

Cameo

by Angie

Vincent held the old blanket in his hands, stroking it gently between thumb and forefinger, lost in a memory he could barely comprehend. It wasn't for the first time, but the piece of fabric, all he had from his first days of life, fascinated him. He was very glad Father had preserved it.

It was very old, of course, and he had been a newborn, and anything he might remember was probably suspect. At the very least it would be pure, basic emotion and need, nothing he could put a name to, a speculation of sensation only.

The fabric was a much-washed flanelette, white with a tiny flower motif, soft, probably ripped from the less worn border of an old bed sheet, because it had a finished edge. He ran that through his fingers, following it along its length, his eyes closed, trying to imagine its history, how it had come to be wrapped around him.

His fingers near the corner and felt a hard object. He stopped, his concentration broken. He lifted the fabric, his eyes seeking to see what his fingers had discovered.

There! Caught inside the thick overlapping seam of the "v" formed by the corner, was ... something oval. He worried at the fabric, trying to free the thing, but not wanting to break it. There was something sharp sticking from it, which made it catch. Frustrated, he finally used the nail on his forefinger to slice open the stitching and gently winkled the object out.

It was a tiny metal oval, with a small pin sticking out of the centre back. He had seen Catherine wearing something similar. An earring! Turning it over, his eyes opened wide, and he gasped. He had to take a deep breath after he realize he had been holding it. He stared at the object in his palm in disbelief.

It was the cameo of a face in profile, pale ivory on a pink background. He gazed at the face portrayed and closed his eyes, briefly, to gain some equilibrium. This was no ordinary woman, although he was sure she was female by the hair style. There seemed to be ringlets down the back. On top of the head were two points, probably a hair ribbon, he guessed.

But the facial structure was unlike that of anyone he knew, in fact of anyone human. The deep set eyes were similar to his own, and the straight, understated nose, with a chin that formed almost a right angle, were exactly like his own profile. There were even clear indications of his high cheekbones and muzzle.

He regarded the blanket again and realized the earring must have been put there deliberately, worked into the corner so that it wouldn't fall out. Repeated washings by the tunnel community had probably embedded it securely in the soft fabric.

He closed his hand around the cameo. He moved onto his bed, made himself comfortable cross-legged, and closed his eyes. He had some skill in psychometry, although he didn't use it

often. He cleared his mind and concentrated on the earring.

There! He sensed an intense focus, a careful carving of the cameo from that of another face entirely. Yes, there was satisfaction at the completion. And then he sensed stress, moderated by determination, as the earring was firmly embedded in the blanket.

Vincent looked at the cameo again. It was doubtful he would learn any more from it, but it confirmed that it had not happened into that corner by accident, and that he, or someone, had been meant to find it. And that it was been placed there with love.

It didn't answer all his many questions, in fact it generated many more, but it did confirm that it was likely his mother who had wrapped him in the blanket, and that she wanted him found. That was a great deal, he decided, given his complete lack of knowledge otherwise.

He opened the pouch he wore around his neck, then ripped off a tiny piece of the blanket. He looked at it more closely, and realized the flower, which had a green stem and a single leaf, was probably a rosebud. That made him smile as he wrapped the tiny cameo in it then placed it carefully into his pouch.

He would show it to Catherine and Father soon, but at present he wanted to think about this, bask in the new knowledge.

Vincent lay back on his bed and closed his eyes again, his mouth turned upward into a slight smile as he saw the tiny cameo in his mind's eye.

Such a little thing, yet so wonderful!



End

(Note: the cameo was found in a 'grab bag' of costume jewelry bought from a thrift store. It is exactly as seen above – the digital camera making the image even easier to see.)