A Private Miscellany

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A Society of Gentlemen coda
This is not a standalone story. It is a coda to the Society of Gentlemen series; its events take place about a year and a half after the end of *A Gentleman’s Position*.

The **Society of Gentlemen** series reading order:

- The Ruin of Gabriel Ashleigh
- A Fashionable Indulgence
- A Seditious Affair
- A Seditious Affair
- A Confidential Problem
- A Gentleman’s Position
- A Private Miscellany

With thanks to Roberta Wilkinson
Letter, Mr. Dominic Frey to Lord Richard Vane
London, 10th October 1821

Dear Richard

I thoroughly enjoyed your last letter. I must admit, your accounts of your travels are causing me immense envy, although leaving even London seems a very distant possibility to me at the moment.

Berlin sounds delightful. I am not in the slightest surprised to hear that your travelling companion is acquiring a facility with the language; it would amaze me more to learn there is anything he cannot do. (Except, I am requested to insert here, reply to letters. S, I am told, will write again only on the condition Mr. C “bothers to put pen to paper first”—I quote this delicate suggestion verbatim, you understand—but asks me to convey his good wishes.)

You asked after Francis in your last, since Mr. C is not the only poor correspondent of our acquaintance. To be fair, one can well sympathise with his distaste for the very idea of a letter.

I fear Francis remains the object of occasional ill-natured jests regarding Maltravers’ accusations. I was privileged to hear Cirencester deal with one of those from Sir James Cairn in White’s; I suspect Cairn may never recover his composure, so severely did your brother deal with him. Between Cirencester and Alvanley’s disapproval, the passage of time, and the endless supply of other scandal, the jests have dropped off markedly in number since last Season and I venture to hope that they will soon be no longer common currency.
This depends, of course, on Lord Maltravers’ continued absence from Society; however, he is not thought likely to return in the near future. It seems that his intemperate letters regarding his exile have only exacerbated his father’s conviction as to his unbalanced state, and the more he rants on his wrongs, the less likely he is to be believed or received. If you encounter his lordship during your wanderings, I trust you will let Mr. C have his head in the dealing with him.

Otherwise Francis is well, if decidedly irritable. Ash has been at Warminster Hall for three weeks now as a matter of family obligation around his sister’s marriage and is expected to be there at least another fortnight; we all look forward greatly to his return.

The main news I have is regarding myself. You have no doubt been wearied by my accounts of the work of taxation reform in which I have been engaged, and I shall not bore you with further detail; suffice to say that His Majesty’s Government considers the topic of more interest than my friends do, and I am to be knighted as reward for my efforts. I need not tell you how greatly this pleases my parents, any more than I need explain why it has caused some upheaval in my personal affairs.

Notwithstanding that minor difficulty, I am of course deeply grateful and honoured, and I am only sorry that you will not be able to attend the ceremony as I know you would have wished.

You will like to hear that your former bookman had something of a triumph recently when Mr. Wilberforce quoted extensively from one of his pamphlets in the House. He is becoming a force to be reckoned with in the movement for emancipation; you may be justly proud that your patronage opened the way for him to fight in a battle so dear to your heart.

I look forward to hearing more about your travels. Pray pass my best regards to your companion.

With fondest love

Dom
Letter, Mr. Harry Vane to Lord Gabriel Ashleigh

London, 12th October 1821

Ash old fellow, do come back to London soon, won’t you? Quex’s is a tomb these days with you and Richard absent, and Francis is in a foul mood kicking his heels while you do the family pretty, so naturally he and Julius are fighting up hill and down dale. I dare say it keeps them entertained but it’s awfully wearing for the rest of us.

Well, what happened is, I had a waistcoat made up in the most delightful shade of violet which I think you’ll find charming, but Francis took the greatest exception, threatening to summon Richard back from the Continent to intervene, and generally very cutting. And since he took that view, Julius—who if you ask me has scarcely more sartorial imagination than Francis when it comes to colour, but you know how he loves a quarrel—of course had to take my part immovably, so now Julius is having a coat made up in the same colour, with the intention of turning what he calls (to me alone) ‘your calamity’ into a new fashion, and every bit of it just to annoy Francis. Dominic says that if Julius succeeds in prompting everyone in London to wear violet he will consider it my responsibility and wreak vengeance accordingly, but Julius won’t back down because Francis is being extremely dogmatic on the topic, and I do wish you’d come back.

