

White Satin Night

by Angie

*The spirit within nourishes, and mind instilled ...
activates the whole mass and mingles ...”*
- Virgil

In the way of such things, Vincent became aware of a song. He heard it from the windows of apartment tenements he passed in the course of his nightly wanderings, sometimes from a radio faintly in the distance, gradually diminishing in volume. He heard it, registered it, but gave no particular thought to it, since he could not hear the words.

Then Kanin began humming it one day as they were resting from excavating a new chamber. He and Livy had just married and the chamber would be his, when it was completed.

The tune was not unpleasant. He supposed it was a folk song. Curiosity got the better of him, finally.

“What are you humming, Kanin?”

Kanin regarded his friend and then broke into a smile.

“Ah Vincent, it’s an old folk song, and this is its 20th anniversary. Do you want to hear the words?”

“Please.”

Kanin sang the song softly,

*“Nights in white satin
Never reaching the end
Letters I’ve written
Never meaning to send
Beauty I’ve always missed
With these eyes before*

Kanin paused and Vincent was silent. He had said good-bye to Catherine just last night, after a whirlwind of adventures, beginning with him finding her almost dead in the Park nine months ago. She had changed his life in ways he would not have believed possible.

Finally, after months which dragged chain-like around his heart, he had ventured above to her balcony, hoping to see her, one last time. He had sensed she was well and getting on with her life,

She had greeted him in a satin nightdress and robe - or at least he supposed it was satin. On her balcony it shimmered in the reflected city lights, and she seemed ethereal almost.

He had written in his journal, just after she had returned above. The entry had been a letter to Catherine, as he tried to make sense of his feelings. It was a letter he would never send - just as the song said.

Vincent swallowed, lost for a few moments in memory.

Yes, Beauty was something he had missed in his life, at least as it applied to women. The words struck hard and his heart fluttered in despair.

He realized, belatedly that Kanin was looking at him, his expression concerned.

“Is there more?” he asked Kanin, when he found his voice, at last.

“Oh yes,” Kanin replied and continued to sing quietly.

*Just what the truth is
I can't say any more
'Cause I love you
Yes I love you
Oh how I love you.” **

“And that’s how I feel about Livy,” Kanin confessed quietly.

He suspected that Vincent also understood the emotions behind the song, but didn’t inquire. He hoped his friend had found someone at last. He wondered if it might be the woman they had been hearing about, the one they had cared for months ago, that Father had apparently warned Vincent to avoid.

That last little bit of gossip had travelled via word of mouth, rather than the pipes, partly to avoid embarrassment to Vincent, but mostly to prevent Father from knowing just how much of his conversation was overheard.

The tunnels seemed to have listening corners, something Kanin knew existed in other places in the world, including Grand Central Station. The pipe conduits were no doubt the reason for this. But in their closed little society, it was accepted that there were few secrets. Everyone was dependent on everyone else, everyone was family. And Vincent, of course, was at their centre.

“Thank you,” Vincent said at last, and rose with his chisel in his hand, determined to work and forget.

“You’re welcome,” Kanin replied, getting up as well, resigned to having to wait longer to learn any more.

Catherine walked briskly down the sidewalk towards the DA’s office. A hot dog vendor had a radio playing a local pop station. She paused as she heard the familiar tune, one she hadn’t heard since she was a teenager. Of course, she calculated quickly, it must be 20 years old!

She had been hearing it here and there for the past week, but only now, standing on the sidewalk in front of her office building, the smell of hot dogs in her nostrils, did the words suddenly sink in. She walked on and sat down on a bench in front of the building. She needed to collect her thoughts before facing her boss.

*“Gazing at people some hand in hand
Just what I’m going through they can’t understand
Some try to tell me thoughts they cannot defend
Just what you want to be you will be in the end”*

The words could have been written for her. She knew them by heart, as who didn't in her generation? But never had they meant as much as they did now. Now it was more than just a catchy tune.

Her life had changed dramatically nine months ago. She had been slashed and left for dead in the Park, then rescued by the most unlikely man she would ever meet.

Her boss, Joe, would certainly not understand what she was going through. She was quite aware of what he thought of her, a rich deb do-gooder. And not a terribly clever one, she thought ruefully, having failed to protect a witness and almost got herself killed.

The carnage in the brownstone had taken some explaining, but her presence at a particular time could not be proven. The puzzle was not considered urgent, given that the assailants each had a long rap sheet. The general consensus was that the City was better off without them. Catherine did not reveal that she had recognized two of them from the assault on her which had changed her life.

She knew that an older detective had sworn to discover the mystery and its connection to the world below the streets, but had hit a blank wall - literally. The wall she and Vincent had escaped through now led nowhere except to a dank, foul sewer and a manhole.

