

Moon, Stars and Sun

- *by Angie*

*Take me to you, imprison me, for I
Except you enthrall me, shall never be free
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me*

- John Donne

Chapter 1

Ironically, it was Father who solved the dilemma of their unconsummated love. Father who worried about Vincent, about his love for Catherine, about hers for Vincent, about what that love could and could not do - or might result in.

She suspected that, as a doctor, what bothered him most was not knowing how Vincent had come to be born in the first place. Catherine had her own suspicions about Vincent's origins. She knew the facts, of course, about how he had been found wrapped in rags behind St Vincent's hospital. She was sure that Vincent was no freak of genetics or failed experiment. He was too intelligent, too curious, too empathic, too beautiful - and all too human. If she was right, Vincent's very existence meant that they could conceive a child.

Somehow, she knew children were never in Tom's plans. She was equally sure that she had been a notation on his daytimer for every Friday night - probably as "bonk Catherine" - part of his "business strategy". Whatever had she seen in him? Jenny had detested him on sight and longer association had only reinforced her opinion.

April 12 had changed all that. Her knife-wielding assailant had raped her viciously as he clamped his hand on her windpipe and slashed her face between thrusts. In retrospect, she was grateful she had been unconscious by the time his partner had taken his turn and they had dumped her in the park.

Father would have discovered this less obvious injury when he examined her. Vincent must have known as well, since he was undoubtedly assisting. Even though she knew she was not to blame for her injuries, she had felt violated, ashamed. She had never revealed that part of her horror tale to anyone - and neither Vincent nor Father had even hinted at it.

But that night had left her with mental scars as well as physical ones. Her ruined face for a time trumped her other injuries. But it did not stop her from thinking. Although she had, with Vincent's help, put the slasher and his boss out of commission, there was still the puzzle of why she had been grabbed at all. There was no prostitute "stroll" in that area. The woman had looked very familiar. Catherine was sure she had been at the function. Knowing Tom, there have been women 'working' the room to soften up the bureaucrats.

She had made changes in her life. Joining the DA's office was only the most obvious. She had also sworn off sex and avoided any close relationships. Fortunately, her brief affair with Elliot had ended precipitously. By then, Vincent had become the most important part of her life. His complete lack of demands on her was unique among the men in her life to that point.

She suspected that he was careful to be non-threatening, hiding his stronger emotions. Coupled with his natural naivete in regards to sex and women, no wonder it had taken them years to even kiss.

But the barriers, on both sides, had fallen - in circumstances neither could have predicted.

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Vincent worried about Father and wanted to be honest with him - but some things were better left unsaid.

Neither Vincent nor Catherine had hinted at what had actually happened when she had gone to him in that deep cavern. It was too deeply personal for both of them. No one had asked, fortunately. She had brought him back to sanity, safely - and that was all that mattered. She had not become inconveniently pregnant.

Their love had been growing steadily since she had almost died - when Vincent had rescued her from the voyeur who had tried to drown her. Her side of the bond had begun to expand as well, putting further stresses on them.

Catherine had long suspected that the constant denial - repression even - of Vincent's sexual needs had been part of the reason for his retreat into madness. Father understood the desire, but couldn't relate to it. He was convinced that Vincent should never satisfy that craving as other men could.

On the other hand, she was not without blame for Vincent's stress. Her dreams were not always virginal and she

knew Vincent was aware of them, even though he did not mention their effect on him. She tried to block their connection, but that was impossible when she was asleep. She felt his unease, his tension in her presence – and did not know how to broach the subject. Instead, he went into retreat doing hardrock mining for a few days, and she dived into her work with new vigour. They were both feeling guilty and frustrated.

His illness had changed everything. When she had left Father and walked down that tunnel where his roars nearly deafened her, she had known that there was no way out for her without him. He was her life. She had to bring him back or die with him.

There had been very little light in that cavern, and that only in too-bright columns from some unknown source. Vincent had rushed out to her, roaring, on the attack. She had been shocked by the madness in his eyes and his dark, unkempt fury. She had screamed out his name in fright without thinking. That sound – and the emotional fear transmitted through their bond - had brought him to an abrupt standstill. He had looked down at her, his hand still raised and fingers angled for attack. She saw the madness drain from him – to be replaced by disbelief and despair. He had sighed and fainted onto the floor as she tried to catch him, then retreated into a coma-like state which frightened her even more. She could hardly detect a heartbeat and he seemed to be barely breathing.

She felt no guilt about her next actions. She knew what she had to do - what should have happened long ago. He had to be assured that she loved him, of his humanity. Words, hugs and chaste pecks were no longer enough.

She bent over him, grasped him by the neck, turned that beloved face to her, and kissed his mouth, hard and passionately, hugging him to her. Then she had felt a slight shiver through their bond and sensed that Vincent was trying to deny her and slip away. It was the worst moment of her life. She fought to transmit her love for him along their bond – and felt his shame as he retreated further from her. She followed him to where he cowered and then she let her need, desire and love for him surround and enclose him.

Then, after long moments, she felt him waver just a little and she let him feel her underlying desperation and despair. He came to her rescue emotionally, as he had done physically for so long. She felt his sense of her persistent kiss. His response, uncertain at first, warmed with a growing heat which matched her own.

She had massaged his lips and explored his cleft, amazed at the sensual feel of his unique mouth. She moved his lips apart to find his tongue and explore it with her own, delighting in his growing arousal and being able to give her own free reign at last. She felt Vincent's muscles tense with desire, as she pressed herself to him. Her crotch was throbbing and moistly warm.

He had sighed at last and opened his eyes to look at her. She stroked his face, looking in his eyes, which even in the dark she could see were filled with love for her. She could feel his passion through their bond, energizing her. He let her know he was surrendering himself wholly to her, knew what she was going to do – and agreed with it.

In fact, she knew he was too weak to do more than acquiesce, but she was happy he did so. She was not sure she would have wanted to continue otherwise.

