of a bottle or two.

Halfway through the third bottle, he passes out drunk. It is a long drive back, and I am relieved to watch his eyes grow heavier before his head slumps forward. Sighing, I take the bottle from his grip and sit beside the two empty ones. I tap on the screen between the driver and me, causing the driver to roll down the window.

“He’s passed out?” the driver asks, sounding as relieved as I feel. Towards the end, his aura made me queasy, so I know he feels the same. “Thank God!” he answers when I see his eyes dart to the mirror.

We chat a bit, and he pulls over briefly, allowing the cars behind us to catch up and drive ahead while I hop out for a smoke. I retrieve a blanket from the trunk, and the driver goes in, tucking the King in like a child. Usually, that is done by Damian, but today, I tasked the driver, Bill, with it. He always feels regret the days after or embarrassment, but I have a feeling this won’t be the last of his anger. I briefly wonder if I should mindlink Damian to warn him of the storm that’s coming their way. I shudder to think what’s going to happen next.

The driver hops back in just as three cars pull up behind us, and three have gone ahead of us now.

I toss the last of my smoke, climbing back in with the King. Retrieving the files, I decide to go over them to find out more about Marrissa and take a peek at Abbie’s files.

Not much is said about Marrissa because, by the looks of it, Alpha Dean isn’t even aware of who his pack has killed.

Shaking my head, I set that file aside before pulling out Abbie’s. I open it to the orphanage photo, which must have been taken that night they were found. She looks petrified as she stares at the camera, her childlike eyes wide with fear and blood drenching her clothes. Turning the page, I nearly drop the files when I find her parent’s ID.

More importantly, when I find her mother's. That's impossible... I watched her die. I knew she was dead because I killed her myself.

I blink down at the picture; her face is exactly how I remember it, similar to Abbie's. The resemblance is uncanny, yet when I look at the name, it is wrong except for the last name.

This woman looks exactly like my mate. Identical, and now I figure out the allure I had to her. Liam is right. I can no longer deny it, and now I know why they share such a resemblance. I have a feeling the woman I am staring at in the photo is my mate's twin.