



The Beast You Feed

By Barbara Anderson

“How can you even look at me?” Vincent asked.

Looking into his anguished eyes, Catherine answered, “Because I know you. I know who you are.”

“You don’t know me,” he insisted, shaking his head and looking away, overcome by guilt and self-loathing.

Trying to reach out to him with love, she whispered, “Vincent, there are dark places in all of us.”

Even now he could feel that part of himself still savoring the glory of the kills. It shamed and disgusted him. “A part of me feeds in that darkness ... and I am lost in it,” he admitted bitterly.

Beauty and the Beast Season 2 Episode 11

Vincent was already halfway there when Devin caught up with him.

The little squealer isn’t going to get out of it that easily. “You are going to pay for this you little snitch,” Devin muttered to himself as he hurried to catch up with his little brother. He had never been this angry at Vincent, but he was sick and tired of always being the one that Father singled

out for punishment. *Why is everything always my fault?* he wondered. *That little 'Goody Two-Shoes' never gets in trouble. This time he's going to pay ...*

By the time Vincent had reached the age of ten he had already begun to explore the deeper reaches of the tunnels, much to Father's chagrin. Father had strictly forbidden all of the children to go past the safety of the tunnel perimeters without permission or supervision. There were too many dangers above and below the main living quarters. But Vincent was restless and as Devin and the other boys were given more and more freedom to go Above, Vincent had often been left to his own devices Below, feeling as if his friends had deserted him. Hurt and lonely and bored, what was he supposed to do? Stay in the nursery with all of the babies?

How he wished he were a normal boy and could go Above with his friends and play in the park in the sunshine or ride the carousel or buy a hotdog from the vendor in the park. Sure, Devin sometimes brought one back for him, but they were always cold by the time he got them and the buns were soggy. He wondered how much better they would taste fresh and steaming hot.

Even though Father did his best to keep the boy occupied by teaching him to play chess, Father's companionship could not assuage the pain and loneliness Vincent felt each time his friends left him behind. No one seemed to understand.

Vincent was frightened by the black feelings that seemed to well up in him during these lonely times. And as the darkness inside of him grew, he instinctively sought out the deeper reaches of the tunnels.

Was he seeking the darkness within himself, or was he hiding from it? At the time, not even Vincent knew the answer to that. Maybe he never would. All he knew was that there were times when he needed the solitary places and craved the darkness. It called to him, it comforted him, it embraced him and he began to feel a kinship with it.

This affinity for the darkness was something Vincent kept to himself. Even at such a tender age he somehow knew that even Devin and Father would not, could not, understand.

It was the beginning ... the beginning of his aloneness.

By the time Vincent was twelve he had explored deeper into the tunnels than any other boy he knew, possibly even many of the adults. Father had given up trying to stop him. He surmised that it was safer for him to explore Below than it was for him to venture Above. Father prayed that Vincent would never discover the evils that lurked in the deepest reaches of their world.

Someone had ratted Devin out. As a result Father had confiscated his pocket knife and sentenced him to two weeks of kitchen duty for so blatantly defying him and then lying about it.

Vincent was deeply wounded by Devin's insistence that it had been him. *Doesn't he know I would never do that?* Vincent wondered. But deny it all he would, Devin would not believe

him. Vincent had run from Devin, not out of guilt and not because he was afraid of his big brother (for they had always thought of each other as brothers).

Vincent ran because he was embarrassed that Devin's accusations had made him cry. Crying was for babies and Vincent knew he was too big for such a weakness. If Mitch ever saw him cry, he would never hear the end of it. So he ran. He ran toward the safety and comfort of the darkness he had come to love. A secret place, deep below the catacombs, where he could make everything disappear for a while ... even himself.

He hadn't even gotten as far as the Great Hall when Devin caught up to him.

"Why are you running away, you little snitch? I know it was you who squealed on me. 'Cuz you're jealous! Because I can go Above and you can't!"