You ask me what news, though I feel you should blasted well be here to find out for yourself. The great business is, my cousin Verona is increasing, and wants me to stand godfather when the child is born. I feel the responsibility, I may tell you. Did you hear Dominic is to be knighted? And there’s been a certain trouble which is causing some ructions both in and out of the public eye. I can’t write more than that, but I’ll tell you when you’re back here. That, dear fellow, is a hint.

Yours aye

Harry
Letter, Mr. Julius Norreys to Lord Richard Vane  
London, 13th October 1821

Richard

Your damned cousin is a damned nuisance and I hold you entirely responsible for the alarms, excursions, tragi-comedies, farces, melodramas, and utterly unnecessary nervous strain under which I have suffered since you foisted him on me. I enclose a scrap of material. Suffice to say that I shall be wearing a coat in this colour, in public, and it is all Harry’s fault. I blame you for everything.

He is otherwise very well, and ecstatic at the news of the forthcoming proof of Mrs. Rawling’s affection to her spouse about which you have doubtless heard. She glows with good health, Mr. Rawling glows with pride in his successful labours, and Harry bounds around them both like an oversized puppy. He will be as fond an uncle as you, I have no doubt. One might say, were one inclined to the low habit of punning, that it runs in the veins.

On a less cheerful note, I must say, I wish you were—no, let me be honest—I wish your henchman were here, as we have something of a predicament. A young fellow, one Oxley, employed at a certain house with which we are all acquainted, has been arrested and charged with extortion. (I am assured that the charges are entirely unjust—it seems some villain wished Oxley to supply him with information, and took this revenge when he refused, as a hint to others who might dare to defy him.) Since Oxley is also accused of committing certain offences and living by immoral earnings, the outcome may be the pillory or even the gallows.

You may ask what concerns this is of yours or mine. Unfortunately, it transpires that Absalom is professionally acquainted with this youth, and has become deeply concerned for his well being, a fact of which none of us had any suspicion. To make a short tale of it, that great ornament of the Bar Sir Absalom Lockwood now proposes to defend one who is little more than a
creature of the streets, in Court, as a matter of charity. He cannot be persuaded
to do otherwise, such, it seems, is the regard he has for the young man.
Dominic assures me that Oxley is considered by his employer to be of
excellent character; I sincerely hope so, since Absalom gravely risks his own
name in flying to the fellow’s defence when there appears to be, in law, so
little defensible about him.

God knows how this will end, but the trial is next month, so all will doubtless
be resolved one way or another before this letter even reaches you. I hope my
next will contain good news. I should have been be tempted to beg you to send
your henchman back to England had there been time, and were I not entirely
convinced you could not go on without him.

I suppose you know Dominic is to have a knighthood. His werewolf’s howls
are, I am assured, plangent and dismayed.

Julius

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**Letter, Lord Richard Vane to Mr. Dominic Frey**

**Berlin, 11th November 1821**

My most excellent Dominic

I cannot sufficiently express my happiness at your news, tempered only by my
regret that I will not be present at the ceremony. You will have to win a
peerage on my return to salve this disappointment. I am delighted beyond
words that your service has been given the recognition it so greatly deserves.
Well done, my dear, and pray offer my best compliments and congratulations to
your parents on their admirable son.

D asks me to convey how very deeply he wishes he might have seen S’s face. I
give this without comment, knowing that it will be received quite in the spirit
in which it is meant.
I have yet to cross Lord Maltravers’ path in person; I understand from the reports of other travellers that he is established in Vienna, and making himself little more popular there than anywhere else. We will probably go to Munich instead.

All remains very well here, so much so that I find myself unwilling to think of return. The company in which I travel becomes dearer to me by the day, as does the freedom from so many of the strictures imposed by life in England. I have found myself giving serious consideration to a quiet, anonymous existence in some little town; the truth is, the pleasures of privacy and equal companionship outweigh all the privilege England affords me. I have not that right, I know. My brother depends on me and my own affairs cannot be left untended forever, not to mention that I sadly lack my companion’s facility with languages. Still, a man may dream.

I think I mentioned that I have been sitting for my picture? My brother had requested that I add my likeness to the collection of family portraits. I commissioned one Carl Joseph Begas, an artist of some repute here, and am well satisfied with his work, which I have now had sent to my brother. It is a satisfaction to know it will have its rightful place in the Long Gallery at Tarlton March in years to come. You will understand, perhaps, when you see it.

Francis has sent me a screed of sartorial outrage. Do I have to write to any of him, Julius, or Harry regarding their latest nonsense? Is anyone capable of preventing Harry from leaving this endless trail of chaos in his wake?

I trust all is well otherwise. Once again, my congratulations and deepest love, my very dear Sir Dominic to be.