She took off her raincoat and made it into a pillow for him, then slipped her slacks as far down as she could. She then loosened his clothes by feel, because she could see almost nothing. Fortunately he had not been wearing one of his heavy metal belts. His pants were tied at the top and a flap opened to give her access. He wasn't wearing underwear, thank goodness.

She sat above him, positioned his wonderful warm, now quite stiff column, then let him slide into her as gently as she could. That had been remarkably easy, considering his size and her long abstinence. She clasped his hands in hers as she moved to lay atop him, doing her best to pump a little and tighten her muscles around him. He felt wonderful and she let him know that.

Suddenly their bond had flared with white hot passion, and they both had a quick, mutually-explosive climax followed by such contentment, love and relief that she was unable to move. She realized then that she was feeling Vincent's emotions as well - and that warmed her anew.

She felt his chest rising and falling under her and could not resist stroking his face. He quivered under her and she knew he welcomed her touch.

Then some sixth sense, probably Vincent's, had warned her that those waiting outside the cavern were getting impatient. Catherine quickly restored their clothing to reasonable decency. She then moved to hold him in her

lap, cushioning his head against her. She felt his gaze upon her again in the dimness. Through their connection, their love for each other was solid, undeniable. They both knew that all those old fears were irrelevant. There were no barriers now.

Catherine wished she could see Vincent's face in the darkness, but she knew he could see her. His eyesight was much keener.

"Shakespeare knew everything," she whispered to him, referring to the inscription he had written in the book of sonnets he had given her long ago. She felt his acknowledgement and quoted:

*"Then happy I, that love and am beloved
Where I may not remove nor be removed"*

"Forever," he said, so softly she was not sure whether she heard it or felt his agreement through their bond. It no longer mattered.

By the time Father's shuffling gait announced his arrival, Vincent was almost asleep and it took both of them to help him to his feet. She gathered up her coat and Vincent draped his arms over their shoulders, until the passage narrowed making that impossible, and he had to rely on Father alone. By then, he had marshaled some of his strength and they emerged from the tunnel to a small crowd of friends, all willing to assist. Catherine brought up the rear, almost forgotten, and felt that way - until Jamie came and put her arms around her. She suddenly realized how tired she was. When they finally reached the chambers, Jamie showed her to the guest chamber and she had flopped on the bed without undressing. She had left early in the morning to get ready for another work day, sure that Vincent would now recover - and wanting to give him time to do that. She would know if he needed her. She frequently let him know that she loved him, through their bond. He let her know he felt the same.

She did visit below a few nights after Vincent's return. He was sitting on the edge of his bed and when she went up to him, he gathered her in his arms. The resulting passion across their bond made them both gasp. However, she knew that Vincent was still trying to come to terms with his latest sickness, so she merely kissed him lightly, then quickly left before she further disturbed him. It was, she thought, the hardest thing she had ever done. She did feel his gratitude for her understanding, which helped.

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They had said nothing to Father about their tryst in the cavern, only that their bond had deepened and opened for her as well. Vincent, much as he wanted them to consummate their love again - in a more comfortable fashion - would not proceed without Father's blessing. It was important to Vincent that Father had other than fait accompli on which to base his approval. She agreed, although waiting was very difficult.

Father still seemed unable to reconcile the teenager who had fallen in love with Lisa with the man that Vincent now was. He had fussed over Vincent, but his son had returned to his regular duties, overriding his concerns.

Meanwhile, they both tried to keep their bond from driving them crazy with anticipation. Lately, Vincent had taken to distracting himself with Mouse's projects and Catherine either stayed late at the office or jogged until she was too exhausted to dream.

When they saw each other, it was at events below with others in the room. By mutual agreement, Vincent stayed away from her terrace above, but she ached for him with a pain that was both physical and mental. She missed his voice as he read to her, his deep hugs and breath on her hair as he softly kissed her head. She didn't want to think about his lips on hers. The way he said her name, carefully enunciating every syllable, was enough to make her legs weak. She could feel the underlying passion in their bond.

She felt as if she were going slowly insane.

Chapter 2

Father's sudden change of heart had embarrassed her – at least the reason for it - an emotion she had thought herself incapable of, after almost three years in the DA's office. She had forgotten how everyone knew everyone's business below – and how deeply they cared about each other - especially Vincent.

Father had invited her below for one of his “heart-to-hearts.” Vincent, she was told, was patrolling the perimeters.

Once she was seated by his desk, Father had looked at her with real affection and had seemed to be keeping himself under tight control. She had thought it was because he had some “Fatherly” advice for her, along the lines of his usual objections to herself and their love. But it turned out to be something quite different.

She smiled as she recalled his words - diplomatically and deliberately put, as always.

“Catherine, your love for Vincent – um, your love for each other – is something that warms all of us here below. I ... um ... have not always been sympathetic to your natural desire to ... um ... consummate your love in the normal fashion between lovers. I've had my reservations, concerns. But I've come to realize that ... things ... simply cannot go on the way they are.”

At this point, Father had had to clear his throat and look away from her. His shoulders were shaking and the tassels on his vest shook. She was puzzled and a little worried. Was he having an attack of some kind?

With apparent difficulty, Father proceeded, pinning his eyes to something on his desk as if he was afraid it would fly off.

“I do beg your pardon, Catherine. This is difficult for me. You see, your ... er ... passion, has not gone unnoticed ... not at all ... by anyone.

“Why even William is affected. He is mumbling around the kitchen like someone who has lost something and has forgotten what it is. His cooking has been erotic ...um, I mean erratic. Why, he forgot to put a bay leaf in the stew yesterday! A small thing, but William was devastated. He is a proud man.

“Mouse has been following Jamie around like a lost dog, but completely unable to say anything coherent – never his strong point at the best of times. Jamie is not known for her patience and I fear she will lash out with a pipe wrench ... or something ... without thinking.

“Pascal is restless, mooning around the pipe chamber as if he is waiting for a message from a lost lover whose name he can't remember.

