
Chapter 1

LORD KEETON HESITATED JUST inside the door of the large, formal drawing room in Medwell House, Lord Robert Lamercier's London residence. He had not expected to see the room crowded with guests. A quick glance at the large, ornately decorated wedding cake on the long buffet table confirmed that he had walked into a wedding celebration. He surreptitiously wiped a piece of straw off his riding coat, conscious that while his coat and breeches were stylish and well-tailored, they showed signs of the hurried journey he had made from Dorset. Amongst the brightly colored silks and satins of the wedding guests, he felt like Hades rising from the underworld, finding himself in the midst of a Bacchanalia. His mouth quirked at his fanciful thoughts as his eyes scanned the crowded room. For a brief moment, he forgot the reason he had sought an appointment with the earl in the sudden fear that he had waited too long and Alicia had found someone else to love her, someone else to understand her eccentricities and admire her intellect. He couldn't breathe. And then the bride, a plain-looking woman in spite

of her wedding finery, came into view and he took a deep breath. It was not Ali.

His breath caught again when he glimpsed Alicia Goodwin through a gap in the crowd. His face softened and his cock hardened. Her dark hair was neatly arranged on top of her head, revealing the elegant curve of her neck and begging for his fingers to explore its allure. Her blue silk dress showed that she had grown from the slim schoolgirl he had met two years ago in her first Season into a woman with very attractive curves he wanted to embrace, whose pert pink mouth needed to be claimed. He resisted the desire to push through the guests and gather her up in his arms, taking those soft lips as his own. If he had any chance of renewing their acquaintance and convincing her to let him court her, he would have to woo her slowly. She did not trust easily and in spite of, or perhaps because of, her unusual opinions, she kept her distance from people, especially after her encounter with so-called gentlemen who had mocked her at her first ball.

She smiled at someone next to her, leaning towards a slim, fair woman. His eyes hardened even as his body responded viscerally to the image of the only two women he had ever truly found attractive and compatible with his desires in such close proximity.

What was Belinda Bennet doing here? She looked very intimate with Miss Goodwin. Were they friends? He frowned. Neither had ever mentioned the other. If the Bennets were intimate acquaintances of the earl, then it was possible Lord Lamercier would not consider his case objectively or seriously.

His thoughts were interrupted by the Earl of Medwell who greeted him affably. Keeton returned the greeting and apologized. "I would not have intruded if I had known you were hosting a private affair. Your butler let me in."

Lord Robbie smiled and handed him a glass of champagne. "It is my niece's wedding but you are welcome." His keen blue eyes studied the uninvited guest, taking in the shadows under his eyes, the fine lines around his mouth, and the rigidity of his shoulders. "I was sorry to hear of the passing of your father. He was a good man."

Lord Keeton relaxed a little but the shadows in his eyes deepened. "He was and I miss him. It is his death that brings me here."

The Earl of Medwell looked puzzled. "He died almost two years ago."

"Yes, but right from the beginning, there was something about the way he died that bothered me, and recently, I have come across some information that could suggest he was assassinated."

Lord Lamercier showed no change of expression at this statement. He sipped his champagne as calmly as if they were discussing the weather. "And you would like me to discover if that is true."

"That is part of it." He glanced around the room. "It would be better to meet in private. This is not the place to talk of possible treason."

Lord Jasper Keeton paced restlessly around the comfortable library as he waited for the Earl of Medwell. After his startling declaration in the drawing room, the very efficient butler had shown him into the library and asked him to wait until Lord Medwell was ready to speak to him. The butler had arranged for refreshments to be brought in while Lord Robert Lamercier continued to entertain his niece's wedding guests.

Jasper had been grateful for the hot coffee, ham sand-

wiches, and delicate sweet pastries which had been the first meal he had eaten since leaving his home in Dorset early that morning. But now the steady ticking of an ormolu clock on the mantelpiece reminded him that time was passing and he had not made arrangements for his accommodation in London, although he was fairly certain he would be welcome at his uncle's London house.

He stopped at the window and watched a young man race his curricle down the street. His mouth tightened as the young man, more intent on speed than the welfare of his horses, whipped the fine pair of greys and pulled at the reins, tightening the bits in their mouths. He watched them disappear around the corner. No other movement disturbed the street. The silence in the room was suffocating, as if a heavy blanket had been dropped over his head on a hot afternoon.

