

Set in Stone Deleted Scene

Tara and Gregore at Maddy's cabin

Tara merged onto the highway and forced her fingers to loosen their death grip on the steering wheel. Gregore silently observed her with his glittering blue eyes. Tension crackled between them as a pulsing, living being that roared into life at her question. She knew he didn't want to give up his secrets. People never did. Five years as a cop had taught her that.

Aunt Maddy may have a certain magic but Tara could work her own magic in an interrogation room. Time to put those skills to use here. She took a deep breath to release more of the tightness in her body. She stretched each arm and all ten fingers, then rubbed at the stiffness in her neck. Gregore's fingers joined hers, easing away the muscle strain with his firm touch.

"I want to help you," she said, not really knowing where the words came from. "But I have to know where you're coming from. "But I have to know where you're coming from." She paused to lock eyes with him, then turned her attention back to the road. "I need to know the truth."

Gregore continued his gentle massage. He was quiet so long that she began to think he wouldn't answer at all. Still, she waited. People always talked to fill the silence. In this day and age of constant noise, people couldn't seem to be content in quiet. But did that same rule apply to the man next to her? She didn't know. Tara stole another glance at him.

They were over half way to the cabin when Gregore spoke.

"I had to find that book, Tara. I've spent the last hundred years tracking down every

relative, each offspring of that gypsy tribe. Every branch of a wandering group of people who have circled the globe. My search led me at last here. To you and Aunt Maddy. Since she was the eldest, I went to her first.”

“Wait, are you saying that Aunt Maddy and I are descendants of the people who cursed you?”

He gave a single nod.

Tara pondered that new bit of information and slowed to turn onto the mountain road leading to the cabin. It was more of a deer trail, she thought, as the mini bumped over potholes. A man searching for the key to his salvation coming to the end of his search after a hundred years, would have to be desperate. Tara stopped the car in front of the cabin and shut off the engine.

“Why didn’t you just try to kill us and take the book?” she whispered.

She met his gaze and was immediately swallowed by the longing in his eyes. Companionship, need and hunger swirled in those midnight blue depths. His hand on the back of her neck tightened and he drew her to him. His kiss claimed her as no other she’d ever experienced. His lips parted hers, seeking her tongue to tangle with his own. Heat and passion ignited in her body and she leaned into him, wrapping her arms around his neck to pull him close in the small space of the car.

Each masterful stroke heightened her senses. Her breasts pressed against his chest, the thickness of their clothes and jacket separating them. Where he fierce need to throw herself at him came from, she wasn’t sure. And didn’t care. There was no room for more thought. Just his mouth on hers. His tongue coaxing hers into a rumba of fierce passion.

Gregore cupped her face in his hands, his thumbs softly stroking her cheeks. It felt as if

he savored her. He tasted like sweet honey and Tara wanted more. His hand stroked down the smooth line of her neck, settling at the juncture to her shoulder. She slid one hand up into the thick richness of his hair, curling the dark locks around her fingers to tug him closer.

He gently broke the kiss but stayed in the close breath of space o her lips. “You taste like heaven,” he whispered.

Tara leaned in, brushing her lips once more over his, then settled back into her seat. The gear shift had pressed into her thigh, giving her a slight pain now that her blood wasn’t concentrating elsewhere.

Gregore rubbed at the fogged-up windshield, making a hole large enough to peer into the darkness. Just ahead, the small log cabin lay nestled in the trees. Moonlight glinted off the snow-covered roof in small patches.

Tara had to lean over to see it. The side windows and her side of the windshield didn’t fare any better from their heated kiss. She laughed, feeling like a teenager. “Let’s go before we make an attempt at the backseat.”

She could swear she heard him say he’d be willing to try as she climbed out of the car. She hadn’t been serious about the backseat, but something about being that intimate with the sexy man beside her made her heart pound. In a bed at least. The car was just a concussion waiting to happen.

Tara shook herself mentally. She hadn’t had a relationship in years and she couldn’t start now. Not even with the sexiest man to walk the planet in one hundred fifty year. Or was that for one hundred fifty years?

Grabbing up the lantern, she headed for the cabin. “Get a grip, O’Reilly,” she muttered to herself and then wished her brain didn’t supply a whole list of things for her to get a grip on.

At the front door, she thrust the key in the lock and glared at him.

He cocked an eyebrow in question.

“Every woman you meet turns into a swooning teenager, don’t they?” She clicked on the camping lantern and stepped over the threshold.

“Only the special ones,” he said.

Tara could swear she heard a teasing note in his voice, but when she looked, his face was unreadable. No doubt about it. She had misspoken. Not a teenager. A sex-crazed female who would launch herself at him with the least probable cause.

“All right buddy. Step away from the pheromone treatments. Nothing more to see here.” His rough laughter brought a smile to her face. She suspected that he didn’t laugh enough.

Gregore closed the door and set down the bag of food she’d had in the car since her apartment lit up like a bonfire. At least they’d be useful out here.

He helped her find the circuit breaker and in a couple of minutes she was able to turn on the lamp in the sitting room in front of the fireplace. There was a kitchen with a small table to the left of the door, a sofa in front of the fireplace to the right and a double bed against the wall on an antique frame straight ahead. Beside it was an old armoire. A door leading off to the right led to the bathroom with a clawfoot tub, showerhead, toilet and sink. A single cabin meant only for the occasional respite. Certainly not meant for winter use. The room was freezing.

Gregore inspected the fireplace and tested the chute. Seeming to find all in order, he said, “I’ll go find some wood.”

Tara nodded. “There’s a small wood shed out behind the cabin.”

When he was gone, she went to the armoire and removed sheets, pillows, and several blankets. She almost had the bed made when he returned with an armload of dry wood and

kindling.

“There used to be a woodshed behind the cabin,” he said, setting the wood onto the grate. “Now there is a large wood pile in a slight resemblance to a woodshed. Covered in snow of course. The dry stuff was underneath what used to be the walls.”

Tara spread the second blanket over the bed. “Thank you. I’ll mention it to Aunt Maddy.”

He had a blaze going with the skill of an Eagle Scout. Tara joined him and held her cold fingers out to the warmth.

Gregore cleared his throat. “I’ll sleep on the couch.”

She nodded and told him to take a pillow for himself. He smiled and went to get another blanket from the armoire. How was it that things didn’t ever seem to be awkward between them? Her last two boyfriends, which were before she’d become a cop, had been nothing like this. And her instincts, though screaming of danger, were talking about something altogether different than what she was used to.

The man was dangerous with a capital-friggin-D!