

A Nibble from Lament for the Living
Book 2

While Tobias was busy strangling his estranged wife in another county, Silas had been busy with his own unplanned foray into torture and murder. His hands were red and glistening, covered in blood up to his elbows. Although he'd taken the precaution of rolling up his sleeves, it was only a token effort, but you have to grab opportunities by both hands when they present themselves to you. He'd have to burn his clothes along with the body when he'd finished.

"It's okay, you can scream." Silas said to the figure strapped to the supporting pillar of the lambing shed. A twist of cord around the neck kept the head upright, arms and what was left of his hands tied behind him, sat on a barrel, bare feet nailed to the sides with rail spikes.

"You've made me want to scream so many times. Here, I'll start. Feel free to join in." Silas flung his head back and screamed, the veins in his powerful neck standing out as his skin flushed. He took a step closer and screamed again. The bound figure fixed him with one terrified eye, the other, discarded somewhere in the straw on the floor, the socket a torn and bloody mess where it had been gouged and ripped out. The figure let out a throaty noise, that would have been a scream if Tobias hadn't already pulled out his tongue and popped it into his jacket pocket like a plump handkerchief.

"At this point, you've probably realised that I'm going to kill you. You're probably pretty close to begging me to do it." Silas tilted his head, thinking. "Hmm, I should have left your tongue in. Too late now though."

Tobias squeezed harder, Suzy had given up trying to release his grip and clawed at his arms instead, her reach too short to slash at his face. He looked into her eyes as her face darkened from the lack of oxygen, the whites of her eyes crazing with ruptured blood vessels. The flailing slowed to a stop and her body went limp. Tobias kept his hands around her throat as they slumped to the floor, her lifeless eyes staring past him as her head tilted to the side. He released his grip on her throat and sat against the wall, his head in his hands, his breathing ragged as adrenaline surged through him. He looked around; this was not the day he had planned.

Silas had finished off the town councillor by sticking the compulsory purchase notice to his chest and skewering it with re-bar, the twisted iron lanced through his chest, the last words he heard were:

"Councillor Morgan, you are a lying self-serving sack of shit." Before his heart stopped beating and all the pain fell away in the black embrace. Silas toiled away for an hour, dismembering Councillor Morgan before carefully wrapping each piece in refuse sacks. It was at times like this that Silas wished that he'd been a pig farmer.

What have I done? Tobias thought as he looked at the body on the floor. His thoughts were interrupted by the car horn outside. He looked up. *Have to leave now.* Isaac is waiting for him in the car. He stood up and absently walked towards the front door, as he passed

the hall mirror he caught his reflection in the mirror, he looked like a ghost. His eyes empty, his face sagging as if all the life had drained from him. He straightened his shoulders, cleared his throat and forced energy back into his body. Isaac was watching him from the passenger seat of the car, he raised his arms in a *what the hell is keeping you* gesture. Tobias bounced down the steps from the house to the street and got in the car.

"Sorry . Me and your mother were just sorting some things out." Tobias said, starting the car.

"There can't be that much to sort out, I'm nearly eighteen. Or are you guys planning on getting back together when I move out?" Isaac said with a cheeky smile.

"Ahh who knows?" Tobias said, making more of a show of concentrating on the road than he usually would so that he didn't have to look at Isaac.

"You're such a bad liar, Dad. You can't even look at me." He laughed. "Okay, whatever. So, what are we doing today?"

"I thought we'd go for lunch first." Tobias said. *And then we'll go for a drive, along the coast, to the cliffs, veer off the road and kill us both. Yes, that would be for the best.*

Silas couldn't remember the boot of his car being this small before, but then again, Councillor Morgan was quite a big guy and the Peugeot wasn't designed as a cadaver conveyance, he hadn't bought it based on the brochure saying how many dismembered councillors could fit in the boot. He closed the boot and looked around at the farmland his family had run for four generations. In the distance he could just make out the farmhouse. The lambing shed was at the foot of the hills; the common land where all the local farmers grazed their animals. The land wasn't any use for anything else, the soil too poor for crops, and too hilly and remote to build on. Not until the wind farms began popping up. Bryn Mawr Wen was earmarked for yet another wind farm development, a development that would envelop Fferm Llwm - Silas's farm. Unwilling to move, Silas found himself in a battle against the local council and the Senedd. It wasn't until he was on the brink of losing everything did he find out that Councillor Morgan was set to make a lot of money from the project, and that was when all the pieces slotted into place.