She was not surprised. The tunnel people would long ago have developed ways to discourage unwanted attention. She was sure they had done this before to protect their world - the world which had saved her life. She had done what she could to help - by playing dumb.

What would her friends think of the man who had inspired her to turn over this new leaf? She knew some of her social set had their doubts about her sanity, giving up her cushy job in her father's firm to slog long hours in the DA's office.

But they couldn't know the decision was a logical one, from her new perspective. And she could never tell them.

"And I love you

Yes I love you

Oh how I love you

Oh how I love you"

Did she love, Vincent? She wasn't yet sure, but she certainly loved the idea of him, the way he hugged her, the way he looked at her, as if she were precious, yet strong and principled. She had never had a man look at her that way. It was ... inspiring, energizing. She wanted to do more to prove she deserved it. She wanted Vincent to know what he had done for her. The DA's office gave her that opportunity. She had a lot to learn, but she would prevail. She had learned determination from Vincent as well.

Later, after a long day, Catherine kicked off her shoes, undressed and had a quick shower. Then, subconsciously, she put on a long-sleeved white satin nightgown and its matching robe.

Padding out to the living room in a pair of low fluffy slippers, she turned on her stereo and plonked herself down on the couch facing her balcony. She leaned back and closed her eyes. She opened them quickly when she heard the beginning bars of the song, then with a slight shrug that was all she was willing to concede to the Fates, she closed her eyes again.

She let her head rest against the back of the couch and slumped a little to relax, letting the tune soak into her.

*“Nights in white satin
Never reaching the end
Letters I’ve written
Never meaning to send
Beauty I’ve always missed
With these eyes before
Just what the truth is
I can’t say any more*

*‘Cause I love you
Yes I love you
Oh how I love you
Oh how I love you
‘Cause I love you
Yes I love you
Oh how I love you
Oh how I love you”*

Catherine smiled to herself. Slowly, she came out of her reverie and realized there was a Vincent-shaped silhouette outside her balcony door and she saw it raise a hand and tap lightly.

She rose quickly and went to him, bodily flinging open the door and into his arms, almost in one motion. They both sighed. Vincent spoke first.

“I’m sorry, Catherine, I didn’t mean to disturb you. I know you’re tired. I came, meaning only to wish you good-night and pleasant sleep. Then I heard that song, and had to stay to listen to it.”

“You’ve heard it before, Vincent?”

“Yes, often just recently. It has been haunting me.”

Catherine laughed. “Me too. It was released 20 years ago. Imagine, Vincent. What a different person I was then. What a different person I was just nine months ago!”

“I also, Catherine. Everything changed when I found you.”

He sighed and held her closer. It was a chilly night.

Catherine shifted a little and looked up at his face. She wished she had put on higher heels, but his feet were close to hers, so close she could touch them, and that was a lovely feeling.

He looked down at her and gave her a soft smile.

“*‘What the truth is, I can’t say anymore’.*” she quoted softly. “But I think we will find out in the near future, Vincent.”

“I suspect I already know,” he whispered back. Her satin gown was a whisper of coolness under his hands and he spread his fingers to enjoy the feel of it.

Catherine’s heart skipped a beat at his hands on her back, but she said nothing. It was yet all too new to her. This man, this wonderful man, held her as if nothing could come between them. She felt a oneness with him that was entirely new to her. She couldn’t even begin to analyze it. Instead, she decided, she would be patient and let her heart catch up with her brain - or vice versa.

“You are tired, Catherine,” he said at last, as he moved his hands a little further apart, touching her only gently now, his arms prepared to release her from under his enveloping cloak.

“Yes, but now I’ll sleep well, thanks to you,” she murmured.

Reluctantly, she pulled away again. Just as reluctantly, he let his arms fall from her.

“Thank you for coming,” she said at last. “I’m so glad you know that song.”

“It speaks to me, to ... now,” he admitted.

“Yes, me too. Funny, it has taken me 20 years to appreciate it.”

“Perhaps its time had come for us, Catherine,” he suggested quietly.

“I think so, Vincent. There can be no other reason, can there?”

“No.”

She turned and stepped through her door and regarded him.

“The truth will find us, Vincent. I believe that.”

“Yes. Good-night, Catherine.”

“Good-night, Vincent.”

He turned and clambered over her balcony, grabbing onto the fire escape. Then he was gone, a part of the night, a myth wrapped in a cloak of mystery.

She closed the door and prepared herself for sleep. She was smiling.

Inevitably, given the nature of the song, she thought of lovers and Valentine’s Day, coming soon. This time she looked forward to it as never before.

END

* Moody Blues – Nights In White Satin (1967)