Yours ever

Richard

PS—I have just received a letter from Julius regarding Absalom. In heaven’s name let me know what has happened, and what if anything I may do, though I well know, when you read this, it will be too late.
Newspaper clipping, The Times
15th November 1821

MIDDLESEX SESSIONS, held Wednesday 14th Nov.

This day came the trial of Mr. James OXLEY indicted for attempted extortion and commission of abominable crimes &c. The Court was crowded at an early hour.

The prisoner was well-dressed, and had an appearance of a decent working man; he gave his employment as servant but was out of place at the current time.

Mr. ADOLPHUS, for the prosecution (brought by Mr. MAWBY), addressed the jury. It was unnecessary for him to anticipate any of the detail which would be produced in evidence; they had heard enough from the indictment to explain its nature to them. The Jury, when they had heard the details which it was his duty to offer, would be satisfied that the unfortunate plaintiff had no choice but to prosecute: he was compelled to come forward to meet his accuser, or must be content to be overwhelmed with infamy for ever.

Mr. Mawby was called to give evidence, and asserted that the prisoner made his living through unmentionable vice; had falsely charged the plaintiff with the commission of such horrid practices; and had demanded the sum of £11 to desist from this malicious falsehood.

Sir Absalom LOCKWOOD was retained for the prisoner. In a most eloquent speech he accused Mr. Mawby of mounting a malicious and unjust prosecution under a veneer of false morality and argued that the young man’s character was nobler than his lowly situation. Evidence was then called of numerous facts concerning the conduct and character of Mr. Mawby, whom several parties attested had committed acts of perjury and extortion. Mr. Mawby, it was stated, had several times committed the self-same offence of which he now accused the prisoner in threatening false accusations and extorting monies thereby. Sir
Absalom demonstrated with great conviction that the prosecution had been undertaken by Mr. Mawby to force Mr. Oxley to act as his proxy in perjuries, and praised the prisoner’s steadfast refusal even at the risk of his own liberty.

Great feeling was expressed in the gallery at these revelations. Mr. Mawby attempted to flee the Court and was prevented. Mr. Adolphus retired without further argument for the prosecution.

Mr. Oxley was found Not Guilty upon all counts and left the Court with, in the Judge’s words, “an unstained character and a head held high”, to much applause from the gallery.

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Letter, unfinished and unsigned

London, 15th November 1821

Foxy

Write a cove a letter some time, you idle bugger. Even better, get your arse back here and do your job yourself. I just spent a week dealing with the latest foolery from your gentry, as if I’ve nothing better to do.

Since I’m sure you’ll want to know— One of Zoe’s boys got himself prosecuted by a nasty piece of work, an extortioner-by-trade, who wanted him to inform on certain of his clients. It seems he’d got wind of Zoe’s house and thought it’d be a ripe plum for picking, and prosecuted the lad to make an example when he wouldn’t cooperate.

Well, your Sir A. was determined to defend the boy in court by hook or crook, and looking fair to ruin himself over it. Since you ain’t here to sort it out and I don’t like informers, I had a chat to some people, and turned up a few bits and piece the swine would rather I hadn’t. Sir A. went to town with it, got the whole gallery on our feet cheering, and the boy was acquitted on all charges. Odd thing, being on the winning side of the law. I know a few people who could have used that sort of speechifying on their behalf, and for better reason
too.

So that’s all squared away. You’ll want to know what was done about the extortioner; all I’ll say is, Zoe decided to make an example of him in his turn, and I doubt anyone will be crossing her in a hurry once word gets out about that.

Things are well enough here otherwise. The gentry are all arguing about some coat that Harry’s fop friend is wearing. I dare say it keeps them busy.

Here’s a damned odd thing for you: one of the staunchest Tories living (not that one; I mean Wilberforce, the abolitionist, who wants to set slaves free and keep workers chained) stood on his hind legs in Parliament and read out my

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Silas looked up as the door opened. He was writing to David as something to do while he waited in the study at Quex’s (and not, in any way, because he wanted David to know that his pamphlet had been read and discussed in the House); he abandoned the letter as Jon and Will came in.

“All right, Silas,” Will said with a grin. “How’s your fancy man, then? Fancier than ever, I suppose.”

Silas made a despairing noise. “A knight. A bloody knight.”

Jon filled three glasses with gin, not bothering to conceal his amusement. “Well, it hardly makes a difference, right? You were tupping above your station anyway.”

“It’s not like he was born a knight,” Will said with gleefully insincere sympathy. “The only difference is him kneeling in front of the king instead of you.”