"I did not!" Vincent insisted.

"You did so!"

"I did not! It wasn't me."

"Liar! It was so you! It's always you!" Coming closer, Devin loomed over Vincent and began shoving and poking him as he screamed, "I hate you! I hate you! *I hate you!*"

Backed against the wall Vincent finally pushed back with all his strength and Devin fell backwards onto the stone steps.

That's it, Devin thought, that little shrimp isn't going to push me and think he can get away with it. Without another thought he punched Vincent as hard as he could right in the nose. He knew how sensitive Vincent's nose was and he had aimed for it deliberately.

The intense pain shooting through his head stunned Vincent and for a moment he saw stars. He reached up to his face and saw the blood on his hand from his bleeding nose. He wasn't sure exactly what had happened next.

The anger, the darkness and rage, sprang up in him so fast that he lashed out at Devin before he even knew what had happened. He heard the angry snarl escape his throat as his hand struck and slashed Devin's face. It was as if someone else had taken control of him and he was powerless to stop it. Until that moment, Vincent was not even aware that he was capable of such a vicious act. The power of it both horrified and exhilarated him at the same time.

Stunned by Vincent's actions, all Devin could do was look up at his brother in disbelief.

Vincent would never forget the look of shock on Devin's face, the fear in Devin's eyes, the blood dripping from the deep gashes in his cheek. He stood looking at his hands as if truly seeing them for the first time and he was horrified at the sight of them. He was terrified by the rage he could still feel burning within himself, and the desire he still had to lash out. As he fled down to the darkness he was running more from himself than from his brother.

What was that? he wondered, shocked by what he had done. *What am I? What am I? What have I done?* he silently screamed.

Vincent ran blindly into the darkness that he had come to know. His only thought was to bury himself deep in its comforting embrace and never return.

How can I ever return? How can I ever face Devin now that he knows? How can I ever face Father and admit what I have done ... admit what I am? That I'm some kind of ...

Up until that very moment Vincent had always believed he was a boy. Yes, he looked different than the others... but still... a boy. Now he knew... and soon they would all know that he wasn't a boy at all. He was some kind of animal ... a vicious, dangerous beast. Only a beast could sound like that. Only a wild animal could harm another person the way he had harmed his brother.

So he ran. He ran until he had reached his secret place, deep beneath the catacombs. It was a dark chamber not even as big as the room he and Devin shared. It was deep within the earth, only accessible by a long, narrow tunnel. Its inky blackness more profound than any darkness he had ever known. And in that blackness he felt that the earth had swallowed him and he could almost cease to be. In that place he could see nothing and nothing could see him.

In that horrible moment of realization, that is what Vincent realized he wanted. He wanted to be swallowed by the nothingness of that black chamber, he wanted to be buried deep in the earth and be sink into nothing.

Mary was the first to see Devin as he returned to the main tunnels. Even though he was holding his hand to his face, Mary could see that he was bleeding.

"For Heaven Sake, Devin what happened?" Let me see."

Devin resisted her request. "It's nothing, Mary, I'll be all right."

"Let me see it this instant, Devin. Even with your hand over it I can see that it isn't 'nothing.'"

Realizing he would not be able to avoid a visit to the hospital chamber, he slowly removed his hand from his face.

"Oh My!" Mary gasped and quickly led him to Father. "Father, come quickly, Devin's hurt."

As Father immediately went to work, cleaning and stitching the wounds, Devin bore the pain of the disinfectant and the procedure stoically. As Father worked he couldn't help but surmise that somehow Devin had been attacked by some large, vicious animal. *Is there a wild animal roaming here below?* he wondered.

"How did this happen, Devin? What did this to you?"

Devin stubbornly refused to speak or answer any of Father's questions. As Father put the last of the bandages on Devin's face, he stepped back.

“Now, Young Man,” Father began. “I demand that you to tell me how this happened.” He waited. “This instant!”