“Vincent has been walking around here like a bear with a sore head, short-tempered and impatient. Why, I even managed to win a game of chess against him last week! I know you too have not seen each other much, but I had assumed it was because of your work obligations.

“And the children, from whom we hide nothing, are misbehaving most outrageously. They can sense everyone's distraction. Mary's at her wit's end.

“Of course, we love children here, but we are careful about our population, since our resources are always carefully measured. You know that already, of course, and have been very generous with your assistance.”

This last, seeming non-sequitur, puzzled Catherine, but she waited in silence.

Father cleared his throat and came to the point.

“So I think it is time for me to end this ... um... reticence.” Father said, as he looked up at her, his eyes serious.

“We simply can't go on this way, Catherine. Vincent finally told me what he wants, after I pressed him. Then he left for a completely unnecessary patrol. That's where he is now. So, I am giving my blessing to your physical union with Vincent, Catherine. I wanted you to know first. I will tell him the same, without reservation, when he returns. I think that is the only way to defuse the present tension. You and Vincent will find that once will definitely not be enough, I am sure, as is the case with all new lovers. But at least everyone will know that your relationship

has reached a new level and will stop watching the two of you - and taking bets on when it will happen.”

At that point a strangled sound had leaked from Father and he had looked away from her face again, which she was sure was a picture of disbelief. She had stared at him, understanding at last that Father was trying not to laugh, and wondering why he found the situation amusing.

“Father, I don’t understand. What on earth is so funny?”

Jacob looked away from her and made another attempt to explain.

“You see Catherine, like all lovers, you and Vincent are completely fixated on each other. It is normal, natural even. I too know what that is like, since I found – and lost - Jessica. But, dear Catherine ... I don’t know quite how to put this ... but the connection you share with Vincent ... well, it seems to send an electric charge between you. It’s almost visible, you know. Everyone in the same room with the two of you can feel it - like heat lightning or an earth tremor. If you were less intent on each other, you would notice that a room is emptied as soon as politely possible when you are both there – and they are not leaving because they have a sudden urge to sort their socks. I expect a minor baby boom in the next nine months.”

He let out a strangled laugh, and Catherine felt a blush heat her face, which she hoped was hidden by the customary candlelit dimness.

Father now looked at her for some response and she could think of nothing coherent for a few moments – a poor quality in a lawyer, she thought ruefully.

“Um, Father, I’m sure I speak for Vincent too when I say we are sorry to have caused such a ... um ... disruption ... in this community. As you know, our bond has become very strong since his illness. We do test it, discovering what we can sense between us. I confess that our emotions have not always been ... um ... chaste ... even if our bodies have. Truly, I’m sorry.”

“Dear Catherine, there is nothing to apologize for. It is my fault entirely. I should have spoken sooner. I get so busy, so involved, that I cannot see what is in front of my face. Your mutual bond changes everything. Mary had to point this out to me. She was not immune to the ... um ... influence herself.”

Father looked very contrite – and not a little guilty – and something else, Catherine thought. Speculative? Good heavens, was Father finally going to give Mary what she deserved? Well, that was none of her business.

“Thank you for your acceptance and understanding, Father. I can only think of one small problem – privacy. No matter where we go, especially here below, we are seldom alone, and never uninterrupted. It’s no one’s fault. Both of us have responsibilities and those who depend on us are used to having us on call. And well, we would want to have as much time alone as possible. We would not want to broadcast our intention to everyone – at least I wouldn’t. Vincent is less shy about these things, I guess because he knows there can be no secrets here.”

Jacob had himself under control now.

“Well, Catherine, you are exactly right, of course. May I suggest that you have your, um, liaison, in your apartment? I know that there are ways you can be sure of privacy – far easier that it can be arranged down here. With the best will in the world, it will take time for some members of this community to get used to the idea that they can’t just march into Vincent’s chamber any time they like. I’ll begin educating them immediately, I promise. In the meantime, I wish you both joy. I don’t know two people who deserve it more. Take as much time as you need.

“Since Jessica left me, I think I understand the imperatives of love a little better. Time had dulled them in me. I ask for your forgiveness.”

“There is nothing to forgive, Father. You have always done what you think best for this community, especially where Vincent is concerned. How could I condemn that? But I will take your advice to heart.”

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It was evening, a few hours after Father had talked to Catherine, and he had managed to convince Vincent to play a game of chess with him. Vincent was regarding the board with that concentration which never ceased to amaze Jacob. It was so intense, so still, so much like – and he forgave himself the analogy – a cat at a mouse hole. Vincent gave no quarter when it came to the things he cared about – work, people, books ... and chess.

Father looked at the board and realized that, if he did not do something quickly, he would lose yet another game to his special son. He sighed.

Above them, Catherine was stretched out on her bed, propped up with pillows, reading *Under Milkwood*, one of her favourites. It's beautiful breaks into rhythmic prose never failed to thrill her. She had heard Richard Burton recite the Dylan Thomas, but now she imagined Vincent reading it in those deep honeyed, silken tones she loved. Why had she never asked him to read it to her?

The volume she held was a sturdy, thick-leafed paperback, but it deserved better, she decided. She would visit Mr Smythe tomorrow and see if he had something in a nice little hardcover she could present to Vincent.

'You can hear the dew fall and the hushed town breathing.'

She could sense Vincent's concentration through the bond, knew that he was probably playing chess with Father. But there was something else, a hint of nervous expectation. That, she was sure, had nothing to do with the chess game.

'Time passes. Come closer now.'

Catherine resolutely focused on her reading.

Father cleared his throat.

"Vincent, are you happy? Do you need anything? I have seldom asked you this, I know - and you never make demands. I've always assumed all was well unless you said otherwise."

Vincent looked up at Father, momentarily distracted from the board and his sense of Catherine, who seemed to be absorbed in a book she loved. He wondered what she was reading as he answered.

