

# Lord Bloodgrin: Golden Ribbons and Crimson Smiles

By Kit Reed

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I had just stepped down from the concord after a long flight from the US. The world had somehow changed so much in the not quite a century since I had discovered who and what I truly was. I looked around at Heathrow but nothing was recognizable as the London that had once been my home. I hailed a cab and headed into the heart of the city. I didn't have time to play tourist or prodigal. I was here on a hunt and nothing came before that.

I had been in New York recovering from a battle with another of the scions of Cain that had left her dead and myself with several wounds. I came across an article in the London Times which told of 6 golden haired girls that had gone missing on the east end over a 10 month period. The first of them had been discovered raped, mutilated and with a sense of whimsy strangled with a yellow ribbon which did nothing to dull the popularity of the song. I discovered another girl had gone missing when we landed.

The modern trappings lay over the east end like a coat of cheap paint. Struggling to hide what lay underneath but already flaking and peeling to reveal the same desperation that had long been the one constant of these streets. Opium dens had given way to flop houses for heroin addicts and prostitutes wore mini skirts and fake furs instead of corsets and low cut gowns but an addict is still an addict and a whore is still a whore. I smiled as I felt the streets calling to me and I reached out, pulling the darkness to me. Many think of the darkness as a blanket or a cloak but in reality she is a sensuous beast and I, I am her master. I faded into her embrace as the call of the hunt grew stronger in my veins.

I was on my seventh night of the hunt and I knew I was close. I could feel the tendrils of his hunger as his need for attention grew stronger. I was disappointed that this wasn't one of the scions and was a mere human. Human or not, he had cried out for attention and now he had mine. Lets see what he does with it. I discovered that the crimes radiated out from a central neighborhood like spokes in a wheel.

I started walking the streets closest to the hub. Somewhere in this dystopian landscape of despair there lay a little girl either dead or waiting to die. Would I arrive in time to save her or merely to avenge her? Only God and the great reaper knew but I would follow this trail to the end.

As I passed a particularly run down tenement I was suddenly awash in a sea of unbridled emotions. It was a heady brew of her fear and his hunger. I moved to the door and silently made short work of the lock. No need to alert him just yet.

I followed the tangy taste of fear down a moldy staircase into the damp basement that was also filled with the scent of old flesh mingling with the coppery taste of fresh spilled blood. There, chained to a wall, was the missing eleven year old child. I was too late to save her innocence but not her life.

I moved slowly, quietly towards her. She whimpered from behind her gag at my approach. I kneeled beside her and made sure my scarf was tight around my face. That sight was for her captor, not her. I pulled a clasp knife from my pocket and cut her free. I tried to pull the tatters of her dress around her but it was no use and so I slipped the wind breaker from my shoulders and draped it around her.

"Shhh... I won't hurt you, you're alright now." I whispered in the most benign voice I could muster. It still sounded like fingernails on a chalkboard even to my ears.

"What is your name child?"

"Amanda, Amanda Brooks" She sniveled like the perfect prey she was. I pushed the curse deeper and replied.

"Well miss Amanda Brooks you're going home today." I then led her through the darkness and to the steps. We made our way upwards slowly, carefully as I wanted to see her finish this journey towards the world that held something for her besides the traumas of the chamber of horrors she had just left.

We almost made it. We were two steps from the door when I heard steps on the stairs coming down. I grabbed her up and rushed the final steps even as he took the scene in disbelief for a long moment then yelled.

"Hey! What do you think you're doing?" I shoved the little girl onto the door stoop and shouted.

"Run, Amanda! Run far from here and ask for help but whatever you do, don't look back. Never look back!" If only she had taken that advice but as I discovered over a decade later Amanda had been scarred far too deeply. She had her own priorities and her own demons. The perfect prey had decided to never be prey again.

I slammed the door behind me and locked the dead bolt. His eyes had gone large and glassy and his lips were flecked with foam. His lips writhed and twisted but all he managed was an inarticulate sputter as he pulled a long thin filleting knife from a sheath on his hip. He found his courage with the blade in his hand. I smiled behind the scarf. That courage would be short lived indeed.

"I don't care who you are! you're gonna bleed for letting that lil tramp go. I had great plans for the games we were going to play." He threw a half full can of warm beer at me and I slapped it from the air as I turned towards him, letting my scarf drop. He paused as he saw the rows of glistening blades that were my teeth in my full hunter form. A low sibilant laugh sprang from my lips, filling the room. I took another step and watched him start to retreat and I growled.

"No worries, I'm going to play all kinds of games with you. You're going to have your fill of games before you die. This I promise." I smiled even larger for effect then pulled one of my blades from my mouth. The steel gleamed dully as the blade emerged. Blood refused to cling to its surface and so it showed no signs of it's recent habitation.

"Oh so many games." I hissed as the need grew stronger inside me. The blade settled into my hands but I could feel the vibrations as it hummed to me. It's appetite growing with my own. The blade traced lines of silver flames in the air as my hands moved faster than the eye could follow weaving a tight pattern in the dim light, driving him back towards the basement. He tumbled ass over teakettle down the steps. He hit hard but I let him clear his vision then he looked around as if waking from a dream until he saw me standing there, smiling.

"No no no no..." He screamed as he scrambled towards the distant corner where Amanda had been chained to the wall. The laugh returned as the blade found him again and again. Shallow cuts weeping blood. Finally I gave a thought and the blade stabbed deep but it didn't slice flesh this time, It plunged into his soul. I felt the psychic shock and I cast the glamour on him. A smile settled across his face and he leaned heavily against the wall. He was reliving his life, as if he had made the right decisions. satisfied for the moment, I left him whimpering.

Three days later I returned and he was still in the same fetal position I had left him in, his mind a far more effective prison than any physical restraints. I lifted him to his feet then I unceremoniously pulled the glamour from him, His eyes misting with emotion as he returned to reality.

"That was what could have been."

I smiled showing my gaping smile of jagged steel.

"This is what you really are." The blade stabbed deep into his mind once more as he now relived his evil from his victim's view and a ragged scream filled the air. I listened for a long moment savoring his torture and then my hand darted forth absently and the steel of the blade sliced easily through his neck leaving him wearing a grotesque parody of my smile. I stepped to the side as the blood sprayed into the room mingling with that of his victims and I like to think that his final sacrifice managed to bring them some measure of closure if not peace.

I was heading toward the door with my mind already moving to the next hunt and he was forgotten before I had even exited the house. After all what is a mere mortal to one of the Scion? I had heard rumors of giants in the mountains of Afghanistan. I began to ponder if they could be Scion? I hurried to the hotel to make arrangements for my next hunting trip. London would always be home but the scion are a nomadic lot and my reputation had began to precede me.