Devin tried to turn away. How could he tell him what Vincent had done to him? ... what he had done to provoke Vincent?

“You *will not* leave this chamber until I get some answers.” Father could be just as stubborn as Devin.

“Devin! *You must understand that this is an issue of safety.* If there is a wild animal here in the tunnels, others could be in danger. It could be rabid for all we know.”

Devin still didn't speak. He kept seeing the look of sheer terror on Vincent's face just before he fled.

Father tried a different tack. He took a deep breath and spoke calmly, yet deliberately. “Devin, if you don't tell me how this happened, I will be forced to contact Peter and you will have to have rabies shots. *Do you have any idea how painful that is?*”

Devin's stubborn will began to crack. Finally he spoke. “It wasn't an animal, Father.” He couldn't bring himself to look at Father as he said it.

“Then what in Heaven's name was it?”

Reluctantly he spoke. “It was ... Vincent.”

Mary, who had been silently cleaning up after them gasped and looked at Devin in horror.

Father felt the unseen icy hand of fear grip his heart. He took hold of Devin's arm and asked, “Is this the truth, Devin?”

“Yes,” Devin said, but he still couldn't look at Father.

“Devin,” Father insisted. “Please look me in the eye and tell me exactly what happened.”

Devin reluctantly explained the entire incident as Father and Mary listened intently. Every now and then Mary interrupted with an “Oh My!” or “Oh Dear!” But Father was silent until Devin was finished telling it all.

As Devin ended his story, he hung his head. He was beginning to realize that his actions, even if they were justified, had been wrong. He began to wish that Father would yell at him or punish him or something. Anything would be better than the silent, unblinking stare he was receiving.

Father finally spoke. “Just out of curiosity, Devin, may I ask, what made you so sure that it was Vincent who told me about your pocket knife?”

“I have proof,” was all he had to say.

Father nodded. “Mmmmm And exactly what proof would that be?”

Devin hesitated as he began to realize that his source of information might have been somewhat unreliable. "Mitch ... uh ... told me he heard Vincent telling you."

Devin looked up at Father. Father stared back at him with that awful look of disappointment he had seen all too often.

"It wasn't Vincent?"

Father shook his head.

"It was Mitch all along, wasn't it?"

Father didn't reply.

Devin could feel the anger rising in him again. "That little creep," Devin hissed. "I'm gonna make that no good, double-dealing liar pay for this."

He made a move toward the chamber entrance and Father grabbed his arm in an iron grip.

"Let me go, Father!"

"And just where is it that you think you are going to go?"

"I'm gonna make Mitch pay for what he did."

"Isn't that what you already did to Vincent? Didn't you already make Vincent *'pay'*?"

Devin was flustered. "But I was wrong ... it wasn't him."

Father nodded. "Yes, Devin, *you were wrong*. But tell me ... is it right that you should be paid twice?"

Devin stopped to consider Father's words.

"*Did fighting with Vincent solve anything?* Haven't you seen enough blood for one day?"

Father asked.

Devin could feel the anger beginning to ebb and be replaced by a niggling feeling of guilt.

"Where is Vincent?" Father asked.

Devin shook his head. "He ran away after he ..." Devin's voice trailed off as he brought his hand up to his face. The throbbing in the left side of his face was beginning to remind him of what he had done, of the terrible mistake he had made.

"Did you at least see which way he ran?" Father asked, trying to keep the panic out of his voice.

Nodding he answered, "Down ... toward the catacombs."

Father muttered under his breath. "We will have to pull some of the men off of the work site to go and look for him."

"No, Father, I should go. They will never find him, not if he doesn't want to be found ... But I think I can."

Father was silent for a moment.

“Please, Father,” Devin pleaded. “I’m not a baby. I’m sure I can find him. I need to ... do this. I need to make it right. I need to tell him ... I’m ... sorry.”

Father relented. “All right, Devin, but please be careful. It won’t do anyone any good if you get lost too. Do not go anywhere where there are no pipes.”