“Aye, I can see it,” Jon added. “Mr. Frey on his knees while his majesty gets his big sword out—”

“Piss off, Shakespeare.”

“You won’t mind that, will you?” Will patted his arm. “I mean, you’re a loyal
subject of his majesty, you don’t mind sharing, right?”

“Aye, well,” Silas said. “If you two have finished, that’s what I wanted to talk to you about.”

“What, the king?”

Silas growled in his throat. “No. Sharing. I was wondering how you two would feel about Jon lending me a hand.”

Jon’s brows shot up. “What, for Mr. Frey?”

“Sir Dominic, that’ll be, to us peasants,” Silas said. “Aye. Way I see it, if he’s going to bow the knee to that tyrannical barrel of lard, I want to make sure he has something else to remember the day by. Wondered if you’d like to help me do it.”

“Well.” Jon tipped his head, considering. “There’s a thought. Will?”

Silas had an inkling the idea would suit. He’d made a third for Jon and Will a few times, and knew him to be a fine man: powerful, well built, with a lot of sense. A man who listened to what was asked of him. Jon would treat the Tory right.

He wouldn’t get too close, either. Silas knew perfectly well that, just because he had Dom in his blood like other men had opium, it didn’t mean anyone else would feel the same. Still, he’d be happier sharing the Tory’s body with someone whose heart was already spoken for.

And, most importantly, Jon could keep his mouth shut. Silas couldn’t risk some paid boy with less backbone than young Jim Oxley pricking up his ears at Sir Dominic, and he needed to say the words. He wanted the title as a whip to make his Tory smart.

“Is that going to be awkward?” Will asked. “Afterward, I mean, with him coming to the club.”

Silas grinned. “Probably, aye.” That was another advantage. Every time Dominic came to Quex’s, where grown men bowed and scraped, and Silas could only set foot in the back rooms, he’d be courteously greeted by a major-domo who’d not only know exactly what Dominic liked, but would have given it to him hard. Silas had a pretty good idea what that daily sting would do.
Will and Jon were looking at one another, in silent communication.

“What d’you think?” Silas asked. “No hard feelings if it ain’t to your liking.”

“Oh, I’d like it well enough,” Jon said. “Rough, right?”

“Hard words, hard handling. No whips or what-have-you, mind.”

“Fair enough. Well, it suits me as long as it suits Will.”

Will tapped his index fingers, steepled together, against his lips. “I’ve no objection.”

“Hold on,” Jon said, with a little frown. “If you don’t like it—”

Will waved a hand, stopping him mid-speech. “No, carry on, if you care to. I was just thinking—well, see how it works. But if it *does* work, I shouldn’t mind watching another time.”

Jon’s mouth curled in the grin that was just for Will. “Would you, now. Not this time?”

“I don’t reckon so,” Silas put in, though the idea had its merits. Will liked to watch, and had a turn for brutally caustic comments, and words were what did it for Dom. He rather thought the two might be a match made in—well, somewhere.

But, no hurry. If what he had in mind suited Dom as well as Silas thought it might, there’d be every chance to take things further. That would be down to Dominic, as all Silas’s wants and pleasures were, always.

“No, not now,” he said again. “As you say, if it works. And I’ve to speak to his highness, mind, before anything. But in principle, what d’you say?”

Jon and Will exchanged one more quick glance; Will nodded. “Aye,” Jon said. “We’re happy. Where and when?”

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Zoe arranged a room in Millay’s for the evening after the royal mummery was done with. Not their old room, the one they’d had for all those Wednesdays
without names; that would be a deal too comfortable, and Silas didn’t want Dom comfortable. Just a sturdy bed, a few bits and pieces he might want to use; an anteroom; thick walls; plenty of privacy.

He was waiting alone, sat in the armchair, when the Tory walked in. His face was controlled, neutral, but Silas could read the little signs of anticipation, and nerves.

“Sir Dominic,” he said. “Shut the door.”

Dom shut it and turned to face him. Silas looked him up and down, taking his time.

“Sir Dom-i-nic.” He lingered over the syllables, making the name a taunt. “All done, is it? Been to the palace in your fancy clothes, grovelled to the king?”

Dom’s dark eyes narrowed slightly. He was bloody proud of his knighthood, so proud that Silas almost wanted to give up the argument, to congratulate him wholeheartedly and share his pleasure in the achievement. He couldn’t do that, not quite. He could do this.

“The ceremony is done with, and my obligations,” Dominic said. “I am at your disposal.”