"Father, happiness is relative. You gave me life, nurtured in me a love of learning, a love of music, a love of beautiful things, a love of this place, of its people. You have kept me safe and given me your love and that of a community. Those things are priceless. What more could I want?"

Father did not miss the substitution of the word "want" for that of "need" – and knew it was deliberate. Vincent was always exact.

"But," Father pursued, knowing there was more to come.

Vincent looked back down at the board, unwilling to look at him.

"But ... over the years I have felt incomplete, without really knowing why. Until I met Catherine, I did not realize my life was a Fabergé egg – golden, encrusted with jewels, precious and beautiful, something admired and kept safe – but hollow inside, like a new chamber before it is occupied. Then one day, I looked inside that egg – my chamber - and she was there, illuminating it from within, making it more beautiful, more complete than I could ever have imagined – making me whole. I see much more clearly now – and I know what I need."

Father sighed.

"I have a bad habit of missing things I wish to ignore," he mumbled, looking down at the chessboard. He rushed his words out, wanted the guilt off his chest quickly.

"I have spoken with Catherine and told her that I give my full blessing to your physical union, unconditionally. I'm sorry I was so obtuse as to not see what was in front of my nose, Vincent. Mary straightened me out. In the meantime, I think the entire community must have thought me as dense as that marble bust."

He pointed at Shakespeare, sitting on a small table, peering from between tall piles of books.

Vincent, who well aware of the what the community thought of Father these days – having been told so by several of its more outspoken members - laughed, the tension draining from him, leaving him happy and expectant.

Deep in Captain Cat's musings, Catherine sensed Vincent's sudden shift in concentration. His emotions were running close to the surface and she could feel his relief and happiness. She kept herself calm, not wanting to intrude, but opened her side of their bond completely.

"Shakespeare knew everything," Vincent chuckled.

Father regarded his son with puzzlement – and amazement. Vincent had not smiled in weeks!

Vincent regarded him with affection and laughed again before explaining.

"That's the inscription I put in a book of Shakespeare's sonnets that I gave Catherine two years ago. She reminded me of it again in the cavern. Now I look at that marble bust, and thanks to her, Sonnet 29 does not have the sting it once did.

Vincent looked around the chamber, as if seeing it for the first time. He frowned and regarded Father.

"However, that bust will soon be out of sight and out of mind. Father, we have to put your books into some kind of order. I'll talk to Cullen about some shelves tomorrow. No arguments this time. It must be done. I'll get a couple of our assistant teachers to organize your books. They might find something of use for the classroom."

Father sputtered, but it was half-hearted. Vincent's last comment had convinced him to relent. It was true that there was little order in his library – and he could not in conscience deny that he had many books of use to their teachers – and the community-at-large.

"I have a first edition copy of *Vanity Fair* somewhere. Now that's a piece of writing that could use a real in-depth classroom examination - if we can find it," Father remarked. He remembered the first time he had read it. It had taken a lot of concentrated effort, but children needed to learn discipline. It would be a good exercise for them.

Vincent caught Father's determined expression and swore to himself that *Vanity Fair* would get "lost" down the Abyss before he let it in the classroom. He had read it, of course, but found Thackery's so-called masterpiece pompous and so obsessively detailed that it was, for months, a guaranteed method of putting him to sleep. It was no book to open the minds of children, however bright. He said nothing, however.

He did reflect that himself and Mary – and probably William and Pascal as well - would have to put their heads together to get Father out of the way while his library was being organized – or nothing would get done for his inevitable interference.

He suddenly felt light-headed, almost dizzy – a reaction to Father's unexpected change of heart.

"I don't think I can continue our game, Father. Shall I concede it to you?"

Father was tempted, but had to be honest. "No, Vincent, we'll just leave it here until another time"

That settled, Vincent then said good night to Father and left for his chamber.

Catherine felt Vincent's change of mood to elation, knew that Father had at last given his blessing as he had promised her. She relaxed and smiled. She sent a message of love and desire through the bond and felt it return with such interest that she groaned. She caught Vincent's amusement. All would be well now, she thought, as she returned to the world of Dai Bread and Mrs Pugh.

Chapter 3

It was evening at last, five nights since she had talked to Father. The longest week of her life. She had used that time to clear off her desk in the DA's office, then announced that she was taking some time off - and that was that. She had made it plain to Joe and added that she would be out of town for some R and R – a white lie – so not to bother trying to get her to help with any emergencies. As it happened, the office was not busy. Criminals seemed less active in the sticky heat of a New York summer and there was no case backlog at present, despite

staff holidays – or maybe because of them.

She planned their special night with care. She had discovered that conflicting scents confused Vincent, and had removed all from herself and her apartment, except one he seemed to like – 4711. Her mother had also liked it and Catherine had kept a bottle around in her memory. Tonight she had used the cologne carefully on herself, running a line of it from her neck, around her shoulders and down between her breasts to her crotch. She had even put a few dabs in that area which now throbbed with anticipation. She wanted Vincent to follow that trail.

She had been just as careful with her personal hygiene. Dr Alex Comfort had admonished against underarm deodorants prior to lovemaking, and Catherine agreed. She had activated her telephone answering service to intercept all calls – something she should have done long ago. There would be not so much as a ring to disturb them.

She had locked and bolted her front door and opened the French doors from the balcony into her bedroom and living room. The building security had been told she would accept no visitors or callers – with no exceptions.

It was a hot summer night with a slight breeze which billowed the sheers. The moon was almost full in a velvet night, shining like Frost's *"luminary clock against the sky."*

She sighed in pleasurable anticipation, entered her bedroom and closed the slatted bifolds. The room was dark but for the city glow and the silver gleam cast by the moon over her terrace. It felt magical. She was very much in love – or lust perhaps.

It had been far too long since her "bones had been jumped," as Edie would have said. She hated most modern expressions dealing with sex – but that one she liked. It had a frivolity about it. Making love should be fun.