“Okay.”

“And I expect to hear you check in on the pipes every thirty minutes. Do you understand?”

“I promise, Father.”

Devin ran out of the hospital chamber as fast as he could, before Father had a chance to change his mind.

How long have I been here? Vincent wondered. He had run into this dark chamber, heart broken and mortified by what he had done to his brother. Appalled and disgusted by the realization of what he was, of what he was capable of, he had hidden in the deepest darkest cave he could find.

Once he was sure he was alone and couldn’t be found he had raged in the dark, roaring and pounding the cave walls with his fists, only frightening himself all the more and then finally collapsing on the floor of the stark, black chamber. He then sobbed himself into an exhausted, dejected and hopeless sleep, sure that the only family he had ever known would now, hate him, reject him... or worse seek to destroy him

As he woke his ears immediately perked up as he heard the sound, a rustling and someone breathing. It was too dark in this chamber for even Vincent to see what it was, but he knew he wasn’t alone.

“Who’s there? Who are you? What do you want?” he called into the dark.

“It’s only me, Vincent. Do you know me?” A soft, soothing voice that sounded familiar to him spoke out of the dark.

“Narcissa?”

“Yes, child. I have come watch over you, to protect you ... from the Evil One.”

“You shouldn’t be near me, Narcissa. It’s me, I am the evil one,” he warned.

At his declaration, Narcissa chuckled, “No ... you are not the Evil One... But he waits nearby. He waits for you.”

“You aren’t safe here ... with me,” Vincent cautioned again.

“And why is that, child?”

“Because I could hurt you.” The anguish and fear was clear in his voice. “There is something terrible in me. Something ...”

“Nonsense,” she scoffed. “There is nothing terrible in you, Vincent... nothing that doesn’t exist in us all.”

“No! No, Narcissa! You are wrong!” he insisted. “You don’t know what I can do. You didn’t hear me... you didn’t see what I did. I think ... I think I killed, Devin. I ripped his face off... Oooooohhhh ... what have I done?” He began to sob anew.

Despite Vincent’s warning, Narcissa came close and took the weeping boy in her arms. “There, there, child. You have not killed your brother. He is fine. He is with the Father.”

She let him weep until he could weep no more as he lay his head on the old woman’s shoulder. From time to time his broken heart made him shudder from head to toe.

When he finally became quiet, Narcissa asked. “You should go back home, Vincent. This dark place is no place for you.”

He lifted his head and said, “I can’t go back. I can never go back.”

“And why is that, child?”

“Because, they will all know now. Father will know ... what I really am. They won’t want me. They will be afraid of me, of what I am.”

“And what are you? What are you that they should be afraid?”

“I ... I am something horrible, Narcissa. I am something evil. I hurt Devin. I hurt him bad. I wanted to ...” His crying began again. He sat up and held his hands up to the darkness. “Have you seen my hands, Narcissa?” then realizing that she couldn’t see them, they couldn’t see anything in the pitch blackness, he went on. “They aren’t the hands of a boy No one else has hands like this Only a monster or a beast has hands like mine. That must be what I am.”

“And who tells you this, Vincent? Surely not the Father?”

Vincent shook his head. “No” he sniffled. “But sometimes Mitch does. He says I’m a freak. Sometimes I hear him calling me that when he thinks I’m not around ... ‘the little freak’.”

“He’s right ... that’s what I am ... a little freak.”

“Shhhh ... don’t say such things You might begin to believe them. There are no freaks here ... *not here*, child. If you are here, Below, *here on this earth*, it’s because the creator of the universe means for you to be here. We all have a purpose child.... even you ... *even a crazy old blind woman like me*,” she added

Vincent turned toward her and she laughed.

“Oh, I know what they say about me, child. I know the Father thinks I’m crazy. I know what the children call me. They only say those things because they don’t understand ... *because they fear* ... but you don’t fear me do you, child?”

