

**THE THINGS YOU
DO FOR LOVE**

**A
SIMPLE
MISTAKE**

ALICE WINTERS

The Things You Do for Love-A Simple Mistake short story

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*To be read after A Simple Mistake

Short Story-Liam

“I’m so excited. Where are you taking me? Should I be concerned that it’s a large, unmarked building that looks like a warehouse? Are you just going to off me after everything we’ve done together?”

“I’ll get you off if that’s what you want,” I assure Gabriel. “And look, there are a bunch of cars. Not actually sure who would choose to come here, but there *are* cars. I wonder if they’re paying people to come.”

“So you’re taking me some place that you think no one else would choose to go?” Gabriel asks skeptically. There’s really no sense in him being skeptical at all when I would give him the world if he simply implied it would be fun to have it.

“Exactly.”

“Oh wonderful. Never been so excited to go somewhere,” he says with a grin as I pull into a parking spot. “You told me to dress in the best cat clothes I have. So look.”

He yanks his coat open, revealing the gaudiest shirt I’ve ever laid my eyes on. He looks so proud of Lucy Fur’s face plastered all over it. My former self would have sworn it was the same picture, but I’ve come to know my lovely Gabriel enough to identify that it is indeed different pictures of the cat doing the exact same thing: angrily existing.

“Oh... wow. If I wasn’t already into men, I would jump in with both feet right this second. Blindfolded too. Preferably.”

Gabriel raises an eyebrow. “It’s cute!”

“Ah yes. Totes.”

“Oh my god, I’ve broken you to the point you’re using expired slang.”

“I didn’t know slang expired, but I think that shirt already has,” I say. “Let me help you change. Better yet, you probably shouldn’t worry about wearing a shirt at all.”

He laughs as he waves me off. “I’m excited to see what’s inside this not at all creepy building. I’m not at all skeptical and actually quite eager.”

“Good,” I say as I get out of the car before side-eyeing his shirt. There’s no one who will take us seriously with that shirt on. “I guess I know what to get you for Christmas. Matching pants.”

“That might be a bit too much, but a nice tie I could wear to work with Lucille’s face on it would be the best.”

“You’d be like ‘Please stop crying. I’m so sorry your husband was murdered’ and the wife would be like ‘I’m not crying about my husband... I’m crying over how creepy your tie is.’”

“You are telling me that inflicting Lucille’s face on someone is worse than their husband *dying*?”

“You are correct. I taught you well.”

“Just because Lucille scratched you *once* doesn’t mean she doesn’t love you. And I know you love her.”

I show off my battle wounds, unsure how he could be so oblivious. The other day, she jumped off her perch onto my lap, having mistakenly thought she was going to land on Gabriel who’d been sitting there moments prior. When she realized it was me, her claws engaged as she leapt off like my body was acidic. After it happened, I dropped my pants and waved to my wounds as Gabriel pretended he didn’t notice and gave me a blow job, which... let’s be honest, made me forget all about the cat scratches.

I tried to get her to do it again to see if it was a fluke, but she couldn't even do me the courtesy.

Swinging the door to the building open, I parade my sweets inside as he eagerly looks around before gasping. "Liam, this is the most romantic thing I've ever seen."

"And here I was prepared to raze the city for you," I mumble as I lead him into the cat show. Gabriel is all in while I look around at the amount of people here to... look at cats. Like... aren't there better things to look at in the world?

There are tables upon tables with crates and carriers of all kinds placed on top. Some have little displays set up like people could possibly want to know what some random cat's favorite treat was, like it wouldn't be the carcass of some endangered bird.

"If you took Lucy Fur here, you should put that her favorite treat is the blood of others," I say.

"No! My baby doesn't feast off blood."

"I'm sorry. Blood and souls," I correct. "She siphons off a bit of my soul every night."

Gabriel laughs. "You're being a bully—a cat bully—and I bet there's a whole room of people here who would back me up."

"Look at this sick-ass bio. Fluffy here's favorite pastime is cat naps. Imagine that. A cat napping. Lucy Fur's would be the assassination of the rodent race, dreaming that each rodent she offs is one less human she has to deal with. She looked me in the eyes as she snapped the neck of a mouse the other day and then yowled in an 'I wish this was you' way."

Gabriel hooks my arm. "You are hilarious. Maybe we need to get you a cat. Show you what having your very own cat is like."

“I would rather let Michaels curl up in the cat bed on my bed than do such a thing.”

“That sounds weirdly concerning. Is there going to be any room for me if you’re over there cuddling Michaels and giving him chin scratches?”

“First step would be neutering,” I assure him. “Definitely don’t want his seed out in the world.”

