

He stepped out into the damp night, pulling his coat shut against the cold wind that stung his cheeks. Light rain dripped down from the star speckled sky, the kind of rain that you barely felt on your skin but soaked you through all the same. The lamp lighters had finished their job, the streets bathed in a pale, orange glow.

His face was cast in shadows, the collar of his coat turned up against the drizzle. Small, piggy eyes, hinting at the cruelty inside him, looked all around, taking everything that was happening on the streets. His nose was big and bulbous, squashed from one too many fights, looking like it had been splattered across his face and a long scar stretched the length of his left cheek.

He was a big man, stocky, with broad shoulders and a rounded, protruding belly like that of a beer barrel. Few people were brave enough to tangle with him and those that did were never in a position to brag about it after.

He waited for an oncoming carriage to pass before crossing the street, ducking down an alley, and following the path to his favourite establishment. He had a craving for something strong to drink, along with someone warm to sink into.

He saw the looks on the girl's faces as he entered, their eyes darting from one to the other, their faces registering their fear. Their fear was sweetness itself, acting as an aphrodisiac to his senses, making him burn for more. They never wanted to be the one to serve him, never wanted to be the one to suffer. He wasn't well liked here, but he paid well so the Madame never turned him away. The girls did as he bid, they had no choice. As far as he was concerned, he paid his money and therefore, he owned them, and that which he owned, he used as he so desired.

He took a seat at a bar and signalled for a drink. Like magic, a glass of whiskey appeared in front of him, they knew he didn't like to wait for anything. He downed the drink in one, signalling for another as he perused the girls that were on offer that night. One caught his eye and he beckoned her over, enjoying the reluctance she showed, the way she began to tremble as she walked in front of him as he followed her to the back rooms.

He took a perverse kind of pleasure from inflicting pain, he liked to sense their fear, he liked to feel their body shuddered with terror, the way their muscles twitched with each blow. He liked their whimpers of pain, he liked to see the colours bloom on their skin as his hands and belt met their mark, over and over.

Once they had submitted to him fully, all protests beaten out of them, he liked to take them roughly on their backs, pinning their arms about their heads so they could not move. He liked to be in control, he liked that he had all the power.

He relished her screams, her begging for mercy, her pleading to be let go. And he ignored it all. He had the power, he had the control, she was nothing. Her cries had turned into whimpers, her head lolling on her neck, eyes fluttering closed as he moved above her, taking his pleasure in his own way. He didn't like it when they passed out, they stopped struggling and he saw it as them escaping him, if even for a moment.

A sharp slap across the face would revive her. He wound his arm back, ready to strike, yet he never managed to land the blow.

He did not like being interrupted and when he was, he spoke with his fists rather than his voice, lashing out at the male. The sound of fist hitting flesh was a thing of beauty to him, the grunts of pain, the splashes of blood. He rejoiced in the feel of his toes connecting with ribs and the sounds of the cracks that accompanied each kick.

He grew almost giddy as his fingers wrapped around the throat of the one that dared to spoil his fun. He was paying, he owned her, she was his until he had no further use for her. His fingers tightened, squeezing, squeezing. He felt the laboured breathing, heard the wheezing, choking sounds that came from his victim. He paid no heed to the hands that scrabbled at his, nails scratching as they tried to prise his fingers from their neck. But their efforts were in vain, he never stopped until he chose to and it had been too long since his last one.

It would be so easy to kill, he'd done it before. He loved the power of that one moment when he held their life in the palm of his hand. When he alone could make the choice if they lived or died.

He savoured the way their body began to twitch all over as they fought against the pressure on their throat. The way they ripped and tore at it, trying to get loose, trying to gasp in another breath, trying to drag the air into their lungs.

He loved the moment their bodies went still but for the few spasmic jerks that twitched their limbs, the body shutting down. He so enjoyed the way their body slumped, the light going out in their eyes. Their final breath, the last beat of their heart, he was responsible for that. The rush of power was beyond words. He shuddered with pleasure every time he recalled it.

And now he had another one at his mercy, but different from the others. The male's time was running out, his face turning an interesting shade of purple as he squeezed still harder. Almost there, almost done. How many had died by his hand? He could barely remember them all...

Sharp blasts of a whistle broke the spell, snapping him from the happy place he had been wallowing in. Cursing he was forced to abandon his victim, leaving the fool twitching like a fish out of water on the dirty, blood splattered floor. The male's face was swollen and distorted from the beating he had administered, his features hardly distinguishable. He wouldn't forget that in a hurry.

The female he had been playing with had yet to regain consciousness, she had seen nothing and if she knew what was good for her, and they always did, she would never mention his name. He hated to run, fleeing like a coward, but the police whistles were coming ever closer...

His boots tapped out a rhythm as he walked the prison hall, guards flanking him on either side. The path a well-worn one, designed to display the condemned every step of the way, serving as a warning to others like themselves. The prisoners jeered and shouted out vile curses as he passed, the guards beating at the reaching hands with their batons, preventing them from grabbing at his clothes.

He climbed the stairs to the gallows, feeling an odd sense of calm mixed with anticipation. The platform creaked under their weight as they stepped onto it, the wood sounding hollow with each step they took.

The rope had been tested earlier that day, but again it was giving a visual examination, the trap door sprung and checked to make sure it was in full working order.

The condemned was lead forward, the priest reading of the last rights as the hood was placed over his head, blocking his eyes from sight. The rope was lowered into place and the noose tightened just right. The condemned stood there, unable to move, unable to run, ready to face the ultimate judgement for his crimes.

The executioner pulled the lever, causing the trap door to open, the condemned dropping until the rope caught and held. His body began to jerk, feet kicking, but his upper body could do nothing but twist, his arms bound behind his back. Slowly but surely the desperate flailing calmed, the body finally going still, a life ended.

He was breathing fast, a wickedly satisfied smile splitting his face, stretching his scarred cheek, his piggy eyes alight with pleasure. He found it so easy to kill, he loved the way he had ultimate control, the power was in his hands. He loved that he had taken yet another life, as he watched the jerking limbs grow still. Who could ask for a better job than that of a hang man?