“No”

“The darkness calls to you, doesn’t it, Vincent?”

He stiffened and the air seemed electrified. “How did you know that?” he whispered. “I’ve never told anyone ... not even Devin.”

“I’ve seen you here, many times. You come here when you are alone and angry and hurt.”

“But how? ... you are ...”

“Blind?”

Vincent nodded.

“I am not completely blind. I can see light and dark and I can see shadows. There are many ways to see, child. Some of the blindest people I know are the ones who have perfect eyesight.”

“I don’t understand.”

“Close your eyes, Vincent... and tell me what you see.”

He wondered why he should close his eyes when he couldn’t see anything with them opened.

“Humor an old woman and close them, Vincent.”

He silently obeyed wondering how she knew what he was thinking.

“Now, tell me what you see.”

“Nothing,” he declared. “It’s too dark.”

“No, child ... tell me what you see ... with your inner eyes. *What do you see?*”

Vincent was quiet for a moment. In the damp, stillness of the chamber he began to feel the compassion radiating from her and covering him like a warm blanket... and then he began to understand, “I see you?”

“And can you see where I am, child?”

Without opening his eyes he faced the sound of her voice and could see in his mind’s eye a light in the general shape of Narcissa. “You are sitting in front of me.”

“Can you see my heart, Vincent? Can you feel me?”

Vincent was quiet and his breathing became steady. There was indeed a steady beat of the light he saw. “You have a good heart, Narcissa, a kind heart.”

“You can *see* that, Vincent. You recognize that because you too have a good heart, and because you are looking at me with your inner eyes. You see me differently than the others. Your inner eyes can see much, child, much more than most.”

He was silent as he allowed her words to sink into his mind. His anxiety and fear began to subside in her presence.

Breaking the silence, Narcissa spoke, “I can see you too, child. Do you want me to tell you what I see?”

“No!” he shouted, suddenly aware that she too could see him with her inner eyes.

“And why not?”

“Because there is something terrible in me, something I can’t let anyone see.”

“That is not true, Vincent. There is nothing terrible in you. Only good.” She tried to assure him.

“No, no! You are wrong,” he said shaking his head. “You don’t know what I did.”

“Vincent, what lives in you ... what has frightened you ... it lives in us all... if you were evil it would not frighten you so. If you were evil, you would not be able to see the good in others.” Her gentle voice continued to soothe his fears. “Do you know the story of The Two Wolves¹, child?”

“No,” he whispered softly.

“It’s an old Indian legend that has been told for generations ... Inside of each of us there live two wolves ... two beasts ... One beast is dark and evil ... he is anger, greed, resentment, inferiority, lies and ego. The other is good and light ... He is joy, peace, love, hope, humility, kindness, empathy, and truth.”

“How can these things exist inside of one person, Narcissa?”

“They can’t, child. But they do, nonetheless, and they must constantly battle one another for control until ultimately one of them wins,” she explained.

“But how do you know which one will win?”

“The Beast that wins, Vincent, is the Beast you choose to feed.” Her kind voice held an unmistakable warning. “When you come down here to this dark place ... you are feeding that dark, evil beast. The one that has frightened you so today. He becomes stronger every time you come here. Is that what you want?” she asked in earnest.

“No ... no I don’t,” he said, recalling what he had done in anger.

“Then you must resist when the darkness calls to you, Vincent. You must seek the light.”

¹ This is attributed to an old Cherokee legend called “Two Wolves” or “The Wolf You Feed”, Author Unknown

“But I can’t go Above ... I can’t go to the light. Father says, I will be caught ... caged like an animal ... that people up there will be afraid of me.”

“There are places, Vincent, even here below ... places where the sun penetrates even the darkness here. Seek those places. But you must also seek for inner light. Seek beautiful things, child. Seek to be kind when others are unkind. Seek to make others happy when you are sad. Try to forgive others when they have hurt you. Fill your mind with goodness Great literature ... beautiful art and music. Surround yourself with beauty and feed the good wolf that lives in you. One day ... one day I promise you, Vincent ... a great light will enter your life, and it will be more beautiful than anything you have ever imagined.”