Silas had found that his activities were being investigated by various local council departments. The Environment Department had been especially intrusive, slapping restriction orders on him for things that his family had been doing for generations. Then a "clerical error" resulted in his council tax ending up in arrears. By that time, Silas had lost all patience with the council and how they dealt with him so he refused to pay the arrears until the issue was resolved. The arrears snowballed as default charges were added until bailiffs turned up one morning to seize goods in lieu of the debt. Silas sent them packing at the end of his shotgun. That was when the suits from the energy company iGreen began calling, offering to buy the farm and the surrounding land. The amount they were offering wasn't insulting, but it was offensive to him that they would expect him to sell his birthright.

Secretly Councillor Morgan directed the council to pile on the pressure. Committees and sub-committees were told how important the wind farm would be, not only to the area, but to the future of the country. With no-one to speak for him at the council, and no interest in pitting himself against the career politicians, all points against Silas went unopposed. At that point the compulsory purchase order was agreed upon. All the while, the debt-collectors letters continued to pour through the door for a debt that only existed on a computer.

That was the point when Councillor Morgan opted to deliver the compulsory purchase order to Silas personally. His coupe de grace in a war that Silas didn't even know he was fighting. Unfortunately for Councillor Morgan, that same morning Silas had bumped into the Councillor's cousin at the feed shop. Councillor Morgan's cousin had no love for the man and when he realised that he was speaking to the owner of Fferm Llwm he told him about his cousin's business dealings. His non-executive seat on GoGreen, a subsidiary of iGreen that identified suitable locations for development. Not only that, but Morgan also held a thirty percent stake in the company, although it was in his son's name to avoid having to declare it to the council. This really was a conflict of interest, especially as Councillor Morgan had seemed so eager to help Silas with the situation.

Silas loaded up his car with animal feed and made his way back to the farm. He had planned to visit Councillor Morgan personally, so was pleasantly surprised when he saw him walking up the path to the door. "Silas, I've got some good news, and some bad news." Morgan had said solemnly. "The council have passed a compulsory purchase order on your land. You'll have twenty-eight days to vacate. It's at market value I'm afraid. I'm so sorry Silas, I did everything I could." Tobias looked quietly at the paperwork before inviting Councillor Morgan to the lambing shed. "I've got something to show you." He said.

Tobias and Isaac had been on their way to the coast when the state of emergency had been declared. Traffic at the edge of town was all backed up, their car moving slowly in the queues. Fortunately they had been close to the front before the announcements had first come on the radio, and across the television channels. As soon as the news broke that people were being urged to stay in their homes, most people opted to pack a few necessities and leave. Behind them traffic mounted up and became gridlocked as more people joined the throng trying to leave the city. The cordon had been hastily erected and an anxious looking police officer looked into their car.

"Any injuries?" He asked. Tobias looked over at Isaac then back at the police officer.

"No, no injuries." He said, his expression puzzled.

"Okay, move along." The officer waved them on.

"What's going on?" Tobias asked. The officer looked angry.

"Just get going, there's no time for chatting." He said, waving his arm. Tobias thought about complaining, but then decided it probably wasn't a good idea. He drove on. In his rear-view mirror he saw the police officer running through the same script with the car behind. As he glanced from the road to the mirror he saw speak into his radio

before the car was quickly surrounded by soldiers, the occupants dragged out and bundled into the back of a military lorry. "Turn the radio on, son. Put on a news channel. Something's going on." He said.