“You never spoke a truer word.” Silas let promise leak into his voice at that, saw Dom’s little anticipatory flinch. “Here’s the thing, Sir Dominic, I wouldn’t want you to get above yourself. You may be all fine for the king out there. In here, you’re mine, to do with as I please.”

“And what do you please?” Dominic was holding himself very still.

“You’ll find out. I’ll have you naked first. Strip.”

The Tory undressed with shaking hands, in silence. Silas sat, watching and waiting, until he was done, standing bare in the centre of the room.

“Right,” Silas said. “So, what I’m thinking is, a knight of the realm with just one commoner at his beck and call, well, that won’t do. I reckon a noble gentleman with a title needs more than that. Fancy fellow like you deserves at least two men serving him.”

Dom’s mouth opened slightly.
Silas grinned at him. “Just fooling. You’ll be doing that. No, the fact is, a friend of mine’s got an itch to scratch, and you’re the man to do that for him. It’s what you’re best at. That and taxes,” he added with a curl of his lip. “What do you say?” He made it sound like a threat; Dominic would know it was a request for confirmation. And sure enough, Dom met his gaze and whispered, “Silas.” The name that, between them, meant Yes.

His dark eyes looked huge, and Silas felt a shiver of triumph. Oh, my Tory...

“Right,” he called out. “Come and see what you think.”

Jon strolled through from the anteroom, casually dressed in loose shirt and trousers, nothing like his usual buttoned-up public self. He propped himself against the doorframe with arms folded, and gave Dominic a long look, up and down.

And dear God, the expression on Dominic’s face. Wide-eyed alarm; recognition; and then a wave of colour over his face, flushing his neck and shoulders. His lips parted, moved silently.

“Sir Dominic,” Silas said in a growl, and Dom said, again, almost inaudibly, “Silas.”

Jon pushed himself off the doorframe and walked around Dominic, a slow stroll, taking his time. Dom stood unmoving under the scrutiny, naked, jaw set, and Silas watched them both.

Jon trailed a finger down the back of Dom’s neck, making him twitch. “Mmm. There’s a fine morsel,” he told Silas. “I’ll have some of this, if you’re sharing.”

Silas could have spent there and then at the expression on Dom’s face. “Aye, I’m sharing. Help yourself. Here’s the thing, Sir Dominic.” He hauled himself out of the chair and walked over so he and Jon flanked Dom, the pair of them uncomfortably, threateningly close. “You’re at Jon’s disposal till the pair of us are done. And you’ll serve Jon every way he chooses, hear me?”

Dominic had to run his tongue over his lips before he could speak. Silas didn’t have to look to know how hard he was. “Do I have a choice?”

Silas leaned in, baring his teeth. “No.”
Dominic shut his eyes. Jon gave him an assessing look, glanced at Silas to make absolutely sure, then took hold, wrapping his fingers over Dom’s blood-flushed prick. Dom inhaled sharply.

“Nice,” Jon said. “Do you know what, I’ve never had a knight of the realm suck my prick. Does he like it in his mouth?”

“Who cares what he likes,” Silas said. “If you want it, take it.”

Jon nodded, then put his one hand to Dom’s shoulder, pushing him downward, the other dealing with the front fall of his breeches, pulling out his piece. He was stiff already, and Silas couldn’t blame him; he was in considerable discomfort himself.

Dominic knelt in front of Jon, body rigid. Silas ran his hand through the loose curls, seeing a lot more silver in the black than he once had. Dominic looked up, meeting his eyes, and he and Silas stared at each other for a long, unspeaking moment.

I love you, Silas thought. More than my heart can take. My knight, my tarnished knight on his knees.

He tightened his fingers in the curls he held, pulling Dom’s head back. “Here. You’re going to get Jon ready, understand? Because he’s taking first ride of you, and I want to see him good and hard for that. Get on, you Tory whore.”

Dom leaned forward, taking Jon in his mouth. Silas stepped away for a better view and stared down, fascinated, watching Dom’s cheeks and throat work. The flush of blood made Jon’s prick look night-black by contrast with Dom’s reddening lips. Silas found he was fumbling at his own buttons, wanting to stroke himself, and forced his hand away.

Jon had taken hold of Dom’s hair now, thrusting into his mouth, making clear who was in charge. He was enjoying himself, as who wouldn’t be, and Dom was taking it willingly. Another man’s prick in his mouth. Silas had wanted that for him, and had never had objections to three in a bed himself, but...the sight of Dominic, his Dominic, concentrating on someone else—

Jon pushed Dom’s head away, a rough movement, dragging his spit-wet, gleaming prick back. Dom’s eyes dark with arousal, flicked up to Silas, as if drawn. As if he too needed to be sure.
That quick look was enough. Silas strode forward, taking Dom’s chin in hand, forcing his head back and pressing against his throat, as Jon pulled his own shirt off. “All right, Sir Pricksucker. Get up. What do you reckon, Jon?”