Vincent slid onto Catherine's terrace with a little less grace and a lot more eagerness than was usual. His manhood had been aroused all week. It was an experience new to him and the cause of much embarrassment, since the chafing had forced him to walk slightly bow-legged. Climbing the fire escape had verged on the painful. But he was here now. He forced himself to relax.

He paused near the edge of her terrace, as he often did, to collect his thoughts. He could feel Catherine's eager anticipation – a feeling he shared, but not without reservations. He drew in a deep breath, amazed that even here on her terrace, he could smell her scent reaching out to him, something innate to her, combined with that cologne she favoured. The combination was something he would recognize anywhere, could follow to the ends of the earth.

He had bathed before leaving his chamber, but had not left himself enough time to dry completely. He had decided, finally, that his usual multi-layers were completely unnecessary tonight - plus he could dry en-route. His cloak was sufficient warmth until he left the Tunnels and entered the humid New York summer night.

Although he no longer worried about harming Catherine – as long as he was careful - he was nervous. It was his appearance which worried him now. His family below accepted his very hirsute body. He had grown up with many of them, swam and bathed with them – always unclothed. But Catherine had never seen him au natural.

Worse still were the fears his manhood might evoke in her. He knew himself to be, in his normal state, not unlike other men, if a little better-endowed. His aroused state, however, was something he had kept private. It embarrassed him because he was different. Lately, he had avoided communal bathing because his reactions to Catherine's frustration – and his own – frequently became evident. The fact that other men in the community made jokes when it happened to them, was no consolation. They had never seen him that way. Catherine, he knew, had not been able to see the truth of his physical reality in the cavern.

Then there was his complete lack of experience. He had tried to mitigate that by reading selected books, and indeed had discovered much that might be useful. On the technical side, he had received the same sex education as every other 13 year old boy below – with a difference. Father had warned him that his "differences" meant he must be extra careful – implying that he should avoid female entanglements, if possible.

Vincent had never felt the slightest desire for any of the women below since Lisa had been sent away. He suspected that Father had also discouraged such notions. Vincent himself had outwardly resigned himself to

celibacy by the time he met Catherine. His dreams were less cooperative.

Even so, only the undeniable fact of Catherine's deep love for him kept him from running back below now, as these thoughts warred in him with his physical need for her. Her love still amazed him, but he knew he could not deny her any longer. She had brought him back to life in the cavern, almost literally. She had accepted him completely into her heart. He could do no less in return.

With a massive sigh, he let go of his inhibitions, looked at the moon, whose magical light gave him courage, and let his love for Catherine run along their bond.

He padded over to the french doors that led into her bedroom, knowing that tonight there would be no readings on the terrace. He looked through the sheers, then moved through them. The room beyond was dim, lit only by the city lights and the moon. He could see her over by the bifold doors, just closing them.

Before she turned, Catherine knew Vincent was on the balcony and felt her heart jump as she saw him move between the french doors and through the sheers, a deeper blackness against the moonlit city. She smiled. She couldn't see his face, but there was something different about his silhouette tonight. He seemed less bulky.

She could sense his tension, however, which matched her own.

Vincent stood between the french doors, looking at Catherine. Her filmy gown shimmered silver in the moonlight. He had never seen anything so beautiful, so ethereal. He felt suddenly like an intruder, like a lumberjack in a fairy ring. He shrugged off that feeling with his cloak and reached down to remove his footwear and socks, tossing everything in the general direction of an ornate chair in the corner nearest him. Then he moved down the two steps into her bedroom and stood still, willing himself to be calm, waiting for Catherine to make the next move. An electric charge ran between them. He could feel her expectation, her excitement at his presence - and it humbled him, as it always did.

Yes, Catherine decided, Vincent definitely looked slimmer. The moon shone through his cloak and over his shoulder, daring her.

She stood as still as he, unable to take a step closer, frozen in the moment. She could think of nothing except gratitude and relief that he had come to her. Of course, he knew her designs on him tonight. He was here because he agreed. The waiting was over. This would be their time – a time to explore love, to savour the joy they had so long denied themselves.

Vincent decided he could wait no longer. He began to walk towards his Catherine. She shook off her lethargy, crossed the room and jumped into his arms, wrapping her arms around his neck. His skin caught fire where she touched him and he groaned with desire, holding her willingly, savouring this new closeness, feeling her complete surrender to the moment. He bent to smell her and discovered an intriguing trail that led ... well, he would find out in due course, but he was sure he knew exactly where it was going. He sighed, hugged her to him, knew there could be no denials or second-thoughts now.

Catherine, at last feeling the warmth of Vincent's body next to hers, tried to enclose him, merge with him, as his arms held her tightly. He was not wearing his usual bulky layers, only a single dark shirt which was soft against her cheek, nubbly, like raw silk. She could feel his muscular chest beneath it and sighed in pleasure. His heart was beating against her ear.

She realized something else then as well, something which must have been transmitted through their bond. Vincent had never been touched by a lover, intimately, and his skin was very sensitive. She could feel him quivering under her hands.

Vincent's breath and lips were teasing the top of her head and his hair billowed around her face. She hugged him closer and his heartbeat increased in tempo. It now pounded into her ears and her own seemed to be trying to

escape her ribcage. She looked up into that beloved face and saw that his eyes were deep and dark, mysterious almost. There was a glint in them. Some reflection of the moon perhaps.

Without his boots on, he seemed a little less tall, and the softness of his feet against her own was a sensation she also wanted to explore - later.

He bent down to kiss her forehead and then moved his lips down her nose to her mouth. The kiss he planted there was soft and swift, but so sensual that her legs suddenly had no more strength. She clasped his arms and he responded by holding her firmly in the small of her back as he raised his head from hers.

She made herself stand aside a little, her eyes straining in the dim light, looking at him. He turned slightly to follow her, and some of the outside light illuminated him. She realized that his shirt was tied down the front, leaving spaces where she could see something intriguingly less dark. Had he deliberately worn clothing easy to remove she wondered?