“You’re so violent!”

“Don’t act like you didn’t find that funny.”

He grins at me. “Maybe a little.” Then he rushes off, leaving me behind. “Ooh! It’s a Maine Coon! He’s *huge*.”

“I bet I could train that cat to tackle people I dislike. First would be Donna. Then Chris. Then Michaels. And then Matthew,” I say as he hurries over to see it.

“Why is your list of people to tackle so long?” Gabriel asks.

“Oh, that was just the people from our department. Don’t get me started on the delivery guy who smiles every time he sees me. And then that girl at the grocery store. I hate the cheerful way she goes ‘Did you find everything alright?’ Like yeah, would I be checking out if I didn’t?”

“You hate them... because they’re polite and happy?” Gabriel asks.

“Exactly.”

“Would you like to pet him?” the woman who owns the cat asks before I can start telling him about my neighbor who waves at me every morning.

“Yes! Yes, I would. So much!”

She smiles at Gabriel, looking him over as she sensually unzips the carrier. This chick is over here preparing to steal my man, and Gabriel looks ready to hop in the carrier and go with her.

“Hold on, I have to see your shirt,” she says, and Gabriel parts his jacket so she can peruse it. She... *squeals* and then smacks his arm playfully. “I *love it*. That shirt is fantastic.”

“It’s my cat Lucille. She’s the sweetest.”

I question if we’re thinking about the same Lucille. Clearly not.

“See, Liam? Others think my shirt is fantastic.”

“Anything you wear is fantastic. It’s the subject on the shirt... it causes me to have flashbacks and forces me to remember the trauma I’ve endured from her mittens of murder.”

Gabriel doesn’t try to save the image of his cat at all as he laughs. The woman is clearly dissatisfied with his attention leaving her because she pulls the giant cat out and Gabriel gasps. “He’s so majestic.”

“Do you want to hold him?” she asks, and I am *positive* this woman isn’t over here letting every stranger that struts by hold her cat. She’s working hard to steal my man who would never be stolen—

“I would love to so much, you’re the best,” he says as he holds his arms out, and I’m half expecting her to put herself in them instead of the cat. Gabriel takes the cat who is busy looking majestic and half asleep and holds him with such care.

“Liam. Look at him. His ears! His face! His whiskers!”

I examine these parts, unsure what’s so different about them when most cats have them, but I ooh and ahh anyway because I’m not letting this woman steal what’s mine. Clearly, I have to up my game of pretending like cats are something magnificent.

“Thank you so much for letting me hold him. He’s very beautiful,” Gabriel says as he passes him back.

“Thanks. You can hold him any time. Just stop on by,” she responds with a smile. That smile tells me it’s not the only thing she wants him to

hold.

“Thank you so much,” he says as he takes my hand and leads me off while I try not to smirk at her. I really do try not to, but that doesn’t mean I accomplish it since she looks quite disgruntled as we walk off.

“I was scared for your life,” I say.

“My life?”

“She wanted you, Gabriel. She was going to stuff you in that carrier and take you home.”

Gabriel looks thoughtful. “You think she really would? I mean... did you see how soft of a bed that cat had? I’m not sure I would mind. I think his collar was made of real diamonds... she could buy me a diamond collar.”

I squeeze his hand. “Funny.”

He grins at me. “Someone seems jealous, and oh my god, it’s a Lykoi. I never thought I’d see one of these in real life.”

“What the hell is a Lykoi... and what is wrong with it?” I ask as I grimace when I see it.

“It’s a werewolf cat. Oh my god, they’re letting us pet it. I want to pet it. Liam... I get to pet a Lykoi. I want one. Do you think Lucille would like a Lykoi brother or sister?”

“I think she’d smother it when you looked the other way because she wouldn’t want to share your love with anything,” I assure him as we wait in a ridiculously long line to pet this cat. It’s like we’re waiting in line to ride something at Disney World, but at the end we don’t get scarred for life by having to face grown men pretending to be anthropomorphic horror shows, we merely get to pet a cat.

He thinks about that for a moment before sighing. “She really would, wouldn’t she?”

“She’d wait until he went for a drink out of that fancy water fountain you swear she can only drink out of, and then take her teeny paws and just hold him down. He’d be so traumatized he’d rush out the door, prepared to brave the world first chance he gets.”

“I like this whole scenario you have planned. Although... I’m going to be honest, it’s probably true. When my sister and I were little, we were both confident we should be the favorite and tried torturing each other a time or two. She would pin me to the ground and pretend to spit on me and then hide my favorite toys and tell my mom I lost them to get me in trouble.”

