

[3] *Extract from  
a newly completed novel  
by Jamie Collinson*

Butcher's house looked like everyone else's, a clapboard bungalow, its blue paint peeling off. There was a small porch, a few cheap plastic chairs. You had to look carefully to see why it was different to other houses: the cameras aimed at the door, but across the lawn to the street, too. The door itself – heavy and expensive looking, with three separate locks.

He and Ghost walked up the steps and Vulture knocked, feeling steel plate under his knuckles. They both looked up at the cameras, showing their faces clearly. They knew the house well. Ghost moved heroin and coke for Butcher, and Vulture handled guns.

After a moment, the door opened an inch.

'What?' a voice said.

'Need to see Butcher,' Vulture replied.

'What you need to see Butcher for, ese?'

'I need permission to do something.'

There was a moment of silence, and then the door opened fully. Behind it was another, made of thick wire like a cage. This was opened too. A man in a crisp white wifebeater and black jeans let them in. He was medium height, but well muscled, his arms and shoulders covered in tattoos. His hair was long on top, and slicked back sides. His

were sharply angled, a smile. Everyone because he got so



much of it.

Vulture nodded at him, stepping into the hall. He felt strangely light, as though he might float away, as if all the anger had burned him hollow.

him, stepping into the light, as though he

Pussy gestured to the living room. In it, a girl with long lashes, big lips and a figure only just constrained by her jeans and t-shirt was pouting on the couch. A little homie sat beside her, staring at them, a miniature version of what they were in his black vans, high white socks and wifebeater.

Butcher was in the kitchen at the back, and he glanced at them but didn't come over. The TV was playing *Game of Thrones*. Vulture didn't look at it, but he heard the signature music and the sounds of a battle with those stupid wet crunches they had for stab wounds. Stab wounds didn't sound shit like that, Vulture knew. They were soft and almost silent so sometimes you didn't even know they were happening to you at first.

Butcher was flanked by two huge homies, their necks enveloped in muscle. One of them had four tears tattooed on his face, beneath his right eye. He was leaning against the worktop, a Modelo dwarfed by his massive fist. The other wore his hair in a long black pigtail at the back, and was frying something up in a pan.

Vulture stood and waited, staring at the wall. The men in the kitchen were murmuring to each other, but he couldn't hear what they were saying. The little homie was still staring at him, and he could feel the tension coming off Ghost in waves.

Photograph: *Murder House*, Jamie Collinson