She smiled up at him as she ran her fingers down the ties, which it seemed were not really tied at all and separated easily. He was wearing nothing underneath, a thrill she felt to her toes. As each tie parted she kissed what she found underneath, letting her tongue run down a smooth line of skin that seemed to beg closer examination. He held her lightly, rubbing her back, blowing into her hair, nuzzling her ears.

She felt him shudder as she undid the last tie and bent to kiss his navel.

Vincent shrugged off the shirt as Catherine stood back a little and teasingly ran one hand just below the waistline of his pants. His bulge was now becoming urgently painful. She leaned close him and pushed against him with her belly. Even through his pants he could feel her heat and the shiver of expectation and desire that seemed to run along her skin. His own skin was so sensitized he felt every whisper of her touch. He whuffed softly and opened his mouth. He could not seem to get enough oxygen.

Catherine could not see Vincent well, so explored his muscular chest with her fingers, discovering longer hair along his collar bone that merged into tight curls. His chest was covered with short fur, except for that smooth, vertical line of skin down the centre.

His fur was as thick and as soft as the finest velvet, softer even than his facial hair. She brushed her hands up and down it, breathing in its fragrance, slightly musky, almost spicy - and tense with a passion barely under restraint. She found the nubs of his nipples hiding under some longer hair and could not resist kissing and sucking them just a little.

Their bond seemed to be shooting sparks and she gasped in delight as she felt him quiver again down his length. She was not very steady herself any more.

He lifted her to his face, covering her mouth with kisses, holding her carefully. He turned a little more and she saw the moonlight in his hair, gleaming along his outline like an aura, illuminating the face she loved with silver.

She felt suddenly hot and very overdressed. Heat rose and throbbed between her legs and her face felt flushed. Vincent put her down so she could remove the flowing housecoat she had worn for decorum's sake, and let it puddle around her feet.

She looked up at his face again and he bent down to kiss her. It was so soft, so tender, so deeply personal, that she was glad his arms were about her again. When he released her at last, she put her forehead against his chest, needing to breathe. She was almost overcome by his scent, his warmth, the arousal searing across their bond.

She was gasping when she decided to proceed and reached her hand down to undo his trousers, without the ever-present heavy belt. She could feel him throbbing under the soft fabric, and that made her eager to release his struggling organ. There was no button or zipper, just a fold of fabric and a leather tie. She undid that and stood back with barely suppressed impatience.

Vincent was as taut as a violin string, trying not to rush Catherine, trying to be patient and to take his cues from her. Having her undo his trousers was a new experience, but so was removing them in front of her. It excited him that she waited with such obvious eagerness, but he was only too glad to get them off. They were painful as never before. He shrugged them to the floor, revealing what he was sure Catherine had been waiting for most of all.

He did not wear underwear, needing none with his body hair and having found out long ago that the discomfort and inconvenience was not worth the price of hidden decorum. He did wonder what Catherine thought of that and saw her staring so intently that his heart skipped a beat.

She began to move around him a little and he followed her, realizing belatedly that she had not been able to see him well in the dim room and wanted the moonlight to reveal more. He stood still under her hot regard, feeling somewhat like a haunch of meat being examined by William. He could sense that Catherine liked what she was seeing. Very much so. He closed his eyes and tried to remain calm.

Catherine could now see Vincent in the moon's magical light – and what she saw took her breath away. He was large, but perfectly-proportioned and lean, wide-shouldered, broad-chested, with long muscular legs, large well-formed feet and solid arms. The moonlight turned his skin to mercury, his fur to silver and his hair to white gold. She could see the tenseness of his muscles under his skin, sense the tight control in his stillness. His beauty was the stuff of fantasies – better even than and what his unusual face and hands had promised.

There was only one word for what she saw – feline – with the strength and grace of the big jungle cats. She looked into his face and saw that his mouth was slightly open and he was panting, his canines gleaming, his eyes closed. He knew what she was feeling and it thrilled him. The thought made her heart race, and a soft moan escaped her. She forced herself to finish her examination.

Her breathing quickened as she finally allowed her self to look closely where his legs joined. Here the fur lengthened into a dense patch of hair, slightly lighter in colour, more like his mane. In the moonlight it was a wonderful backdrop to his exposed manhood. She could see now why underwear was impractical for him. He was magnificent. The skin of his organ was darker than his chest. His testicles hung like tennis balls, enticingly. There was soft look about them which she ached to feel with her hands, sure that they would delight her. Above these, his penis, deliciously thick, was draped, partially hidden inside a foreskin but definitely aroused. She sighed.

Then, as she watched, it began to grow, emerging from its sheath. Nothing had prepared her for this erotic sight. He was lengthening and swelling, rising beneath her eyes. She gasped and felt her legs weaken under her. Heat rose from her in waves. She felt as if she were going to spontaneously combust.

Vincent was enjoying Catherine's heated examination of his moonlit body, but her emotional reaction to his emerging penis was completely unexpected. Fiery arousal blazed across their bond, making him groan and open his eyes to look at her. A moan escaped her and he could almost feel the waves of heat emanating from her, even from this distance. It was too much for a man to bear. He took a step closer to her. She moved closer too, then suddenly bent to kiss the top of his manhood, now almost vertical. That soft touch was almost his undoing. He growled deep in his throat, felt her thrill across the bond as he embraced her, his organ throbbing between them against her belly. His heat and hers seemed to be building into an inferno. The ambient temperature of the room, and the warm breeze on his back, seemed suddenly cold in comparison.

He kept himself under tight control as Catherine kissed his neck, moving her lips to the hollow of his Adam's apple, licking it gently as she grasped his biceps, stroked the long, silky hair she found there. His skin tingled where she touched and she seemed to leave a trail of fire in her wake. She rubbed her face and breasts against his chest, making him shiver with desire. Her nipples felt hard and left a trail of fire behind them as she moved. She was obviously intrigued by his body fur.

