

Chapter 21

GANNON

Liam had to repeatedly crank up the volume to drown out the shrill cries emanating from the basement. Mrs. Daley's blood-curdling screams reverberated around the dimly lit space.

Eventually, her cries ceased altogether, replaced by a ghastly silence. The stone floor is now a bright canvas, painted with the remnants of her life. The scent of raw meat permeates the air, mingling with the metallic tang of fresh blood. Her body is bloody and lifeless, having skinned the bitch alive. Oh, how I loved hearing them scream. Although I could have gone without the erection it gave me.

Washing my hands in the filthy sink, I dry them on a hessian bag I find sitting beside it before staring at the old hag's pelt hanging up on a hook from the ceiling, admiring my handiwork. I head for the stairs with a shrug. The rickety old steps creak under my weight as I climb them. Opening the door, I shake my head when I see Liam shaking his ass and dancing to the music he has blaring loudly. Liam is still wearing his floral apron, only now he is doing the dishes.

Katrina comes into the kitchen with another pile of plates clutched in her hands, a tea towel draped over her shoulder. She gives me a wary look. She hesitates for a second, then hurries past me toward the small kitchen. She sets the plates on the bench beside Liam. He grabs her hand and twirls her around, pulling her to dance with him, tugging her body flush against his.

Only then does he spot me standing by the basement door. He smirks, letting her go and drying his hands on the apron.

“About time; I thought you were trying on Mrs. Daley and wearing her skin as a suit with how long you were taking,” Liam laughs. Katrina stares wide-eyed at me, turning my head to look at her, she hastily looks away.

Liam undoes his apron and sets it on the counter before pecking Katrina on the cheek. “Be seeing you later, doll face,” he says, sending her a wink. I shake my head as he walks toward me and stops at the door leading out to the hall. “On second thought.” He turns back and snatches the apron off the counter. “You don’t want this, do you?”

Katrina shakes her head. I’m pretty sure she would give him her kidney if it meant he would get away from her. Probably even cut it out herself.

“Good, good, it looks better on me, anyway,” he says, chucking it over his shoulder before sauntering out.

“Ah, Mrs. Daley?” Katrina asks me when I turn to follow him.

“No need to worry, I already hung her up to dry; just let her air out for a bit,” I assure her, following Liam back through the house. We pass Oliver and Logan, who are huddled under a blanket, watching the other children play with puzzles. “I will be back as soon as I can to pick you up, I just have an errand to run for my king. Then, I have someone I want you both to meet,” I tell them.

Oliver rests his head on Logan’s shoulder, sucking his thumb.

“Who?” Logan asks me, hugging his brother closer.

“A woman named Clarice. You will like her, and she will love both of you. She will take good care of you,” I tell him as he chews his lip while gazing at his little brother. He nods, so I turn on my heel before strolling outside. When I do, I am confronted with Alpha Dean and Alpha Brock, who must have been having a heated argument with Liam.

“Can I help you?” I ask them, coming behind Liam and stepping over the small brick fence that runs along the footpath.

“Don’t you mean, can I help you? This isn’t your pack, and we were called here about a disturbance,” Alpha Brock states.

“Is that right? Well, last I checked, werewolves were lower on the food chain. So, I suggest you move along before you meet the real big bad wolf,” I snarl. Alpha Brock glances at Liam before focusing back on me, looking me up and down.

“Well, the king never informed either of us you would be showing up; if we had known, we would have prepared for your arrival,” Alpha Dean adds, glancing around nervously.

“No preparations needed. If you will excuse me, I have a butcher who needs butchering,” I tell them before smiling and shoving past them both. I open the driver’s door, and Liam tosses me the keys, I snatch them out of the air, about to climb in the car.

“Exactly why are you here?” Alpha Brock asks as I start the engine, I look over the roof of my car at Liam.

“Little slow, this Alpha is. No wonder the pack is going broke. Not one brain cell between the two of them,” Liam says, climbing in and shutting the passenger side door.