Jon tossed his shirt away. He was a few years younger than Silas, and he stripped to advantage, with powerful sloping shoulders and a broad chest. “Him on the bed, is what. Bend him over.”

“Just a minute.” Silas took up a length of soft rope. “Wrists together, Tory. Don’t want you thinking you’ve a choice here.” He tied Dominic’s hands behind his back, quick and practiced.

“Please,” Dom whispered.

Jon gave him a hard shove, toward the bed, glancing at Silas behind him as he did it. Silas nodded, reaching for the oil. They moved together, pushing Dominic down, Silas shoving his legs apart with a foot, deliberately rough.

“Please,” Dominic said again. His arms were straining against the rope.

Silas reached down to run a hand over his arse, down one shaking thigh. “This is mine. Right? I said, right?”

“Yours. You know.”

“And I’ll use you how I want, when I say, how I say. You hear that, Sir Dominic?” He turned the caress to a sharp slap. Dom jolted. “Jon’s going to fuck you, and you’re going to spread your legs for him, and I’m going to watch him do it.”

“God. No.” Dom’s back was flexing. Silas knelt on the bed, put a hand between his shoulderblades, pressed him down. Jon had slicked himself, but he was waiting, eyes on Silas. They’d talked about this, what Dominic needed and how it worked, but these were unnerving games for a decent man to play if you weren’t used to them, and sometimes if you were.

Silas pushed down harder. “What’s my name?”

“Silas. Don’t.”

Silas gave Jon a nod. He moved forward, between Dominic’s legs, stroking a thumb over his arse, firm against the flesh. Dominic moaned. Jon grinned
tightly. “Mmm. Thing is, I’ll be honest, Sir Dominic, it puts me off not to get a bit of enthusiasm. Not polite, is it, Silas? So what I want is a please and thank you for all the trouble you’re putting me to.”

“That’s fair,” Silas managed. “Hear that? Gentleman like you, knight of the realm, forgetting his manners? That won’t do at all.” He pulled at Dom’s hair, dragging his head up, saw the look in his eyes. “Ask Jon for it. Now.”

“I— God.” Dominic’s voice cracked. “Just do it.”

“Not good enough.” Jon’s fingers were working between Dominic’s legs. “Say it like you want it. I can feel you wanting it, there’s no point playing coy with a cockstand like that. Let’s hear you beg.”

“Fuck me,” Dominic whispered. “Please.”

“More. I know you’re Silas’s whore, Sir Dominic, and so do you. He’s promised me a good long hard fuck out of you, and you don’t want to make him a liar, do you? So let’s hear it. What do you want?”


“You hear that, Silas?” Jon shook his head theatrically, and pointlessly since Dom couldn’t see. “You weren’t wrong about this one. Born for it.”

“Told you,” Silas said. “A man can’t fuck him enough.”

“We’ll have to see what two can do.” Jon put a hand to Dom’s shoulder. “Right, then, Sir Dominic. You’re mine.”

Dominic cried out. Jon was a big enough fellow, and he wasn’t being over-gentle. He moved steadily, breaching Dom, and Silas held him down, felt his shoulders flex, watched him taken. He couldn’t look away. He thought he’d have this in his mind every night of his life that wasn’t Wednesday or Saturday, the sight of another man fucking Dominic, the way his lover moaned.

“You’re enjoying this too much,” he told Dom, voice rough. “A lot too much. I didn’t bring Jon here to please you.”

Jon took that hint, driving harder, till Dominic was gasping. Silas fumbled at his own buttons, getting himself out, and saw Dom’s fuck-drugged eyes widen.

“As soon as Jon’s done,” he promised savagely. “The minute he’s out. You
fucking tuppenny doxy, I’ll teach you who your master is. And till then—”

He pulled Dom’s head up by the hair, and shifted forward to bring his prick just to Dom’s lips. Jon paused in his work, teeth bared in the effort of self-control, watching, with Dominic splayed helplessly under him. There was a long, still moment of nothing but breathing.

“Both of us, at once,” Silas said. “You understand, Sir Dominic? You’ll take me and Jon at once.”

“And love it, I reckon.” Jon ran a hand over Dominic’s flank. “Not that you can tell, even if you cared to ask. Doesn’t talk much, does he?”