Then she clasped him under his arms. He quivered violently as she ran her tongue across the middle of his chest to one nipple and then to the other.

Time for him to take some distracting action before he exploded, he decided.

He caressed her back with his hands, kissed her head, worked his way around her neck with his lips and tongue, following that trail she had marked for him. She obligingly left her explorations to give him room. He felt her shiver with desire as he reached the valley between her breasts. Then he realized he was far more undressed than she - and decided to rectify the situation.

He gently slipped her gown's spaghetti straps off her shoulders, carefully keeping his nails turned up. Catherine moved away just enough to shrug it off and let it cascade with a silken rustle to the floor. Then she kissed his cheek and captured his mouth as he turned to her. They stood thus for an eternity, lips pressed, massaging, tasting. She ran her tongue along the cleft of his upper lip and Vincent could not prevent his body shuddering in reaction. He had never known such an erotic sensation. His manhood was pulsing in fiery pain. He growled in excess arousal and felt their bond ignite, white hot.

Catherine realized that for the first time, her crystal and Vincent's rose in its leather pouch were pressed together between their naked skins. That thought made her sigh in happiness. However, afraid that they might be detrimental to their lovemaking, she lifted off her chain and Vincent did the same with his pouch. Both of them were panting as they lay them on a nearby dresser, without taking their eyes off each other. She could feel his passion, his emotions and almost his thoughts, as he could hers. She pressed her body against his, encircling his waist with her arms and hugged him. She did not want to let him go for even a second. The heat emanating from his manhood was almost burning her.

Vincent could wait no longer. He lifted Catherine to him by her buttocks, and carried her to the bed, laying her on it. He rose above her, barely touching her, feeling her heat radiating onto him, her scent driving him mad. He lay beside her soft, white length and his hands began an exploration of her unknown territory. He kept his eyes closed, relying on his other senses. He found that she had many textures and temperatures, and that in arousal her heat seemed to be focused in her belly – and below. He could feel the softness of fine hair on her legs. Her hips were chilly, her breasts warmer. Her nipples were tantalizingly erect as he brushed his lips over them.

His ministrations were rewarded with a gasp of delight from her. Then she interrupted his exploration with demands of her own.

She captured Vincent's face with her hands, then her lips and tongue. She found herself fascinated by the silkiness of his skin and the softness of the fur along the wide bridge of his nose, the long hair of his eyebrows and the worry line in the centre of his forehead. Then she kissed his closed eyes as he lay still under her hands. With her tongue she again explored the cleft above his lip, felt him shudder, then nuzzled his full lower lip.

She felt Vincent's tension building in the muscles clasped to her. His hands were now massaging her breasts and ribs. She pressed her lips to his hungrily, as her hands caressed his chest and its soft fur. She clasped him around his neck, rubbing her breasts against his nipples as he moved to put his arms behind her and hug her closer. Their ecstasy built into something tangible, a ball of molten rock around them.

He drew her up so he could kiss her breasts. She buried her face in his hair, delighting in its softness. The gentleness of his lips on her nipples was almost her undoing. She felt flaming passion rise from deep inside her. She fought it down and kissed the top of his head, letting her hands explore his shoulders. There was muscle there too, covered in longer hair, like a shawl. It made her want to see more of him, to explore until there were no more unknowns.

But there were more urgent demands. She could feel his manhood throbbing on her legs and the imperative was too much to deny. She raised his face to hers, gave him a lascivious kiss on his lips and slid down until that throbbing magnificence was between her thighs, now moist with anticipation. Then she lifted one leg onto his and with a slight movement positioned him, then drove herself down onto him, clamping him there. He slid in and the heat and pressure of him inside her almost made her weep for joy. There was a huge sigh, hers or his – or both perhaps - she did not know or care.

Vincent thought he would die from the sheer pleasure of feeling himself inside Catherine, her moistness, her aroused muscles throbbing and clamping him. Her warmth enclosed him. He held her close now and her arms encircled him. Her face was buried in his neck. He moved as close to her as he could, was glad he was not lying on her, as their passion built.

They were truly one and the fire they both felt blazed across their bond and lifted them on fountains of magma, a volcano of passion. He began to move his hips a little, while inside her he was swelling and pulsing. He reflexively thrust himself in further and Catherine canted her hips to meet him.

There was an explosion building and when it came, it was a white hot nova that inundated both their senses. He was blinded, dumb, deaf. His seed expelled in a liquid fire. They climaxed together, as one, inseparable, the glorious inferno holding them suspended until it passed over them, searing them clean, reborn.

Vincent roared, his neck was arched and his head flung back in his passion. The sound was so deep that it was more felt than heard – like thunder in the far distance. Catherine felt it to her core, and looked at him, marveling that such an amazing sound could come from any throat. His eyes were closed. She shivered in reaction as she let herself sag back onto the bed, tucked her head under his arm.

“Oh, Catherine,” he breathed into her hair, the first words they had spoken that night.

“Vincent,” she whispered into his chest, shuddering with love, release and happiness. No one had ever made her feel like this. She was completely at his mercy.

She clasped him to her, unwilling to move, wanting him inside her forever. A thrum began to tickle her breasts and soon a soft vibration danced along her skin where she was pressed against him. When it grew into a reverberation that seemed to tickle her bones, she finally opened her eyes to look up into his face. His eyes were shining in the moonlight and full of wonder, love and confirmation as he looked into hers.

Her voice throaty, she whispered, “Vincent, you’re purring. I had no idea you could do that.”

“I did not know either,” he rasped, his voice deeper than she had ever heard it. “Until now, there had been no opportunity to know. There are no words Catherine, for what I feel now.”

“Try,” she said.

There were a few moments of silence, before the words “loved” and “blessed” were whispered into her ear, followed by a sigh that she felt down to her toes.