“The two rogue boys inside will be leaving with me when I return; touch them, you will be hanging alongside Mrs. Daley in the basement,” I tell them before climbing into the car.

They glance at the orphanage behind them as we drive off. Liam provides me with directions to the butcher’s shop. It is a stroke of coincidence that this establishment is situated in the heart of the small-town square, where curious glances welcome our arrival as we step out of the vehicle and make our way toward the storefront entrance.

A huge glass display fridge is out the front, taking up half the store, but I can see a room out the back behind the till. Pushing through the hinged door beside the fridge display, I go out the back of the small store to the freezer room. There is muffled yelling as I approach the enormous steel door. Twisting the handle, I yank it open and step inside. The room is freezing, and I shiver instantly.

“Quite frosty in here,” Liam remarks playfully, his voice laced with mirth. My focus snaps to the figure before me—the butcher himself. His gaze, wide and filled with a mixture of apprehension and curiosity, locks onto mine. A man in his mid-forties, he stands clad in plaid pajama pants, his disheveled hair defying order as it sticks out at odd angles. Chattering teeth and his lips tinged with a bluish hue betray the frigid temperature that surrounds him. His bare chest has goosebumps that adorn every inch of his skin.

Liam has skillfully bound him, ensuring there is no escape from his restraints. The butcher’s eyes dart back and forth between us as Liam pulls out his charming floral apron, while I grab one of the rubber ones hanging just outside the freezer room door.

“Bring him out,” I call to Liam, who obediently follows my command, his hands eagerly rubbing together in anticipation.

Untying the butcher, Liam sets him free, only to have the man bolt toward the door in a desperate bid for freedom. However, a swift blow to his windpipe quickly halts his escape. Gasping for air, he clutches his throat, but before he can gather his wits, I seize a fistful of his hair and forcefully slam his head into the unforgiving steel of a nearby table.

He crumples to the ground at my feet, left defenseless and subdued. Liam emerges from the room, shaking his head disapprovingly before delivering a swift kick to the butcher's ribs, eliciting a pained grunt.

"Now, listen here, pork chop," Liam asserts with a weary yet firm tone. "I am old and tired, having just prepared over 100 pancakes. So do me a favor and hoist yourself up onto that steel bench. My back is aching." Liam tells him while tying the back of his apron.

The butcher's eyes widen with fear as he stammers in protest. "There must be some mistake! I don't even know what I've done. You've got the wrong guy!"

I fix him with an unwavering gaze, my voice steady as I inquire, "Is your name Doyle?"

He nods hesitantly in confirmation.

"And do you happen to be acquainted with a young girl named Abbie?" I press further, observing the flicker of recognition in his eyes. "So, you do know Abbie?" I continue, watching as he glances between us before finally shaking his head.

"Well, now that's quite the lie, isn't it? Mrs. Daley spoke of you and your despicable act—how you paid her to violate that poor girl, robbing her of her innocence," Liam interjects, tilting his head slightly as he studies the trembling figure before us.

“No, I swear! I never took her virtue!” the butcher pleads, panic evident in his voice. “Mrs. Daley lied! Abbie is still pure, I swear it. If she claims otherwise, she is nothing but a liar. I know better than to defile her. After all, a girl like her loses her value if she’s been sold off,” he blurts out, his words hanging heavy in the air.

“What do you mean?” Liam asks, his expression mirroring my confusion. It is inconceivable to think the king would deceive me or lead me on a wild goose chase.

“I’m saying you didn’t purchase damaged goods. I overheard rumors about how the Lycan king took her under his wing; she remains untainted, I swear it. If she claims otherwise, she must be lying. Inform the king of her purity; I know it to be true! I know better than to steal her purity.” My eyebrows shoot up in surprise. Did this man truly believe that the king would stoop so low as to acquire a sex slave? Did he not comprehend that the king possessed the power to have any woman he desired? Truth be told, the king only wants Azalea.