“Aye, well, who needs to hear more gentry-talk? Most of the bastards won’t shut up.”

“True enough,” Jon agreed. “Stop his mouth for him, then.”

Silas did, moving forward, feeling Dom’s lips close around him. He thrust gently at first, but firmly enough that there was no mistake who was controlling this, and felt Jon resume his own movement. Both of them fucking Dominic, pinioned between them. He could see the muscles work in Dominic’s back and shoulders and bound arms, in futile resistance that only served to prove his helplessness, and he thrust harder, mercilessly, hand tight in Dominic’s hair, seeing his eyes water.

“Man at each end,” he growled. “This what you want, Sir Dominic?”

“Spit-roasted like a sucking pig,” Jon gasped. He was close, Silas could see that. He jerked his cock away, out of Dom’s mouth, so that Jon could have his way, and he did, heaving Dominic up now, fucking ferociously. Dominic thrashed under him babbling pleas with bruised lips; Jon shoved him forward again, hips jerking, and shouted aloud as he spent.

Silas swung off the bed, not bothering to strip; he couldn’t wait. He damn near pushed Jon out of the way to take his turn. Dominic was begging incoherently as Silas took him, biting his shoulder, feeling him thrash, and then hump as Jon shoved a hand under his belly—he was bringing Dom off, and no bad idea, because Silas wasn’t going to need any time at all. Jon’s other hand was in Dom’s hair, pulling hard, and Silas had his own fingers biting into flesh, his weight pinning Dom down. The pair of them, focused on nothing but mastering
Dom, on the body racked with humiliation, pain, and pleasure, and the peculiar bastard who ran all three together in his mind. On his own Dominic, to whom he could do anything, and for whom he always would.

“Please God—Silas—Silas!” Dom’s body was jerking in the spasms Silas knew well, and he gave up any effort at holding off. He spent hard, unable to resist, so hard that his eyes swam with it and he had to blink his vision clear, and collapsed, gasping, over Dominic’s back.

“Hard work for an old man,” Jon said. Silas, not quite having his breath yet, raised two fingers in silent salute. “I like your knight. Does what he’s told, or doesn’t argue, anyway.” He cupped a hand over Dom’s arse. “I’ll have more of that, I reckon.”

“Help yourself,” Silas said. “Whenever you’re ready.”

“No hurry, is there? We’ve all evening. You might even say all knight.”

“Christ almighty. Have some shame.”

Jon tugged at Dominic’s hair. “Got anything to say, Sir Dominic?”

Dom made a slurred sort of noise. Silas grinned. “Oh, aye. Don’t think we’re finished, Tory. I’d say we’ve only just begun.”

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Afterwards—a good hour afterwards—Jon slipped away, gathering his clothes up and heading out in silence. It was what he and Will always asked of anyone who made a third for them, and now Silas could see why, and was grateful. He wanted to be with Dominic, nobody else.

Dom was sprawled over the bed where they’d left him, naked, and it was getting a little cold. Silas threw a couple of logs on the fire, grabbed a blanket, and lay down by his lover, pulling the cover over the pair of them. He held Dom, brushing his lips over his brow and hair, feeling the tremors running through his body, and feeling them ease, until the two of them lay peacefully entangled together, skin to sweaty skin.
“You all right?” Silas said finally.

“Yes. My God, yes.”

Silas tightened his grip. “Congratulations, Sir Dominic. You Tory bastard,” he was forced to add.

“Thank you,” Dominic said. “Did it stick in your throat very much?”

“One good turn deserves another.” Silas felt Dominic’s silent shake of laughter. “I’m glad for you. You know that, right?”

“Don’t be ridiculous.” Dominic shifted with a wince. “Good Lord. I had no idea Shakespeare was such a bruiser.”

“He’s never thrown you out of Quex’s?”

“I’ve never made it necessary for him to do so. Ah, is there anything I should handle, arising from this?”

He meant, Is there a fee? He would think of that; the Tory had been a byword in Millay’s for never forgetting, ignoring, or taking other people’s hard work as his due. “Nah,” Silas said. “All friends here.”

“That was extremely friendly.”

“Could get friendlier,” Silas said. “Will likes to watch.”

There were a few seconds of silence, then Dominic said, “You are, in fact, trying to kill me.”

“Once a radical, always a radical. Nothing you don’t want, Dom. It’s up to you.”

“I know. My stars, I know. The care you take, Silas. The things you do for me.”

“Aye, that was a real hardship, watching you on your knees for Jon. Could barely stand it.”

