



"Love Tidbits"

by Judith Nolan

Her Touch

The desolation of loss washed over him. He'd finally returned to the tunnels, thereby beginning his nightly ritual. He'd found her coat neatly folded in his chamber. He held it close, the candlelight making their love live again; the candelabra creating sympathetic shadows. Then, as he'd done these many weeks, he dropped his face into the fabric and wept his tormented regret.

"Catherine, I love you..." he whispered. He sighed over what he'd lost... his friend, his love, his soul...

"Vincent..."

He jerked erect – she *was* there, *before him* – her questing hand smoothing his tangled hair – caressing his tear-wet cheek...

Their Love

“I remember that night so clearly.” Catherine smiled. “As if it were only yesterday.” She smoothed the cover of the old book with reverent care. “We read the last chapter of *Great Expectations*. Out here ... in the dark.”

“And yet it’s been five years...” Vincent leaned his hips against the balcony wall beside her. “So, now?”

“We go Below, you and I.” She took his hand in hers. “That’s who I am now, and where I’ll live. Always...”

Vincent tilted his head, looking down at their entwined fingers. “*I saw no shadow of another parting from her...*” he quoted softly.

His Hand

Extending one hand tentatively — hesitatingly — he almost withdraws. Then, gathering courage on a deeply-drawn sigh, continues the motion. He doesn’t wish to wake his slumbering subject of observation, but the urge to caress the smooth, downy skin of her flushed cheek is irresistible. His clawed fingertip settles, light as the feathering kiss of a butterfly — but it’s enough. Green eyes

flicker open and he finds himself drowning once more in their dancing light.

Catherine smiles, a slow, knowing curving of her mouth that speaks of pleasures given, and received, in the dark warmth of the recent night. “Good morning, Vincent...”

His Friend

“You, my friend. Eh, Vincent?”

“Yes, Mouse, I am your friend.”

“And you. Always be my friend. Right, Vincent?”

“Yes, Mouse, always...”

“No-one better. Good to Mouse. Trusts Mouse. Right, Vincent?”

“Thank you, Mouse, yes.”

“Okay, good. Okay, fine. Mouse happy.”

“Then I’m happy too.”

“And Catherine. She Mouse’s friend too. Right?”

“That’s right, Mouse. Catherine is your good friend too.”

“And you won’t go away. Will you, Vincent? Not ever.”

“No, Mouse I will never leave you. Nor will Catherine.”

“Catherine... I like Catherine. She really pretty lady. You think so too, Vincent.”

“Yes, Mouse, I think so too.”

His Father

“One day I’m going to beat you, Vincent.” Father scowled at the chess board.

“Perhaps it would be easier on your blood pressure if you soothed your chagrin with the knowledge you are an excellent teacher.” Vincent removed his opponent’s queen smoothly.

“Don’t try to butter me up!” Father reared back. “I’ll not be mollified with platitudes. This is *my* game. I *should* be winning!”

“Yes, Father.” Vincent smiled.

“Smirk all you like,” Father snapped. “Wait until your own son shows you up like a novice.”

“I am looking forward to that.” Vincent’s gaze became unfocussed and his smile widened.

Their Son

Catherine entered Vincent’s chamber looking for her son, intending to give the child his overdue bath. But she halted in the doorway, smiling. Her sleeping husband was stretched supine on the bed, with a slumbering Jacob pinned securely to his broad chest between his strong hands. They both looked supremely peaceful and content.

What is it about watching a sleeping man cuddling a baby? Catherine sighed as a rush of love quickened her heartbeat. She had no wish to disturb serenity of the moment. But then she looked at the grubby nature of her son's face and knew she must...

Their World

The hidden world of the tunnels slumbered. No-one stirred but Vincent, and the occasional rat which scurried a wide berth. Unperturbed, Vincent walked in deep contentment, head bowed in thought.

Catherine... his great heart whispered. They'd come so far; endured so much. *And now...* "My wife..." He smiled. "*Grow old along with me. The best is yet to be...*" he quoted Robert Browning softly, his heart singing its own song of love and acceptance for everything that had come to pass between them. Now there could be a new tomorrow for both of them; and nothing stood in their way...

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