Vincent wondered if she knew of his dreams to run and play in the sunlight.

“*One day ... you will* return to this dark place, Vincent ... I see that you will have a great battle with the darkness in yourself. Sooner or later everyone does. You must be sure that you are ready when it comes ... you must be sure that the good wolf within you is strong enough to win.”

She paused while Vincent contemplated her words.

“The Evil One, he waits for you in the darkness, Vincent. He wants you for his own.”

“Who is he, Narcissa? Why does he want me?”

“He is no one, child ... not anymore. He was once a man ... much like the Father. But now ... now there is no light left in that one ... the evil in him won that battle long ago and now he slinks in the darkness and seeks to drag everyone into the darkness with him, especially you.”

Her words made little sense to Vincent, nevertheless he tried to remember them.

“Now, child. You come with a crazy old woman and we will get you cleaned up. You cannot go back home looking like this.”

Vincent wondered what she could mean. *How does she know how I look? She is blind and it’s pitch black in here.* Nevertheless Vincent obediently rose and followed the blind woman out of the darkness.

Devin had never liked Narcissa. She made him nervous the way her blind, clouded eyes seemed to see right through him. As he approached her living quarters he could hear her muttering and laughing softly to herself. When he spotted her, she was leaning over a large bowl and sprinkling something into it.

“The one you seek is not here, Devin.”

Creepy old witch, Devin thought to himself. *How does the old bag know I’m even here?*

Narcissa laughed, “I see many things, Devin, many things that others choose to ignore.”

Can she read my mind too? he wondered.

She laughed again. "Some minds are easier to read than others, child."

"I'm not a child. I'm 14 years old."

"Oh yes, I see that now. A man in a boy's body ... or are you a boy in a man's body? Which is it?" she teased.

He was unsure how to answer.

"You are not sure? Let me help you to see ... Only a child seeks to blame others for their own mistakes. Only a child would strike out to harm those weaker than themselves. A man would accept the consequences of his actions. A man would acknowledge his mistakes and seek forgiveness from those he has wronged. Come closer. Look into the waters, Devin, and tell me which one is looking back at you ... is it the man? ... or the child?"

Devin looked cautiously into the bowl. He was intrigued by the distorted reflection in the water.

"Well, Devin ... which is it ... who do you see?"

"I ... I'm not sure."

"The time has come for you to be sure. There is one whose heart is broken because of the childish actions of someone he loves. There is someone who suffers because he fears he has lost his brother forever."

"Where is he, Narcissa? I need to find him. I need to apologize for what I did."

Narcissa smiled, "He has gone back. He is seeking a place of light. A place of peace."

"Where is that?"

"You would know that better than I. Think, child. Where would your brother go for peace?"

Devin turned and ran back the way he had come.

"Vincent" Devin's voice was not far above a whisper.

Vincent lay on the bridge intently listening to the voices in the Chamber of the Winds. He looked steadfastly to the opening far above him that let in the sunlight. The cool air rushing past him felt good on his skin. He couldn't bring himself to look at Devin.

"How did you find me?" he finally asked.

"You come here sometimes ... when you're sad." There was an awkward silence between them. "I'm sorry, Vincent. I'm sorry I blamed you for ... I know now, that it was Mitch that squealed on me."

Vincent was silent. *How could you think that I would ever do that? How could you hurt me like that?* he wondered silently. He didn't move, but try as he might he couldn't keep the tears from

slipping out of his eyes and pooling in his ears. And yet he couldn't reach to wipe them away for fear that Devin would see that he was crying.

"Can you forgive me, Vincent, for thinking that you would ever do that? I'm sorry about your nose too. I should never have punched you."

Silence

"Vincent, please... say something," Devin gently pleaded.

