

## Chapter 2

### GANNON

The aging door creaks open, its old hinges emitting a loud groan that reverberates through the room. As the light streams in, filtered and subdued by the curtains, I see the space is enveloped in a dim, ethereal glow. Liam, a tall and imposing figure with broad shoulders and a chiseled jawline, strides into my sanctuary. His dirty blond hair tumbles messily into his eyes, adding an air of ruggedness to his already formidable presence.

Despite his commanding demeanor, there is a certain enigma that shrouds his face, concealing the savage nature that lies within. Frustration etches his stance as he saunters toward me, dressed only in a tank top and jeans. The sinewy muscles of his bulging arms are on full display, adorned with thick, corded veins that seem to pulsate with every step.

“Get up!” he demands, his voice laced with an undeniable authority. I groan in protest, reluctant to be torn from the peaceful embrace of slumber, but Liam’s relentless determination leaves me no choice.

Standing at the foot of my bed, Liam begins clapping with a resounding intensity. “Up! Get out of bed,” he insists, his words punctuated by the

forceful removal of my blanket. A mischievous glint dances in his eyes as he exclaims, “Oh la la, what have we here? Sleeping in the buff, I see. Me likey.”

Before I can react, his hand connects with my exposed skin in a swift slap that leaves a searing imprint on my ass. The sting radiates through my body as if every finger has been branded onto my backside.

I snarl in defiance, rolling over onto my back and fixing him with a glare that could ignite the room. “Liam, you fucking twat!” I hiss through gritted teeth, my hand instinctively rubbing the welted flesh. “Get out of my room.”

But Liam remains undeterred, his resolve unyielding. “No, can do. I have a job to do, and you are coming with me,” he declares with unwavering determination. I groan in resignation, reaching for my blanket and attempting to reclaim the warmth that has been so abruptly snatched away. However, Liam’s grip is firm as he snatches it again, tearing it completely off the bed.

“Up, or I will make use of that ass by turning it into my personal cum dumpster,” Liam snaps, his words laced with a dangerous edge. Anger courses through my veins as I begrudgingly sit up, tossing my legs over the side of the bed. As I do so, Liam nonchalantly strolls toward my drawers, rummaging through them and flinging clothes in my direction.

With a mixture of annoyance and resignation, I snatch the garments and begin dressing myself. “And where are we going?” I inquire, a tinge of curiosity seeping into my voice.

“Anywhere but this room. I am sick of watching you sulk,” Liam retorts, his exasperation palpable.

Great, the psycho woke me for no damn reason. Pulling my shirt over my head, I fix him with my meanest glare.

“Has Abbie called you?” I ask him as I slip on my sneakers, stealing a glance in his direction. He shakes his head in response.

“When was the last time you spoke to her?” he queries, tilting his head slightly to the side.

“Days ago, a week maybe more,” I shrug nonchalantly, uncertainty clouding my mind. The days have blurred together since she left, merging into a haze of indistinguishable moments.

“She’ll come around, Gannon. She will realize what sort of man he is,” Liam assures me, his voice carrying a hint of optimism. Grabbing my belt from the bedside table, I deftly thread it through the loops before securing the buckle and following him out of the room.

“Maybe ask Kyson for permission to visit her,” Liam suggests as we make our way through the corridors. Unsure of our destination, I continue to trail behind him, my mind preoccupied with thoughts of Abbie. We eventually find ourselves in the labyrinthine depths of the castle’s basement, specifically the kitchens. Descending deeper into the bowels of the building, we finally come to a halt in a dimly lit chamber.

“Kyson wants me to find all the archives on Azalea Landeena,” Liam informs me, his voice carrying a note of urgency. We had long suspected Ivy may be the missing Landeena princess, the rightful heir to the Landeena Kingdom. The implications of this revelation are staggering, as it meant Kyson’s treatment of her had been misplaced. He had believed her to be the daughter of the infamous serial killer Marissa Talbot, but now doubts began to creep in. Too many pieces of the puzzle failed to align.

Having voiced my concerns to Damian on numerous occasions, I had become increasingly convinced something was awry with Ivy’s behavior. Her instincts seemed more akin to those of a Lycan rather than a werewolf. However, Kyson remained steadfast in his refusal to listen to our doubts. Until now.

Navigating through the cluttered expanse of the storage area, we drag boxes out and sift through them in search of any information pertaining to the Landeena family and their missing daughter, who would be roughly Ivy’s age. Our efforts yield a few scattered files, which we quickly scan before deciding to consult Damian for further insight. Unfortunately, it becomes apparent we have barely scratched the surface of this vast labyrinth. The cell is almost inaccessible, with towering stacks of boxes reaching all the way to the ceiling. And there are six more cells just like it.