No carriages had left Medwell House for at least half an hour, yet there was still no sign of the earl. Had he forgotten about the unexpected, perhaps unwelcome, guest who was waiting to see him? The longer Keeton waited, the more dubious he became about the wisdom of bringing his problem to the earl.

Lord Keeton turned back to the room and tried to calm his turbulent thoughts. It was a pleasant room. Large leather chairs and couches were placed in inviting positions, urging people to sit and read or to engage in quiet conversation. He ran his fingers over the leather bindings of books that crammed the shelves, interested in the wide variety of subjects from history and science to the latest novels. Some books had been left in haphazard piles on tables next to the chairs, a ladies' fashion journal lay open on the window seat and two books on botany were open on a writing table alongside a notebook in which the reader had been jotting down observations and ideas. Near the fireplace, a chess set, exquisitely carved from ebony and ivory, had been left with

the game unfinished. He studied the positions of the pieces, considering how the black knight could be moved to capture the white queen and bring about checkmate.

He resumed his restless pacing around the room but stopped when a large portrait of five young women hanging above the mantelpiece, attracted his attention. He recognized the Countess of Medwell and her sisters. The artist had captured each sister's unique quirks well. Although all of the sisters were attractive, his eyes lingered on Alicia Goodwin who, although identical in appearance to her twin sister, was distinctly different in character. He smiled as he read the title of the book Alicia was holding, *Linnaeus' Species Plantarum*. He wondered if she was the botanist who had been carefully making notes about different kinds of moss and algae.

The soft smile lingered and brightened the somberness of his face. He had caught only a glimpse of her earlier but it had been enough to show him that the slim girl he had met two years ago had developed into a very alluring woman. Her dark hair was just as thick and glossy as he had remembered it, with stray tendrils escaping her severe chignon to frame her face, and he had wanted to stride across the room, tug at those tendrils and watch her face flush with anticipation. He had not kissed her in those brief weeks when they had visited museums and lectures together, and the thought of taking possession of her soft mouth sent his blood surging through his body. His kisses would not stop at her mouth but trail down her throat and along her shoulders, nudging at the border of her dress and the promising curve of her breasts. In the silence of the library, he could almost hear how her breath would become uneven, ragged, as she let go of her control and yielded to pleasure and passion as he showed her that not everything in life could be understood through dispassionate science.

He ran his hand over his tight breeches, tighter now that

his cock was swelling at the thought of kissing her, tasting her, possessing her. As he gripped his shaft through the soft buckskin of his breeches, he pictured her as he had seen her earlier. Abruptly, his thoughts included the woman she had been talking to. Belinda Bennet. With her fair hair, pale eyes, and delicate bone structure, she had made a striking contrast to Alicia's vivid coloring. His blood heated even more at the thought of both of them together. They were the only two women he had ever found appealing, who had ever filled his mind when he jerked himself off. For a moment, he allowed his thoughts to linger on all kinds of impossible and forbidden temptations.

The clock struck again, bringing him back to his senses. It would not do to be found in the Earl of Medwell's library, his cock hard as he dreamed of the earl's ward and her friend. Deliberately, he gave his cock a squeeze, took a deep breath, and withdrew an exquisite gold watch from his fob pocket. The watch was a sobering reminder of why he was here and why he should not allow thoughts of Belinda Bennet to distract him, no matter how much he admired her intelligence and fervor. He was honest enough with himself to admit that her slim figure and pert breasts, which she tried to hide beneath her practical dresses, added largely to her appeal.

He turned the watch over in his hand, running his finger over the inscription on the back. *Virtus in arduis*. His father had given it to him when he achieved a first in science at Oxford. *Courage in difficulties*. He drew comfort from the words of his family motto but the thought of his father saddened him. It also reminded him of why he had to quell his interest in Belinda Bennet and her revolutionary ideas, and why he had to delay his wooing of Alicia. He frowned as he placed the watch back in his pocket.

He had been waiting for almost two hours. He had just decided that perhaps it was in his best interests to leave and find another way of dealing with his problem when the door opened and the earl entered, followed by Lord Halstead and another man who was introduced as Simon Barlow, the earl's secretary.

Robert Lamercier introduced them to Lord Keeton and then ushered them to some comfortable chairs grouped near the fireplace. He poured brandy into exquisite heavy crystal glasses from the decanter the butler always kept ready for just such occasions. When he was settled in a large, comfortable chair, he grimaced affably. "April is still such a blustery month. I do not know why my sister insisted that her daughter should get married at such an inconvenient time of the year."