He thought he’d larded that with enough sarcasm, but Dom pulled a little away to look up, and the expression in his eyes made Silas’s breath catch.

“You have me, heart and soul,” Dom said. “You know that. And the way you think of what I might want is astonishing, but if it doesn’t please you equally, I
don’t want it. Shakespeare—Jon—is a damned good man, don’t misunderstand me, but this evening he was another way for you to fuck me, and no more. I want only you, and that will not change, no matter what proxies you please to call upon.”

Silas let out a long breath. “Nor I, either. And Jon’s the same, so you know. Him and Will, they like to play, but it don’t touch anything that matters between them. I wouldn’t have asked them, otherwise.”

“I know.”

Silas made himself say, “I’ll admit, this evening felt a bit...odd, at first. Didn’t think it would, but it did.”

“Then—”

“I got over it. As long as we’re clear what you are, which is mine. My knight, my tax collector, my Tory. My bloody Tory.” His voice rasped on that, and he felt Dominic’s arms tighten.

“Yours,” Dom said softly. “And only yours. In whatever way pleases you.”

“That’s all right then,” Silas said gruffly. “You and your blasted knighthood.”

“Richard has asked me to ensure I’m elevated to the peerage,” Dominic remarked with what Silas felt was deliberate provocation. “Since he missed my investiture.”

“Aye, well, your Richard can fuck off. I’ll put up with a knight, but I won’t stand for a baronet or a marquess or what-have-you.”

“Oh yes?” Dom raised a brow. “What do you intend to do about it?”

“I’ll work on that,” Silas said. “But I’ll tell you now, it’ll make tonight look like Christmas. And I’ll definitely have Will watch.”

Dominic stretched luxuriously, rubbing against him. “Consider me warned.”

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Letter, Sir Dominic Frey to Lord Richard Vane
17th November 1821

Dear Richard

I am delighted to say that all is well. Absalom’s performance at the trial was, I am told, superb; his opponent melted in the blast of rhetorical brilliance turned upon him, not to mention a few telling facts S dug up against the villain who mounted the prosecution. I like to think your henchman would approve his work.

It seems that Absalom has developed a sincere affection, sincerely returned. Some might regret the disparity in age and standing; none could fail to see that the young object of his care truly appreciates him as he deserves. I trust the pair will have your support in their newfound happiness, as they have mine.

I write primarily to let you know that I am now knighted. Cirencester did me the honour of attendance at the ceremony and was most gracious in speaking for some moments to my parents, whose pride now bursts all bounds. I assume that was at your request; you are ever thoughtful.

As to the peerage you suggest I seek: believe me when I say that the consequences of my knighthood have been such that the prospect of further advancement is alarming. Maybe next year.

Ever yours

Dom

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Enclosure, undated, unsigned

Got your note. Fuck off, you ginger bastard.

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Memorandum of Delivery, 13th December 1821, Portsmouth Docks

From Berlin: One portrait, in oils, gilt-fram’d, shewing a Gentleman Seated, to be sent onwards by carrier to the country-house of the Marquess of Cirencester, Glostershire

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Letter, Lady Cirencester to Lord Richard Vane

Tarlton March, 20th December 1821

Dear Richard

We are delighted to know that you are still enjoying your travels. The children are very well. Dickie has come triumphantly through the chicken-pox with no more than a few scars to show for his trouble, and a most dutiful letter of thanks for your birthday gift is enclosed with this packet. He wishes you will come home, as he believes himself now of a height to climb the great oak in the grounds and insists nobody but his godfather may teach him. I suspect you have six months’ liberty yet.

Philip acknowledges the pleasure you are taking in your travels, but is also impatient for your return. He is not entirely happy in his mind regarding the steward of the Lancashire estate, and will enclose a note to that effect; I am quite sure that the issue is small enough to wait.

I write to let you know that your portrait arrived safely. It is a magnificent likeness and Philip is most pleased to have it. He is curious to know the significance of the composition, and indeed nobody here can guess at why you have had yourself painted with a fox on your lap. If you would care to enlighten us, we are agog to know, but in case it should be a private reference, you may rest assured that we shall not raise the subject first. Or, at least, that
Philip and I shall not; the children are naturally full of questions as to whether you now have a pet fox, did it not bite you, &c., &c.

Your ‘Portrait with Fox’ has been added to the pantheon of Vanes past and present, and hangs in the Long Gallery next to Mr. Lawrence’s likeness of Philip and myself. It does very well to represent you in our hearts until we may have sight of you in person once more.

Until then, with our best love, dear brother, we all bid you a very merry Christmas.

Eustacia
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