

# Waking Dreams

by Angie

*“We are awake while sleeping, while waking sleep.”*

- Montaigne

Vincent found himself unable to sleep ... again.

The last few weeks had been busy. He had helped Catherine move some of her belongings below, while the rest went by truck to the brownstone. He had felt her frustrations as she packed and dealt with the moving company.

People in his world occasionally shifted belongings if they married, or added a crib if they had a baby, but never moved everything unless there was a disaster. He had never realized how much work – and stress – was involved in moving in the world above. But that was over now and couldn't be the cause of his insomnia.

On the face of it, he had never been happier, he mused. The new intimacy he and Catherine shared defied description. Their bond had blossomed with their lovemaking, and they indulged as often as they could, unashamedly making up for lost time. That didn't tire him out the way it had in the beginning. Any unaccustomed muscles were now well-toned, he thought wryly.

Catherine's breathing was soft and even and he could feel her contented heart beat underlying his own. He had followed her into that dream space often in the past two months, as tired and happy as she was. But during the last couple of weeks, he had been increasingly restless.

Was he perhaps unsuited to a life above ground? Here in the brownstone, there was no escaping the pulse of New York. Even in the wee hours, as now, the hum of traffic was ever present. Every so often, in the distance, came a loud series of clangs. He could not imagine what made this racket, but it didn't seem to disturb Catherine - or presumably others on this quiet street.

There were noises in the world below too, of course, but at this time of night the clattering subway trains were still and the only sounds were their own – the sentries tapping their reports on the pipes. No hard labour like chamber carving or pipe maintenance could be done at night – the sound travelled too well through rock and would have attracted unwanted attention.

Was the lack of silence keeping him awake? He could go down to his chamber and sleep where he had spent almost all his life. Catherine had insisted he not give up his chamber, and they had spent many nights in his bed while the brownstone was being renovated. But even there, with her beside him, he had woken at odd hours of the night and been unable to get back to sleep.

He could go for a walk, but was reluctant to do so. Catherine might wake and worry about him. She had done so much to make his life more normal – the brownstone being the cornerstone of that strategy – and she did not deserve to awaken and find him gone.

Vincent sighed quietly. He did miss his nighttime forays into the city, walking those alleys and dark places, observing this city from shadows and atop building roofs, enjoying the moon phases, seeing the ghostly clouds of steam from the old road grates. He liked to feel the rain on his face, smell the

scents and stenches – all things missing in the tunnels. It was the beauties, untidiness and complete unpredictability of the city which drew him back. In one of those moments, in the park he knew so well, he had found Catherine - and his life had changed.

Life below was of necessity structured. Their survival depended on it. No one was truly free, without limits, just as Catherine had once told him. However, his own freedom, even limited to the dark hours of night, defined him. He still thought of the night as his. Despite his new life above, he needed that world.

Catherine would never try to forbid him that freedom, but he knew she would worry about him, just as Father did, and for the same reasons. He did not want anyone to worry. What was he to do?

Then it came to him. He had not spent much time below lately. Between his sickness and recovery, and the work needed on the brownstone, which had become a community project, he had been too busy. He had forsaken his usual duties, and while no one had complained, he knew those duties had been done by others. Perhaps it was time he resumed them. Catherine had her work in her new home office, so he should have his own as well.

He needed the stimulation, he realized suddenly. He could not spend all day reading, writing in his diary, cleaning house - or even cooking. He had never thought he would complain of too much leisure time, but it was so.

He needed to visit their elderly helpers, to help with repairs, and to resume his classes with the children. In other words, it was time he again contributed to the world which had made life possible for him.

The brownstone had expanded that safe world, but it was still a cage of sorts. The garden was wonderful, allowing him to enjoy the sunshine and the colours of daylight for the first time – but it was a protected and private place, as were the tunnels. He could not use the front door, be seen at any window, or answer the telephone. No, his life was still circumscribed by what he was. That would never change – and he accepted that.

So it was important that he gave the life he had been gifted, that so many protected, unselfishly. Catherine would understand.

He looked at her now, and with a start, realized she was awake and watching him. Why had he not realized that?

She smiled. “You looked so deep in thought, I didn’t want to disturb you,” she whispered, guessing his unspoken question. “What is it, my love?”

Vincent turned on his side and placed a hand over her heart, stretching his fingers over her breast. He felt her thrill of pleasure and marvelled again that she could love his hands as she did.

“I need to get back to work,” he said quietly.

“Of course you do.” Catherine put her hand over his and stroked it.

“You knew?”

“I guessed. You’ve been a little reserved lately. I’ve kept you so busy here, night and day, that you’re feeling a little lost now that we’re settled in. I’m sorry that this upset your usual routine so much.”

“I didn’t realize what was missing until now,” Vincent admitted.

Catherine’s mouth twitched.

“You’ve had a lot of changes in your life recently, Vincent. Even in my world, when people move or get new jobs, changes take a while to assimilate. And you’re not used to big changes like this. Your world is so ... different. Its days are dictated by what needs to be done. You share everything – far more than anyone in my world. We keep our work life and home life separate. Your world will always be a healthy mixture of both. You need that.”

“Yes. Yet you did not tell me this. Why?”

“Because I know you, Vincent. You have to think things through your own way. You always have.”

He chuckled and nuzzled her ear.

“Yes. You know me too well,” he said softly into it.

“Never TOO well, my love.”

She put her hand on his chest and moved it slowly downwards. He arched his back as she reached her goal and then captured her with his legs, then turned onto his back, carrying her with him. He gloried in the feel of her touching as much of him as possible. She was smiling, her eyes dark with love, their bond humming with desire.

“This change has been easiest,” he whispered.

“And the most satisfying,” she returned, dropping her head to kiss him on the lips.

There was no need to say more.

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