Vincent didn't dare. How could he pretend it never happened? He knew he could forgive his brother. The truth was he already had. But how could he undo *what he had done*? How could he forgive himself when Devin's face would forever bear witness to that terrible act of violence? How could Vincent ever unlearn the terrible truth about himself that their fight had revealed?

"Please leave me alone, Devin," he finally managed to say.

Devin quietly turned and walked away.

Father's was sitting at his desk with his head in his hands when he heard a soft voice whisper.

"Father ... may I speak with you?"

Father looked up immediately. He jumped up from his desk and fairly ran to Vincent. "Vincent, thank Heaven, my boy. Where have you been? I've been so worried about you."

Vincent stood in his place at the threshold of Father's study passively accepting Father's embrace.

"Father, I need to talk to you. I need to tell you something."

Father could sense the serious tone in Vincent's voice. He nodded. "Yes, Vincent, come in and sit down."

"Would you like some tea?"

"No thank you, Father."

As Father waited the minutes ticked by. He decided that he needed to let Vincent decide when he was ready to speak. So he sat back in his chair and tried to assess the boy from a distance. It was clear he had been crying. There was some swelling around his nose and bruises were beginning to darken under each eye. Otherwise as far as Father could see, Vincent was fine.

Sensing Father's gaze, Vincent asked, "Did Devin tell you what happened?"

Father nodded. "Yes, Devin told me."

"Is he going to be all right?" Vincent meekly asked.

"Devin will heal, if that's what you mean. He will most likely have scars. He went looking for you ... to apologize. I take it he found you."

“Yes.”

“What is it you wish to talk about, Vincent?” Father gently urged.

“Father, I ... there is something about me ... I’m not ... I’m not a normal boy. I need to know ... *Am I ... a boy ... at all, Father?*” he asked desperately.

Father had dreaded these questions since the day Vincent had been brought Below. *How am I supposed to know that?* he asked himself. *What am I supposed to tell the child?* He had often wondered the same thing himself. How could he tell the boy what he himself had always feared? Vincent was in a fragile state, Father could easily see that, so he lied. “How can you ask that, Vincent? Of course you are a boy. What else would you be?”

“I don’t know, Father. I was hoping you ... knew. I’m afraid that I am something ... terrible ... a monster or something.”

So am I, Vincent. So am I, he thought. He couldn’t admit to Vincent that this had been his fear since the day he realized the abandoned infant would survive. *How could anyone look at the child’s hands and teeth and not feel some level of fear?* But as the years had gone by without any incidents out of the ordinary for any child, Father had begun to hope his fears were unfounded. Today that had all changed.

Then Father lied again. “I don’t think you are a monster, Vincent. Why would you say that?”

“Today when I ... when I hurt Devin. I felt something ... something took over me and I ... I wanted to ...”

“What, Vincent?”

“I wanted to ... kill him.” His words were nearly inaudible, it pained him so to admit such a thing to his Father.

Father was so shocked by Vincent’s revelation and his candor that he had no time to hide the look of horror and fear that crossed his face. It only took a moment for him to get his thoughts under control. He loved Vincent as if he were his own son, but Vincent had viciously injured his own son, *the boy who truly was his son*. And now he was admitting that he had wanted to kill.

With his voice shaking he said, “But you didn’t, Vincent. *You didn’t kill him.*”

“No ... but I was so afraid that I would ... so afraid of ... myself ... that I ran away from him as fast as I could ... so I wouldn’t. Father, *I’m frightened* ... I’m frightened of myself.”

“Where did you go? Where did you run to?”

“Deep into the tunnels. Deep into the darkness. I wanted to bury myself and ... disappear forever.”

Father’s heart nearly stopped. *How could a child have such thoughts? What if he had discovered what waits down there in that darkness? What if he had harmed himself?* These questions and others flooded Father’s mind.

“What made you change your mind?” he inquired, attempting to sound calm.