“Did she always win?” I ask.

“How’d you tell?”

“I can see the scars from your past in your eyes every time you look at me.”

He laughs. “The *scars*? Don’t tell Layla that. She would be ecstatic to know the effect she’s had on me emotionally and mentally. In simpler words: she was an evil little shit. But I got her back.”

“Oh? You know I like revenge stories.”

“She kept telling me how much she liked the neighbor boy, so I made sure he kissed me first.”

“I am... amazed? Proud? Shocked? I didn’t know my sweet Gabriel could be devious.”

“I then went home and cried.”

“Why did you cry?” I ask. “Do I need to beat him up? What’s his name? I’ll beat him up.”

“Oh my god, you’re not beating up the guy who kissed me when we were fifteen. I cried because I felt really bad because my sister started crying. And then I was crying. And... don’t look at me like that.”

“I’m still willing to beat him up.”

“He’d have no idea why!”

“For coming between this clearly beautiful sibling relationship. Just tell me his name. I’ll take care of it.”

“You’re not taking care of anything. Ooh, we’re next. Are you excited?”

“I’ve never been more excited in my life,” I deadpan.

Just as Gabriel is hurrying up to pet the atrocity, the older woman goes, “I’m sorry, we’re going to have to get her ready for her class.”

Gabriel stares, clearly devastated. “Aw. I’m so sad.”

I stare at the monster as she zips up the cat’s crate, having no idea I’m thinking about all the ways to make her disappear so I can steal her cat for Gabriel to pet.

“Boo. Ah well. Let’s go see some other cats.”

I sidle up to the woman and flash my badge. “I saw the rolling stop you executed as you came in here. But I’m willing to look the other way if he can pet your weird-ass cat.” I have no damn idea what kind of stop she made coming in here, but I’m also confident that she’s not going to try to tell me I’m wrong.

She stares at me. Then at the badge. “Uh…”

“Just let him pet the cat,” I whisper, knowing that Gabriel can’t see what I’m doing.

“O-Of course! Sure! I’d love to have him pet her!” she announces.

I push Gabriel forward. “Look, she said you can quickly pet the cat.”

“I really can?” Gabriel asks, delight lighting up his face. Threatening her really was a good choice.

“Of course,” she says with far too many nods as Gabriel reaches into the crate like he’s reaching in to touch some ancient artifact. The cat bumps

her head against Gabriel's hand and he nearly melts right there.

"Oh, I love her," Gabriel says. "Thank you so much. I really appreciate it."

"Of course," she responds. "Thank *you!*"

Gabriel walks a few feet away before looking at me. "Did you threaten her?"

"Me? God, no, I would never threaten someone. Do I look like a man who would threaten some old woman who has at least one foot in the grave?"

"Did you blackmail her?"

"I'd never blackmail anyone."

"Why the hell did she nod so much, then?"

"I don't judge others for things they do, Gabriel. Maybe her neck was sore from having to haul her irritating head around for so long."

Gabriel's eyebrows shoot for the sky. "Excuse me? Isn't that like... your thing? Judging others for what they do?"

"I would never, and I almost feel like you don't even know me when you say such things."

Gabriel grins at me. "Like I don't know you... you're hilarious."

I match his grin. "Thank you."

"No... thank you for bringing me here. This is really so much fun. Ooh! They're selling stuff over here!" He hurries over to the vendors as he starts collecting everything that even remotely looks like his cat until his eyes snap onto something. "Look!"

"What?" I ask as he pulls a tie off a rack. It's plastered in different cat faces and looks almost as gaudy as his shirt.

"You would look so handsome in this."

"I would absolutely not look handsome in that—"

“All of this, thank you,” Gabriel says to the vendor as he tosses the tie on top.

“I’m not wearing that. If you give it to me, it’s going in the trash bin.”

“You really wouldn’t wear it? After I got it for you? I got it for you as a thank you gift... and now you honestly won’t wear it?”

“It’s the absolute last thing I’d ever wear. I would have to be deceased before I’d ever permit anyone, even you, to put that thing on me.”

“What the fuck are you wearing, Liam?” Matthew asks with a huge grin as he stares at me.

“If you say one more thing about my tie, it’s going to become a murder weapon,” I hiss.

“Isn’t he handsome?” Gabriel asks as he picks up the end of my tie and tugs it.

“That man is *whipped*,” Matthew says.

“That’s it,” I growl as I pop open an evidence bag to drop the tie into when I’m done using it on him.

Gabriel just laughs and pushes me back down in my seat as I glower at Matthew who is grinning from behind the safety of Gabriel’s body.

