

SET IN STONE

Written by

Simon Dales

Groes Gwtta, Prion, Denbighshire LL16 4RU  
07528 334 117

FADE IN:

EXT. DINORWIG SLATE QUARRY - NORTH WALES - DUSK

A sweeping landscape.

Mountains of blue-grey slate dominate the skyline. Fog snakes through broken machinery, clinging to rusted chains, dormant tracks. The silence is heavy.

EXT. VILLAGE ROAD - DUSK

A narrow, winding road cuts through the hills. Rain beads on the windshield of a slow-moving car.

INT. CAR DUSK

THE DAD, early 60's, quiet and weathered, grips the steering wheel. His face is tired but intent.

EXT. HOLIDAY COTTAGE - EVENING

The Dad parks beside a stone-walled cottage. Moss clings to the roof slates. The wind whistles through nearby trees.

He steps out slowly, stretches. Opens the boot and removes a small holdall.

He stands at the porch. Looks at the keyhole. Then down.

INT. HOLIDAY COTTAGE - MOMENTS LATER

The Dad enters, flicks on the light. The bulb flickers briefly before settling.

The interior is simple. Wooden beams. A fireplace with a few logs stacked beside it.

On a table, there is a selection of maps and leaflets for attractions in the local area, with a handwritten note saying, 'Enjoy your stay!'.

The Dad removes his coat, hangs it carefully. Walks to the window and peers out at the faint outline of the slate quarry in the distance.

## EXT. HOLIDAY COTTAGE - NIGHT

A kettle steams inside. The Dad stands outside smoking, cupping the flames of a match. He exhales and watches the smoke disappear into the darkness.

## INT. HOLIDAY COTTAGE - NIGHT

A fire crackles.

The Dad sits at the table. He unzips a small rucksack and packs methodically:

- A wool hat
- Gloves
- Two metal lunchboxes
- Two enamel mugs
- A flask
- A bottle of whisky

He pauses. He adds a folded map. Taped on the inside cover is a worn paper label: 'DINORWIG CIRCULAR ROUTE 1998.'

The Dad smoothes it flat with his palm.

## EXT. DINORWIG SLATE QUARRY - NORTH WALES - SUNRISE

Close up, abstract shots of the slate, as the sun breaks and covers them in shadows and an orange glow.

## EXT. QUARRY PATH - MORNING

The Dad walks along, rucksack on his back, boots crunching on the gravel. The morning is overcast and fog covers the slate.

By the side of the path, an old wooden bench leans under the weight of time. An elderly FARMER sits there, still as stone, his face carved by weather and years. He watches the Dad approach.

THE DAD

Bore da.

FARMER

Bore da. Rydych chi wedi dychwelyd.

THE DAD  
Sorry – I don't speak much Welsh.

FARMER  
I said – you've come back. I've  
seen you before.

The Dad pauses, eyes lifted toward the slate mountains that loom like memories.

THE DAD  
I come every year. My son...

FARMER  
I know who you are. I remember.

(A beat)

FARMER (CONT'D)  
This land doesn't let go easily.

A gust of wind stirs the silence. A single leaf flutters across the stones, catching in a crack.

THE DAD  
No, it doesn't.

The Farmer studies him for a moment, then turns his gaze back to the horizon.

The Dad lingers, then moves on – his figure swallowed slowly by the mist as he walks toward the quarry.

EXT. DINORWIG QUARRY – MIDDAY

The Dad kneels beside a flat rock ledge. He lays out the two lunchboxes and mugs.

The wind lifts, slate dust drifting.

From the distance – faint – a voice. Almost swallowed by the wind.

The Dad pauses. He turns.

A solitary silhouette approaches through the haze, framed by crumbling stone and stillness.

As it draws closer, the form becomes clear: *THE SON*.

THE SON  
(Calling out)  
Dad!

With a burst of energy, The Dad stands up, and walks towards him.

They reach each other. The son, early 30's, is smiling faintly. A quiet embrace. Firm. Wordless, at first.

THE SON (CONT'D)

Dad!

THE DAD

It's so good to see you.

THE SON

When did you get here?

THE DAD

Yesterday. I'm in the same cottage as before. And you? how long have you been here?.

THE SON

Ages.

A pause hangs between them, the wind passing softly through the slate around them.

#### EXT. SLATE QUARRY - EARLY AFTERNOON

The Dad and The Son walk side by side along crumbling stone walls, their voices low, occasionally breaking into laughter. Their steps are slow, unhurried - two figures suspended in a shared moment.

They peer into the shadows of abandoned buildings - rusted tools, collapsed beams, echoes of another time. Dust motes hang in the shafts of light.

They climb higher, the path narrowing, until they reach a ledge overlooking the valley below - slate, forest, and distant sea unfolding beneath them.

They sit, side by side, unwrapping lunch. They gesture, reminisce, relive memories half-spoken.

Laughter. Genuine. Easy. The Dad watches his son as he talks - something in his eyes both present and faraway.

#### EXT. SLATE QUARRY - LATE AFTERNOON

They sit on a low slate wall, the vast quarry behind them. The sky is soft with the dimming light.

The Dad gazes into the distance, quiet. The Son idly tosses small shards of slate down the slope, listening to them click and skip.

I still think about that time your mum lost the car keys out here.  
Somewhere in the stones.

The Son chuckles, already remembering.

THE SON  
We spent *hours* retracing every step.