Lord Halstead chuckled. "Perhaps she was nervous that if given too much time, Mr. Trimble might reconsider his offer."

Robbie laughed as he sipped his brandy. "That is probably it. Well, at last Prudence is safely married and I won't be called upon to host more events for her benefit."

Lord Keeton sat stiffly on the edge of his chair, holding the brandy glass but not tasting the drink. He had come here to discuss serious issues that could affect the nation and yet these men were gossiping about trivial matters as if they were at their club and had nothing to occupy their minds beyond social engagements and the latest gossip. Perhaps Colonel Ross had been mistaken and they were not actually an organization of men who worked to keep the country safe. He placed his glass on the table next to his chair and wondered how quickly he could politely extricate himself from the room and the house, and begin his own inquiries.

Lord Halstead noticed Keeton's uneasiness. He sat up

straighter, his casual air vanishing. His eyes conveyed the keen intelligence that had made him one of the most successful spymasters in England. "Keeton, you told the earl that you have some knowledge of a plot regarding treason. Would you care to give us the details, now that we are in a more private place?"

Jasper Keeton picked up his glass and swallowed a mouthful of brandy. With a deep breath, he decided to trust these men after all. "My father died about two years ago." Sadness clouded his hazel eyes. He had been very close to his father and still missed him.

"We are sorry for your loss," Lord Robbie said gently, "but how is his death related to a current possible act of treason?"

The others nodded but said nothing, waiting for Lord Keeton to explain. "The doctor gave a heart attack as the reason for his death and I accepted that at the time, although I found it odd." He hesitated. "Now, I am more inclined to believe that he was the victim of foul play."

"Why?" Lord Halstead was leaning forward, listening carefully to every detail.

"My father had never shown any signs of heart trouble. In fact, I cannot remember him ever suffering from any health problems at all, not even a cold in winter. He was fit and healthy, an active man, not given to excess, so his death was very unexpected." He looked at the three men. Their understanding and sympathy spurred him on. "I am not sure if you know that he was an advisor to the government, not in a military capacity, but as a negotiator for peace. Not many knew that he was making progress with some leaders in France who oppose Napoleon's plans."

A quick nod from the others reassured him that they were privy to information that was not publicly known. He continued. "His death delayed the peace negotiations."

Halstead looked puzzled. "This is all very interesting, but it has no bearing on current events. Napoleon has been exiled to Elba. Peace is being restored to Europe. There is to be a convention in Vienna later this year to finalize the peace treaty."

Keeton clenched his jaw. "There are warmongers who want the war to be rekindled because of how it will benefit them, both financially and for political power. Some of them will resort to any means, fair or foul, to achieve personal gain. There are others who support Napoleon's absurd ideals and are wanting to reinstate him and who would even like to see him rule here."

Barlow spoke for the first time. "All that you have said is true, but your suspicions about your father's death seem to be nothing but conjecture. Do you have anything definite on which you base your surmise?"

Keeton reached into his pocket and withdrew a letter which he unfolded and spread out on his knee, but he did not look at it. He knew the contents by heart. "I found this amongst some of my father's private papers."

Barlow took the letter, skimmed it, and handed it to Lord Halstead, who read it slowly twice through before passing it to the earl.

"This is addressed to you but was never sent." It was an observation, not a question, but Keeton nodded at Lord Halstead.

"It was the last letter my father wrote to me. He began it the day he died but never finished it." His eyes clouded over and he swallowed hard. "I found it in his desk amongst his personal papers that I had not touched until recently."

"I do not see any cause for alarm in its contents. He mentions an issue on the estate that had been resolved," the earl said smoothly, a touch of irritation coloring his voice.

"He also raises some concerns about his secretary, who

ardently supports the ideals of the revolution in France and ardently admires Napoleon and all he has done. I was initially under the impression that my father quite liked his secretary, but this letter suggests that there was some tension between them," Keeton countered.

The earl sounded a little cynical as he reread the relevant part of the letter aloud. *"Young Bennet and I had an interesting debate about Napoleon's ideals and whether or not they would benefit Britain. He is quite fervent in his beliefs about making education available to the poor, improving the roads, and advocating libertie, egalite, et fraternitie. Although I find him very diffident and timid in most other matters, he argues most powerfully when advocating these ideals."* Robbie looked up. "A difference of opinion does not implicate Mr. Bennet in murder or treason."