“You know better?” I inquire, my voice laced with incredulity, and he nods seriously, his gaze pleading with me.

What in the world is wrong with this man? I thought my own mind was twisted, but he has taken it to an entirely different level.

“I’m a little confused here. Are you Gannon?” Liam asks, glancing at me. “Because he claims to know better, yet he seems to find rape acceptable,” Liam interjects, his tone heavy with disgust. “Am I

understanding correctly?” Liam asks, his brows pinching together, mirroring my confusion.

“What? No, I merely paid for the whore,” he retorts callously, and a surge of anger courses through my veins at his vile words. Without hesitation, my claws slice down his face, cutting through flesh until they reach bone. In one swift motion, I seize his throat, hoisting him up before forcefully slamming him onto the nearby table.

“Please, I beg of you! She’s still pure! I only fucked her ass. Her virginity remains intact. Buyers value that,” he pleads desperately. Every fiber of my being bristles with rage. Liam’s claws sink into his thigh at his words.

My grip tightens around his throat as I growl, “You seem to be gravely mistaken. We couldn’t care less about her virginity; what truly concerns us is whether or not you’ve caused her harm. But please continue talking; you’re only making your demise more excruciating. There are two things we despise with every fiber of our being: rapists and those who harm children. And you, my friend, have committed both of these heinous acts. Now, you shall face the consequences of your crimes with your blood,” Liam snarls menacingly, his claws digging into the man’s thigh as his screams reverberate through the air. With deliberate slowness, Liam withdraws his claws, twisting them as he does so, causing the man’s agonized shrieks to fill the room. Meanwhile, his hands clasp mine, reinforcing my grip around the man’s throat.

“Help me move him, flip him on his stomach,” I tell Liam, who walks off into the freezer. He returns, bringing back the ropes he had tied this

scumbag with. We flip onto his stomach before binding his hands and feet to the legs of the table. He thrashes wildly and continues to scream.

Liam starts whistling as he cuts the vile man's pants off while he cries and begs. Walking into the freezer, I look for a broom, finding one in the back corner by the grate and drain in the floor. Grabbing it, I walk back out to find Doyle crying hysterically and begging Liam to free him.

His words cut off, and his head lifts, his mouth wide open on a silent scream as he gasps when I shoved the broom handle up his ass. His entire body shakes, his legs trembling uncontrollably. Blood trails over the steel table.

"I swear you're still pure. Anal doesn't count, right?" I ask him while I walk around the table. I grip his hair, yanking his head back. He pants, eyes wide, and I smile when Liam gives the broom a jiggle, and he makes a pained groan. I drop his head, and Liam walks over to the wall and pulls down a bone saw, chucking it to me. He then unrolls his pouch of knives, selecting one.

"So slice and dice, or will we be more creative today?" Liam asks.

"Please, please, just let me go," the man begs.

"Don't cry, beefcakes. Gannon here will make sure we tenderize your rump before we make you eat it. We can stuff it some more," Liam tells him, slapping his ass. "If you like. I reckon you could take another,

pretty loose back there,” Liam adds. The man whimpers and sobs before pissing himself, urine cascading down the sides of the table along with his blood.

“What’s that?” Liam asks when Doyle mumbles something incoherently.

“Think he said he wanted the other broom,” I tell Liam, who smiles sadistically while the man screams and thrashes as much as possible.

Liam comes out with a mop, and I shrug.

“It’s alright, I will spit on it first,” Liam tells him before shoving it up alongside the other one. His screams are music to my ears, ringing out loudly, and making me shiver.

“Now, do you like your meat medium, raw, cooked all the way through? How should we serve it to you?” Liam says, cutting a chunk of his ass cheek off with his knife. The butcher screams wildly, and I grab my saw before using a rag as a tourniquet. I know he will heal quickly, but the tourniquet will ensure he does before bleeding out. Wrapping it just above the knee, I pull it tight before grabbing my saw, and I start cutting into the back of his knee.