Their laughter builds – genuine, infectious.

THE DAD  
You actually remember that?

THE SON  
How could I forget? We must've turned over every rock in the whole quarry.

They're laughing hard now – the kind of laugh that comes from deep familiarity.

THE DAD  
And they were sitting right there... On the wall by the entrance. A few metres from the car.

Their laughter fades slowly. The breeze picks up a little, rustling the loose slate at their feet.

A moment of quiet.

THE SON  
How's Mum?

The Dad takes a breath before answering, voice softer.

THE DAD  
She's alright. Going away with her friends this weekend. Keeps busy.

THE SON  
She didn't want to come here?

A beat. The Dad hesitates.

THE DAD  
No... she said she wanted us to have time – just the two of us.

The Son nods, looking down.

THE SON  
I miss her.

A moment of quiet.

THE SON (CONT'D)  
I hate how things ended up between  
us.

The Dad watches him, something unsaid in his eyes.

THE DAD  
It wasn't your fault, son.

The wind moves again. The quarry, still and vast, seems to listen.

EXT. GRASSY PATCH NEXT TO THE QUARRY - EVENING

A small campfire crackles beside a scatter of slate boulders. Shadows flicker against the stone. The sky is turning into night.

The Dad and The Son sit opposite each other, faces half-lit by flame. Between them, an almost empty bottle of whisky rests in the gravel.

The Son absently pokes at the fire with a stick. The Dad, visibly loosened by drink, picks up the bottle and raises it.

THE DAD  
You sure you don't want one?

The Son glances up, his face tightening.

THE SON  
No, thanks... Still not cutting  
back then?

The Dad shrugs, pours himself a heavy measure into a tin mug, and sets the bottle down with a dull clink.

THE DAD  
You sound just like your mother.

THE SON  
Maybe that's not a bad thing. Can't  
be easy for her.

The Dad lets out a short laugh - more breath than sound - and knocks back the whisky.

THE DAD  
That's rich... you defending your  
mother.

THE SON  
What's that supposed to mean?

A pause. The Dad eyes him, wavering slightly.

THE DAD  
I just think it's funny.  
Considering all the pain you've put  
her through.

The fire pops. The Son stops stirring the embers.

THE SON  
You're still blaming me.

THE DAD  
I'm still hurting.

The Dad leans forward, voice low, bitter.

THE DAD (CONT'D)  
She doesn't come here anymore. You  
know why? Because it breaks her.  
(beat)  
She says it feels like punishment –  
just being near this place.

THE SON  
Maybe she's right.

The Dad says nothing. He finishes his drink, then slowly lies  
back on the rock, eyes fluttering shut.

THE DAD  
Maybe she is.

The fire crackles on, the shadows swallowing their silence.

EXT. QUARRY - DAWN

A series of close-up shots:

Sharp edges of slate.

Cold, glinting surfaces.

Cracks, dust, layers of deep time.

Abstract. Brutal. Beautiful.

The Dad lies sprawled on a slab of rock. His head rests awkwardly. His eyes flicker open – slow, pained, dry.

He winces, sits up.

Silence, except for a faint wind moving through stone.

He blinks at the landscape, disoriented. Tries to piece it together.

The cold remains of the night before:

A blackened patch of ash.

His rucksack, slouched on its side.

The half-empty whisky bottle.

He turns.

The spot where The Son had sat – empty.

Suddenly alert, a jolt of panic.

THE DAD  
(Shouting)  
Son!

He scrambles to his feet, dizzy, scanning the area.

He stumbles across uneven ground, over fallen slate, through broken ruins.

THE DAD (CONT'D)  
(Louder)  
Son!

No answer.

Eventually, he climbs a steep mound of slate. Reaching the top, he sees a narrow ledge ahead.

Sitting at the edge – still, facing the valley – is The Son.

The Dad approaches, carefully. He lowers himself beside him, breath catching.

THE DAD (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry about last night.  
(Beat)  
I didn't mean what I said.

The Son doesn't turn.

## THE SON

I know.

(quietly)

But you don't have to keep  
punishing yourself.

A long silence.

The Dad turns to him, eyes wet.

## THE DAD

I want to.

(Beat)

Letting go feels harder than  
holding on.

The Son looks out at the endless grey, then slowly turns and embraces his father.

The Dad holds on tightly, trembling - holding in the tears.

The wind picks up again. The quarry, silent and ancient, watches.

## INT. CAR - MORNING

Through the windscreen, The Dad emerges from the cottage, bag slung over his shoulder. The early light is pale, the village still.

He opens the driver's door, places the bag in the passenger seat, and lowers himself into the car.

He sits for a moment, staring ahead.

Then: he pulls out his phone, taps a contact, and places it on the dashboard. It rings.

A voice answers - THE MUM.

## THE MUM

Hello?

## THE DAD

Hello, love.

## THE MUM

How are you? Are you ok?

The Dad exhales. He struggles to respond.

THE DAD

I...

(Beat)

I don't really know.

A moment of silence.

THE MUM

You know you need to stop going  
there. It won't bring him back.

He nods slowly, though she can't see him.

THE DAD

I know. I just want to fee close to  
him.

EXT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

The car engine turns over.

It pulls away from the cottage, rolling slowly down the narrow  
village road - the same one he arrived on.

As it disappears around the bend, the wind picks up. A faint  
gust moves through the trees.

FADE OUT.

THE END