Silas was sitting in the police cell. His clothes taken from him, replaced by a white paper forensic suit that rustled every time he moved. He sat scraping Councillor Morgan's dried blood from under his finger nails, although it didn't make much difference. Fingerprint ink covered the rest of his fingers. As fortuitous as it was for Lady Luck to hand Councillor Morgan to him on a plate, it seemed that she had become fickle with the timing of the local police officer to come calling about cattle thefts in the area. It didn't take long for the local bobby to put two and two together when he found Silas alone, covered in blood, and Councillor Morgan's empty car. Although he could easily have overpowered the much smaller police woman, Silas decided to quit while he was ahead. As it stood he could claim diminished responsibility for killing the Councillor, but he wouldn't get off lightly for killing a police officer. Instead he just kept uttering that it happened so fast. When the police back up finally arrived and he was lead into the back of the van he went peacefully, cooperated. Mumbling and fidgeting as he went.

That was just over three years ago, Tobias did kill his son, but not that day. Since then, Silas burned his way across the South West of the country, and when Tobias and Silas's paths crossed, Tobias died. Condemned by his own people for the murder of his own son, and others, who had been under his leadership at The Sanctuary that Silas had destroyed. Since then the Nomads led by Silas made it as far as Swansea. Their progress slowed by the sprawling city and the pockets of survivors there being more resistant to the world that Silas was intent on building.

"It's going to be his Stalingrad." John said idly to the other cook as they chopped the last of the vegetables. The other cook looked at him in horror.

"You can't say things like that." He hissed, looking around to check that no-one was listening to them. Although the Dogs, Silas's hunters and guards didn't live inside the camp, there were plenty looking to gain favour with him who would gladly sell them out.

"Why not? Because I might disappear like the others? Well that's exactly the problem here. Everyone is afraid. Afraid of the Dogs, afraid of telling the truth, afraid of being heard telling the truth."

"Like your Tobias did?" The other cook replied.

"That was different, Tobias did what he did for all of us. Silas does what he does because he has ideas of running the world." John snorted. "Come on, what's to run? He burns everything he comes across. At this rate, he's going to be the King of Charcoal."

"I like it." A resonant voice drifted across the kitchen. "The King of Charcoal. Pithy." Silas said as he walked over to the counter, his long coat flowing behind him, his rifle swinging idly at his side. John's blood ran cold, icy sweat prickled all over his skin. He looked at Silas, his eyes as wide as saucers.

"Tell me, John. Would you find it as easy to wax lyrical with titles if I were to, say, cut out your tongue?"

John swallowed. "Ah, no Silas."

"No. Have you ever seen a man have his tongue cut out?" Silas idly cleaned his fingernails as he spoke. John shook his head. "It's a messy business. And the screaming. Oh my, the screaming." He smiled. "It's almost as bad as the gurgling. So much blood you see. The tongue is quite a bloody organ, and when you rip it out, it bleeds something awful. Difficult not to choke on your own blood. A terrible thought, isn't it?"

John nodded silently.

"I like you John, and the boy likes you too. That's why, if I ever *have* to cut your tongue out, I'll use some red hot irons, to save some of the unpleasantness." Silas looked around at the sound of running feet. "Oh and here he is now. Have you finished your lessons, Rat?" He said to the boy running into the canteen.

"Hi Silas, hi John, hi Sam." Rat beamed as he jumped up and embraced Silas. The cooks smiled at him, sheepishly. "Yup, lessons all done. Did you know that the moon controls the sea? Can you imagine what would happen if we could control the moon?" He asked, his voice full of excitement. Silas sat him on the counter.

"Tell us, Rat. What could we do?"

"We could pull the sea really far out, and then just walk across the gap to England, or do it the other way, and go to Ireland. But England's closer, I think."

"Interesting. But I guess we'll have to create a moon pulling machine first."

"Yeah, I suppose so." Rat said. "Hey John, can I help?"

John looked at Silas, who nodded.

"Sure, Rat. You know you've always been the best helper."

"Don't be too long, Rat. And John, I hope we don't have to put tongue on the menu any time soon. You understand?"

"Yes, Silas." John said with a gulp.

"Enjoy then." Silas said and left the kitchen area.

Lament for the Living Book 2 by David Nicol is due for release in late 2018. Lament for the Living Book 1 is available from Amazon – just search for the title.

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