Keeton leaned forward and spoke more quickly as he presented the arguments he had been forming over the last few days. "My father also mentions that he has been suffering from nausea and had developed a skin irritation along with heart pains, but the doctor could find nothing wrong and suggested it was likely an adverse reaction to too much rich food," Lord Keeton pointed out. "And the symptoms only appeared after the new secretary began working with him."

A light knock at the door cast a blanket of silence over the room.

"Enter," the earl called out.

The door opened and Keeton was surprised to see Alicia Goodwin enter. She looked around at the group of men, frowning slightly when she saw him. She pushed her glasses more firmly onto her nose and turned deliberately to her guardian. "I'm sorry, Lord Robbie, I didn't realize you had guests. I didn't mean to interrupt. I just needed my books."

He nodded at her and she quickly crossed to the table where her books had been left. She picked them up, hugging them close to her chest, and looked from the earl to Lord

Halstead, her eyes glancing over Lord Keeton as if she were hesitant to acknowledge his presence. "I didn't mean to listen to what was being said, but I heard something interesting just as I entered. It sounded like the symptoms of foxglove poisoning."

She stood firmly in her place, looking from one to the other, her chin tilted as if she expected them to reject her idea or scold her for eavesdropping. Instead, Lord Robbie nodded and Halstead leaned forward. "What did you hear?" he asked.

"Someone was describing the effects of ingesting foxglove. Is it a real case or hypothetical? Did the person also have tremors, vomiting, and eventually die of a heart attack? There is no antidote but few people would actually eat it. It is apparently quite bitter." She had lost all signs of diffidence and took a step forward in her eagerness. "I have been studying how different poisonous plants work and the effect they have on the body. Did you know that some plants have parts that are nutritious and others that can kill? For instance, rhubarb leaves can cause harm and yet for supper last night we enjoyed rhubarb and custard."

"Thank you, Ali. I might want to talk to you more about the foxglove later." Lord Robbie's voice was gentle but firm. Realizing she had been rambling and was now being dismissed, she held her head high and walked out of the room, trying not to look at Lord Keeton whose hazel eyes had been fixed on her unwaveringly from the moment she had entered the library.

She tried not to let his scrutiny affect her, tried not to notice his strong, sensitive face, and especially his firm mouth. And above all, his hands. She did not know why she was so fascinated by his hands, but even after two years, she could remember how pleasurable it felt when he placed them on her waist to guide her through the steps of a dance, how

firmly he held her hand when they crossed the street, how a surge of pleasure jolted through her each time he touched her. She had no idea why he had suddenly reappeared in London or what business he had with her guardian and Lord Halstead, but she was determined not to let his presence affect her as it had done two years ago. If he had felt about her the way she felt about him, he would have contacted her as soon as the official period of mourning for his father was over, but he had not written or even sent a message to let her know he was in London. Two years was a long time, and she had probably deluded herself into thinking he had felt anything more for her than friendship. And any affection he might have felt for her had surely waned. She needed to get a grip on her own feelings, especially if he was going to be in London for a while. It would never do to let him know how much he affected her.

Once her footsteps receded down the corridor, Keeton, trying to focus on what was truly important right now and not be distracted by the vulnerability and hurt he had detected in Alicia's eyes, said, "What Miss Goodwin said makes sense and explains why the doctor believes my father died of a heart condition even though he had never suffered any such problems before."

"It would be extremely difficult to prove," Barlow mused. "How would it have been given to your father without his knowledge, and would it have been one large dose or several smaller ones over time? And above all, who would have had the knowledge and opportunity to administer it?"

The gentlemen sipped their brandy quietly for a few moments as they pondered this and then Lord Halstead put his glass down and said, "That is all speculation. None of what you have shared, Lord Keeton, shows any connection between the work your father did and his death or provides any indication that there are people actively opposing the

peace negotiations and wanting to restore Napoleon, something that would be very difficult to do. There are people guarding him on Elba."

The earl added, "Besides, the information would be two years out of date and, therefore, no longer relevant."

"The letter is not the only reason I have come to see you. There were some other odd things among the papers I have only recently begun sorting through."

Halstead glanced at Robbie but they said nothing, waiting for Keeton to get to the point.

