

Set in Stone Deleted Scene

February 1860, England

"Sir." Someone tapped his shoulder. "Sir, some gentlemen are here to see you."

Gregore Trenowyth peeled an eye open to find the wavering, blurry face of his manservant, Reginald, standing over him. He stretched and opened the other eye. Blinking didn't seem to make Reginald's face any clearer. "What is it?" Gregore asked. He reached for the half empty glass of bourbon and chased the sleep away with its contents.

"Mr. Kingston and Mr. Whetmore are here to see you, Sir. They say it is most urgent." Reginald's stoic voice grated.

Gregore looked at the prone form laying on the bed before him. His father had barely moved since drifting off into blissful sleep. Gregore returned his attention to Reginald. "What is the hour, old man?" He unfolded himself out of the chair by his father's bedside, stretching limbs too long in the same position.

"Just after noon," Reginald said with a scowl.

"Hmmm." He'd been in that chair since the afternoon, yesterday. No wonder his body ached and his valet frowned. He scrubbed a hand over his face, patted down unruly hair and tried to look awake. "Show me to them then. Let's get this over with."

Leaving his coat over the back of the chair, Gregore followed the man out of the chamber and into the hall. At nearly sixty years of age, Reginald still walked tall, if a bit slow. Gregore could hardly find fault in that. Reginald had served him and his ailing father since before Gregore had memories to call his own. And with Gregore's father so near to death, he welcomed the loyalty and patience the old man exuded.

“Will you keep an eye on him while I see to my guests?” Gregore asked. He needn't have. He knew the answer.

“Of course, my Lord.”

Gregore nodded and descended the stairs. Excited voices rose from the foyer below. How long had it been since he'd seen his friends? A fortnight? How long since they had spent real time together? A year?

A squeaky step beneath Gregore's foot caught the attention of his friends. Both stopped short and looked at him in shock. Gregore cocked an eyebrow in question.

"I thought you said that you had come to care for your father, not the other way around," Jeffrey Kingston said.

Gregore scowled. Kingston didn't even flinch. Jeffrey was one of a few men who stood eye level with him. Solidly built from years of work on his family's aging estate made him a man that most wouldn't trifle with. Gregore wasn't most men. Thomas Whetmore was shorter and stockier than both, with a mane of light brown hair and blue eyes. A dimple in his left cheek assured that every woman from here to London was his with just a smile. Jeffrey and Gregore never stood a chance with Thomas around.

"What he means is, you look like hell mate," Thomas added, quite cheerfully.

Gregore would have thrown them both out right then if it weren't for the laughter in their eyes. He was genuinely glad to see them, even if they did make sport of him at every opportunity. He speared Thomas with his scowl, just to be fair. "And the two of you are at your Sunday best?"

Both men snickered.

"If you gentlemen are done with your insults, perhaps you would care to attend lunch in

the dining room?" Reginald said from behind them.

Gregore smiled at his friends. "What is the afternoon without insults between friends?"

"Indeed," Jeffrey laughed, clapping Gregore on the back. "Let's go see what cook has for us. Then we must talk business."