

Chapter 16

GANNON

Liam's forceful smack against my chest jolts me awake, instantly alert as I catch sight of the town limits unfolding before us. "Orphanage first," I command, and he nods, deftly steering the car toward our destination. Leaning over into the back seat, I extract my jacket from the bag, as a chill lingers in the morning air. We pull up in front of the dilapidated building.

The orphanage, a crumbling structure on the brink of condemnation, had been modified to accommodate the old hag's wheelchair-bound existence after our last visit. Today, however, she will no longer need to fret about her future, for hers will come to an end.

Liam pulls over to the curb, and I step out of the car, closing the door with a gentle click. The children remain asleep, their absence evident in the stillness that permeates the premises. They are all tucked away in their beds. I effortlessly hop over the small brick fence that encloses the front yard, while Liam opens the trunk.

“No need for those,” I caution him, considering the presence of innocent children within these walls.

“Then why are we here?” he queries.

“Grabbing the old bat, getting a name and leaving,” I tell him, and he sighs but shuts the trunk. “I’m still bringing my knives just in case,” he mutters.

As I approach the entrance, I rap on the door, waiting in vain for a response. It is early; perhaps Mrs. Daley is the sole adult present. However, sneaking around to the back of the building, I discover the door has been left unlocked—an oversight on their part. Stepping inside, it is colder within the orphanage than it is outside.

“Fuck, it’s like the arctic in here,” Liam snarls.

“I presume she no longer occupies an upper-level room,” I remark, eyeing the worn spiral staircase.

“Not unless the old bat sprouted wings and learned to fly,” Liam chuckles.

“Oh, she will fly alright,” I tell him, walking through the bottom level, looking for where she may have had her room moved to. It is the sounds of banging around that alert me to which one. It sounds like she has fallen out of bed. Her annoying screeching voice curses, making my

upper lip pull back over my teeth as I push open the door. The room stinks of piss and shit.

“Fuck me, we haven’t even touched her, and she already shit herself,” Liam snorts, and her head snaps up to stare at us from where she is trapped beside her bed, her wheelchair overturned. Her eyes grow wide, and she cowers away.

“Haven’t you done enough?” she says, visibly shaking.

“Nope, but I will make it quick. All I need is a name, and address,” I tell her, gripping her shoulders while Liam turns the wheelchair upright. I lift her, dropping her into the seat, and she clutches the armrests so tightly her knuckles turn white.

“How about a nice cup of tea, love? You look rather parched. I make an outstanding brew,” Liam says, grabbing the handles and steering her out.

“There are children here,” she stammers, flinching as she passes me when I hold the door open for them.

“Well, what would an orphanage be without children?” I retort, trailing behind as Liam leads her into the kitchen. He glides around the space with practiced ease, his theatrics serving to alleviate her anxiety—a prelude to her impending demise.

“What have I done this time? What did the king order you to do to me?” she asks, her lips quivering.

Liam chuckles, finding an apron hanging by the stove and putting it on before flicking the kettle on. “The children will be up any minute; I have to start making their breakfast soon,” she claims. Liam snorts.

“You, you can’t even reach the counter. What use would you be in a kitchen?” Liam asks her, and her eyes prick with tears.

“Regardless, today will mark the end of your suffering. Answer truthfully, and I will make it swift. Fail to do so,” Liam interrupts, swiftly plunging a knife into her hand, his other hand clamping over her mouth as she gasps in horror.

“Understand?” I inquire, folding my arms across my chest, my glare fixed on her. She wheezes, her withered face turning crimson as she stares at her hand, the knife protruding through her flesh and impaling the wooden armrest.

“Oh, right. Almost forgot,” Liam remarks, yanking the blade free.

“Ah-ah! No need for that. You’re a big girl.” Liam admonishes her as she opens her mouth to scream, wielding the knife before her face. He proceeds to wipe it clean on the apron tied around his waist. “I should get myself one of these,” he muses, admiring the floral pattern.

“Do you have one with skulls instead of flowers? Not that I’m complaining, though,” he adds cheekily.

Mrs. Daley shakes her head, fresh tears streaming down her cheeks as her mouth hangs agape. She bears an uncanny resemblance to those carnival clowns with gaping mouths waiting to catch balls.

“Never mind then; this one suits me just fine,” Liam taunts, wiggling his jean-clad behind in front of the frail woman. “Does it make my ass look big?” he jests, prompting me to shake my head, attempting to stifle my laughter as he parades around the kitchen. She shakes her head in response.

“Well, that was a lie, wasn’t it? No matter; I’ll let it slide. One lump of sugar or two?” he asks, receiving only wide-eyed silence in return.

“You strike me as someone who prefers two. Let’s make it three; you seem like a bitter old bitch,” he remarks, turning back to prepare the coffee.

Once Liam finishes brewing the drinks, he hands me mine, and I take a sip, observing Mrs. Daley wince as he thrusts the cup into her injured hand.

“Bottoms up; it’s piping hot. We wouldn’t want it to go cold,” he remarks, sipping his own coffee. “Ah, now that’s a fine blend. What brand is this?” he inquires, glancing back at the counter where an expensive-looking jar is displayed.

“Hmm, where did you order this from?” he probes.

“Online,” she stammers.

“Good. Write down the website before I end your life,” he commands. Mrs. Daley whimpers, pointing to a card affixed to the fridge’s corkboard. Liam strides over and plucks it off.

“Well, that was easy,” he remarks, slipping the card into his pocket alongside the coffee jar’s label. Meanwhile, Mrs. Daley sips her coffee as if it might somehow delay her inevitable fate. In an effort to entertain ourselves, Liam engages her in idle conversation while I finish my drink. Placing my mug in the sink, I wash it before setting it out to dry. Turning around, I lean against the counter, watching as the woman trembles like a leaf, her eyes fixated on Liam’s every move.