“Narcissa found me ... crying in the dark.” Vincent recounted the story of the two wolves that Narcissa had told him.

Father had always discouraged the children from spending time with the superstitious, old woman, but he had to admit, even if only to himself, that this time he was grateful for her intervention.

“What do you think, Father? Is it true that everyone has two wolves inside of them?”

Father contemplated the tale. *Perhaps Narcissa isn't as crazy as I thought she was*, he thought. Then nodding, “Yes, Vincent, it is true... uhm ... philosophically speaking anyway. Perhaps it is more so for you than for others. But I do believe that to a degree, it is true for everyone.”

Then wanting to stress the significance of what Vincent had done without frightening him, he continued. “You must be ever vigilant, Vincent, that this never happens again. *You cannot allow that dark part of yourself to harm others... ever again. Do you understand?*”

“Yes, Father.” Talking with Father was helping to calm Vincent’s fears that his family would reject him. Losing Father’s love would be devastating to him. Vincent silently vowed that he would never lose control of himself in that way again.

For Father, this little chat was having the opposite effect. This new knowledge about his adopted son worried him greatly. *I must keep a close eye on the boy from now on*, he thought. Despite his deep love for the boy, he had to consider the safety of the other children, the safety of the whole community. He needed time to think. “Why don’t you go on to bed, Vincent, it’s late,” he said, dismissing the child.

“Aren’t you going to punish me, Father? For fighting ... for what I did to Devin?”

Father was too emotionally exhausted to do any more than he had already done. Seeing both of his sons so hurt in the course of one day was enough. “I believe the two of you have been punished enough for one day don’t you?”

“Yes, Father.”

As he reached the chamber entrance Vincent turned back and asked, “Father?”

“Yes, Vincent, what is it?”

“Narcissa said that ‘The Evil One’ waits for me in those dark places down there ... that he wants me ... for his own. What did she mean, Father?”

Father was quick with his reply, perhaps a little too quick. “I’m sure I don’t know, Vincent. Sometimes I’m not sure even Narcissa knows what she means.”

Vincent nodded. “Good night, Father.”

“Good night, Son.”

As soon as Vincent was gone, Father collapsed in his chair and rested his head again in his hands. *How long can I lie to the boy before he realizes? I am not qualified to raise children, especially this child. What is going to happen when Vincent reaches puberty? What will I do if he ever ...?* He couldn't bring himself to think anymore. Each question only made him more frightened of what the future might bring.

He soon left his chamber to seek out Narcissa. He wanted to find out just what she knew of the Evil One, and if he should be concerned.

“Devin?”

Devin stood and turned quickly to face the entrance of his room. Each boy stood awkwardly looking at the other.

His voice not much more than a whisper, Vincent said, “I’m sorry, Devin ... about what I did to your face.” He could feel that he was close to tears. “If you don’t want to share a room with me anymore, I’ll ... I’ll understand.”

Devin reached up to lightly touch the bandages. “Oh, hey, don’t worry about it, Squirt. It’s not that bad. You know Father, he always wants to put giant bandages on scratches to keep out the germs and all. It makes it look a lot worse than it really is.”

“So you forgive me?”

Devin came closer. “The way I see it, Vincent, I sorta had it coming. Anyway, it was me who threw the first punch. I’m sorry too. Is your nose okay?”

Vincent reached up and gingerly touched his nose. It was still tender from Devin’s right hook. “Yeah, it’ll be fine.”

“So what do you say? Are we friends again? Brothers?” Devin spit on his palm and held it out to Vincent.

Vincent looked at it for a moment and spit on his own palm and grabbed Devin’s hand.

And just like that, all was well again.

As Mary came to say good night to the boys and see how they were, she could hear their voices and soft laughter coming from their room. She decided to leave the boys alone.

There was a gentle smile on her face as she walked away, knowing that peace had returned to the Tunnels ... at least for tonight anyway.

She would let tomorrow worry for itself ...