Keeton swallowed a mouthful of brandy before continuing. "It probably sounds like something from a fanciful novel, but there was a secret compartment in my father's desk which I discovered only a week or so ago. There were a number of documents in the drawer."

The earl raised an eyebrow. "Do you have those documents with you?"

Keeton bristled and then took a deep breath. It was a reasonable question. "I have stored them safely." He glanced at each of his listeners in turn, silently daring them to make a comment, but they simply watched him. He continued. "I wasn't quite sure how much of the story I could tell you. If I decide that you will be able to help, then I will show them to you."

Robbie shrugged as he replenished the brandy glasses. "Fair enough. Will you at least give us some indication of what is in them?"

Keeton sipped his brandy, looking from one to the other of his listeners, and then nodded. "Most of them are in some kind of code that I haven't been able to decipher. The ones I could read contained information about a few people my father believed were interested in prolonging the war and who consider Wellington a deterrent to their goals. The strange thing is that the pages are carefully numbered

yet some pages are missing. Three, if page twelve was the last."

"He might have removed them himself for some perfectly logical reason," the earl pointed out.

Keeton set his glass firmly down on the table next to him and began to rise. He was halted by Barlow's asking quietly, "Who would have known about the secret hiding place?"

A flash of anger hardened Keeton's eyes. "Not even I knew about it. I can only imagine that someone must have spied on him and learned the secret and then later purloined the documents."

"Who?"

Keeton clenched his jaw. "Peter Bennet, of course, my father's secretary and whose sister was one of your guests at the wedding today." He spat the words out.

The other three looked at one another questioningly. Suddenly, Halstead chuckled. "Our assistance has been sought by more than one supplicant today. A young lady came to see me before the wedding. I was not available and Louisa must have brought her here. She must be the Miss Bennet to whom Keeton is referring."

"This could be interesting," Lord Robbie murmured, as he topped up the brandy glasses, "working a case from both sides."

Keeton's barely concealed temper flashed in his eyes but he kept his voice steady. "It is hardly a matter to provoke humor when gentlemen who have a reputation for aiding the government entertain traitors."

"Steady on, Keeton. Being the sister of someone you suspect might be involved in treason, is not a criminal offense," the earl said. "In our experience, things are seldom as cut and dried as people imagine them to be. What actual evidence do you have that Miss Bennet sympathizes with her brother or, indeed, that her brother really is on the verge of

committing an act of treason? As yet, nothing you have said to us suggests that any new treasonous act is being planned."

Lord Keeton took a deep breath and swallowed a mouthful of brandy. "I have met Miss Bennet on a few occasions at some assemblies and dinners in Lyme Regis." He tried to eradicate the image of her slender figure and flashing eyes that intrigued and stimulated him, of her neat and precise steps as she danced, of her clear voice as she explained her opinion. He could not, should not, feel attracted to her, and yet he could not stop his mind from dwelling on her fascinations.

His contradictory thoughts made him harsher than he intended to be. "She is quite outspoken about her sympathies for the French and believes Napoleon has carried out, successfully, many of the ideals of the Revolution and desires to see similar changes in our country." Although he tried to keep his tone neutral, it was not possible to keep his personal aggrievement completely hidden. Much of his indignation rose from the attraction he felt towards Belinda Bennet. Her conversation was stimulating, her ideas invigorating, her attitude refreshing, but she spoke openly of her admiration for Robespierre's ideas of equality and freedom, ignoring the horrors he had perpetrated when he had ruled France.

Although Keeton had seen Belinda Bennet at various events in the last few months, he had not spoken to her privately since they had danced together at the assembly in Lyme Regis. But more often than they should have, images of the stately toss of her head when she defended her ideas, the flash of determination in her eyes, the stubborn tilt of her head obtruded into his thoughts. He gave himself a mental shake. He had just been contemplating Alicia Goodwin's attractions and now he was thinking of another woman. It was not like him to be so fickle.

Only by a flickering of their eyelids, did his listeners

betray their understanding of his attraction to Belinda Bennet. There was silence in the room for a few moments.

Simon Barlow asked, "Why do you suspect Mr. Bennet of nefarious actions?"

"Among the documents I found was a letter written by Mr. Bennet." He opened a dossier that he had placed on the table beside him and removed the top sheet of paper. His mouth twisted as he handed it to Simon Barlow.