When our search finally draws to a close, Liam leads me to a training session with the castle’s men and what remains of the Landeena guards. The day stretches on, filled with physical exertion and the relentless pursuit of honing our skills. Amidst it all, I attempt to call Abbie, my

longing for her presence gnawing at my heart. Liam, ever vigilant, seems determined to keep me distracted. I wish he would stop babysitting me.

As the shift comes to a close, we make our way back to my room within the castle's confines. Stepping through the threshold, I groan in frustration as Liam follows closely behind.

"Come on, Liam, leave me be," I growl, my frustration seeping into my voice as I stalk toward the bathroom in need of a quick shower. The hot water cascades over me, washing away the grime and tension of the day. However, when I step out, I find Liam still lingering in my room, his eyes fixated on my personal belongings. Snatching the photos of Sia and Abbie from his hands, I confront him with a mixture of annoyance and anger.

"Liam!" I snarl through gritted teeth, my voice laced with frustration. He exhales heavily before moving toward my bed and taking a seat.

"By the way, Kyson granted you leave to visit Abbie," Liam states matter-of-factly, his words hanging in the air. I sigh in acknowledgment, realizing he must have convinced Kyson or perhaps enlisted Damian's help in persuading the king.

"You didn't have to get involved," I mutter, placing the photos back in their folder with a sense of careful reverence.

“When you get her back, are you going to tell her about killing her aunt?” Liam’s question hangs heavy in the air, causing me to swallow hard as my gaze averts to his penetrating stare.

“More importantly, are you going to tell the king about who Sia truly was?” he presses further, his voice filled with a mix of concern and curiosity.

“It changes nothing. We dealt with Sia in the end, and she never had the chance to carry out her nefarious plans. What good would come from dredging up the past? Nothing but turmoil,” I respond, my voice tinged with resignation.

“The king wouldn’t be angered by your actions against Sia and her mother,” Liam asserts, his gaze unwavering as he locks eyes with me.

“Are you speaking solely about my involvement or considering everything?” I counter, my tone laced with a hint of skepticism.

“If Kyson were to discover the truth, he might hold Abbie accountable. Assuming guilt by association. Look at what he has done to Ivy. I won’t risk it with Abbie,” I explain, my words laden with a sense of protectiveness toward the woman I love. Liam takes a seat at the edge of the bed, his posture reflective of deep thought.

“And what about Abbie?” he probes further. “You have to tell her about us. She will find out, Gannon. Secrets like this don’t remain hidden forever.”

“Tell her what exactly? That my mate chose you over me? Or how I felt the bond breaking every time she fucked my best friend? Or perhaps I should inform her about how we tore her beloved Aunt apart when we discovered the truth about each other?” The bitterness in my voice is palpable as I unleash my pent-up frustration.

Liam sighs, his expression filled with a mixture of sympathy and understanding. “Abbie would understand. I just don’t want this one secret to tear you apart again once you have her back. If she were to uncover it on her own, the consequences could be dire.”

“The only person who knows about this, Liam, is you. Unless you plan on revealing it to her, there is no way for her to find out,” I retort sharply. Liam shakes his head, his expression a mix of resignation and concern.

“Just think about it, Gannon. I will support you, no matter what you decide. But I believe Abbie deserves to know the truth about her parents and the circumstances they were running from.”

“We can’t say for certain. We only recently discovered that Sia had a twin sister. There could be numerous reasons why Abbie’s parents went rogue,” I argue, desperately clinging to the shreds of doubt that remain.

“But it does make sense, doesn’t it? Why would Abbie’s parents willingly become rogues? They were fleeing from someone. We might not have known about it until Abbie entered the picture, and you

stumbled upon those files, but now it's clear who they were running from. Abbie has a right to know, at the very least, that her aunt was your true mate," Liam concludes before turning toward the door.

"Get some sleep, brother. I'll make sure your car is ready for your departure first thing in the morning to see Abbie. Hopefully, you can bring her home," he says, his voice filled with a sense of hope and determination. With that, he shuts the door, leaving me with a whirlwind of thoughts and emotions.

I exhale deeply, retrieving my clothes and slipping into bed. Tomorrow holds the promise of reuniting with Abbie, and I can only hope my words and presence will be enough to convince her to return with me. If not, I am left uncertain of what other avenues remain open to me. However, I know if I were to ask Liam for assistance, he would willingly aid me in exacting vengeance upon Kade and sweeping the consequences under the rug. Unfortunately, such an act would require the annihilation of his entire pack.

As sleep begins to claim me, I am left with lingering questions and a sense of trepidation. The truth weighs heavily on my heart, threatening to unravel everything we have fought so hard to build. But in the depths of my soul, I know that secrets can only remain buried for so long.