The earl's secretary skimmed the page and then said, "This begins mid-sentence. Knowing what went before, might change the meaning."

"What does it say?" Lord Halstead asked.

Simon cleared his throat and then began reading. *"...a better society, based on the changes Napoleon has brought about in France. We cannot give up our hopes and plans for a better world, which will not happen while Wellington continues to oppose Napoleon."* Barlow looked up, his eyebrow quirked as he waited for a response, but none was forthcoming so he continued reading. *"I agree that immediate action needs to be taken but with Lord Keeton's death, I can no longer remain here. Yours, P Bennet."*

Jasper Keeton realized he had been holding his breath as the earl's secretary read the letter that had brought him to London. He purposefully forced his shoulders to relax and his breathing to even out. "It is all circumstantial so far, which is why I need your help." His voice was brittle and clipped as if he begrudged asking for their help. He was used to being in control of the circumstances of his life, but this was something much bigger, with much farther-reaching consequences than he had ever faced before.

"Did the secretary help you sort through your father's papers?" Simon Barlow's voice was gentle but insistent.

"No. He vanished before I arrived home. I never met him. But a few months ago, I heard he was working in the

Foreign Office. When I tried to contact him, he disappeared from there as well."

Halstead drained his glass and placed it decisively on the small table beside his chair. "So you suspect this man of being behind your father's death and complicit in an act of treason based on some missing papers, a few sentences in a letter, and because you never spoke directly to him."

Keeton drained his brandy glass, stood up, retrieved his letter, folded it, and began to walk towards the door. "I am sorry, gentlemen, for having wasted your time." He gave a stiff, curt bow.

"Sit down, Keeton. Don't be so hasty. We need to consider things from all sides if we are to find out the truth."

Keeton sat down at the earl's words, but his face was still set in rigid lines. His mouth tightened as he tried to control his anger. "I have spoken to some of the members of my father's, of my, household and their testimonies support my point of view about Peter Bennet. He had many opportunities to administer poison to my father, he had access to my father's papers and no one would have wondered if they had seen him looking through my father's desk. Furthermore, he did not even remain long enough in the house after my father's death to attend the funeral or discuss any of my father's business matters with me. And he has an extensive understanding of plants. It was only recently that I discovered where he has been. He has evaded any attempts I have made to meet with him."

"Why did you decide to consult us now?" Lord Halstead asked.

"Colonel Ross, whom I believe you helped out of a difficult situation some years ago, suggested that I should see you. He has heard some rumors that corroborate my suspicions. There are rumblings in the militia about Wellington's philosophy on war."

Simon Barlow leaned forward. "This is the first time you have mentioned Wellington. What has he to do with this?"

Keeton leaned back and ran his hand over his forehead. "Ross has heard rumors of assassination plots against the duke. Peter Bennet has been seen in company with some of those who oppose him and those who support Napoleon's release."

"That is not much to go on, but there is usually no smoke without fire," Halstead mused.

"If someone wanted to keep the war going, surely, killing Wellington would not be the best move," Barlow pointed out.

"He is a good general, but he does want peace as quickly as possible and he abhors violence. Some believe his ideals are counter-productive to victory and the British cause. Getting rid of him and replacing him with one of those who favor a longer war is not implausible," Keeton said, his voice milder now. "I believe there are those who are desirous of disrupting the peace negotiations and who seek a way to set Napoleon free from Elba to continue with his campaign. And Peter Bennet is somehow connected with this."

Halstead stood up. The calmness of his voice did not betray his troubled thoughts. "If you have decided that we can be trusted, we will look into this. We take any threat to the nation's security seriously. We will begin to investigate both the rumors of your father's murder and the threat to the peace efforts. To do so, you will need to let us have access to the documents you spoke of. Where can we reach you?"

Keeton also stood. His shoulders lost their stiffness as he decided to accept their assistance. "Thank you. I will be staying with my uncle, the Earl of Harcombe, in Grosvenor Square."

"Ah, yes. You are his heir." Lord Robbie's words were a statement rather than a question, but Keeton nodded as he

shook hands with all three of the gentlemen he had spoken to.

As the earl rang the bell for the butler to call for Keeton's horse, he assessed him and gave him one of his charming smiles. "We have missed seeing you these last few years. Welcome back to London. My wife and I are hosting a small dinner party on Wednesday evening. It would be good if you could join us."