His purr settled down into something soft and sensual, but so erotic that she found desire rising in her again. She nudged him so that he obligingly rolled onto his back, and she managed to keep him inside her as she followed him, letting her body find comfortable contours in his. His legs reflexively opened and wrapped themselves behind her own. She ran her hands over his chest fur. Her lips were drawn to his nipples again. His purring deepened and she could feel it tingling inside her, where his manhood had swelled again. She knew he had felt her desire through their bond, as she could now sense his. She moved against him, just a little, feeling as if she was lying on an earthquake, a warm, sensual tremor that rippled along her body, first in one direction, then the other.

He held her tight and they moved together to the thrum of his love purr. He felt huge inside her and she felt as if she was going to burst with desire. He tilted his hips so that he could move her forward enough to capture her mouth with his and his thrum grew to a seismic crescendo, carrying them both along on tremors that lifted her gently and carried her over moon-kissed hills and into warm valleys. She put her hands behind his head and lifted him to her, nuzzling his neck as a series of quivers shook them both, deep inside.

When the big one came, the power of it lifted her as Vincent’s hips arched in response, and she slid her arms behind him, grasping him tightly in the soft fur she felt there. Release, when it came, brought joy beyond anything she had known. She felt as if two huge tectonic plates had at last settled into their final resting place.

She gasped in reaction as he roared again and she let go of his back to catch his face between her hands as he settled back onto the bed, his knees lifted and his hips angling her towards his face. She covered that face with

kisses until she was sure she had not missed a spot. He wrapped his hands around her tighter, his eyes closed. His purr softened. He sighed, kissing her ear and whispering her name in deep, ragged tones. She was unable to speak and lay down on him, her face against his neck, her breasts pressed to his soft fur, feeling as if he was the only solid thing in a universe made of jelly. He was deliciously warm and damp underneath her and his presence still inside was exciting, promising more delights to come. The musky smell of their love surrounded her.

She felt the night breeze along her back and shivered a little. He immediately gathered her to him and turned so that she was beneath him, his body arched over hers. He knelt on both sides of her, his weight held up on his elbows. His manhood felt deliciously warm inside her. She closed her eyes, content to let Vincent take the initiative.

Vincent regarded Catherine with a sensual joy that was new to him. He bent over her and began to tongue her small, firm breasts. Her body was beautiful beyond anything he could have imagined. He wanted to explore her.

The rasp of his slightly rough tongue excited her and her back arched in reaction. He sucked her nipples, his long incisors touching her lightly - which made her gasp with passion. He found that delightful trail of scent and confirmed where it led, but did not want to go there, lest he lose his position inside her. That sensation thrilled him. He would happily stay there forever, if that were possible.

She tasted wonderful. He moved slowly up to her neck and Adam's apple, over her chin until he reached her lips. She sighed with love and pulled him to her, urging him to lay down on her. He clasped both her hands in his and she gripped him tightly, their tension tightening into a coiled spring.

He was hardening inside her, swelling to fill her, and he marveled at that. He bent to kiss her forehead, his hair draping them. He kissed her closed eyes. He explored her right ear, tasting it and nuzzling it with his nose, then softly ran his lips across her face, pausing to worship her nose before moving to her left ear. He walked his lips along her jawline, spending a moment on the scar she kept as a remind of that time, so long ago, when he had found her. He moved to her lips again and there he stayed, kissing her with a passion and love that their bond magnified into something solid, deep and eternal.

Vincent clasped her fingers in his own and stretched their arms out as far as he could.

Catherine felt as if she were a small boat tied up at a buoy, buffeted by the swell of a growing storm. Vincent moved his legs between hers, spreading them, and she felt his soft thighs rub her, felt the velvet touch of his testicles against her crotch, and moaned.

He arched his back and moved his mouth from her face to her breasts, where he nuzzled her nipples and massaged them with his tongue again. She gasped and struggled in his hands, pulling him closer, begging him to continue. The waves of desire lifted her and she felt him stiffen and lengthen inside her. He left her breasts to look in her eyes and once again, his face covered hers, sought her lips. His tongue found hers and twined around it, then hers explored his cleft again and they were lost. She wrapped her legs around him, wanted to get closer yet, to merge their skins.

She held onto him, the only solid thing in an ocean of roiling ecstasy. A storm of giant, heated breakers crashed over them and through them pulsing along her skin. She groaned and he whuffed as their climax cast them over a waterfall into space. She tightened her pelvic muscles around him and held him tightly as they tumbled over and over down a smooth cascade until they emerged to float on a limitless lake of contentment. His roar was shorter, but still traveled along her bones like a silent thunderclap.

Vincent's purr was subdued now, but Catherine did not need that to tell her he was contented. He let go of her hands and she nudged him so that he obligingly shifted off her sideways, the other side this time. She tightened her thighs, still miraculously managing to keep him inside her. She felt his hand in the small of her back, warm, soft, his fingers moving in small circles.

That lovely weight gone from her, she felt as light as air, a soap bubble, and she drew one hand down his chest, lower still, and began to stroke his inner thighs, now wet with their love, touched his column where it entered her and was rewarded with a quiver. She kissed the shoulder that lay nearest her and licked the salty damp on

his chest fur, moving to explore under his arm with her tongue. The scent of him drew a sigh of delight from her. He smelled like warm bread, yeasty, along with the musk she associated with male arousal – and something almost spicy, like ginger. She was so happy, she felt as if she could float on the breeze from the balcony, a wisp of dandelion fluff.

Vincent sensed Catherine's thoughts and rose slowly to his knees, carefully keeping himself inside her still. He held her under her buttocks with both hands and lifted her so she was free of the bed, resting on his thighs. He lifted her legs one after the other so that they rose along his chest on either side of his head. She linked her feet behind him, a tethered kite. The position, the feel of her legs against his fur, were so unexpectedly erotic that his skin flared and his groin began to throb. He felt her response to his extension inside her. He realized there could be no secrets between them when their bodies were so merged. That thought delighted him.

Catherine let the currents of love carry her into the realm of air and she felt as if she flew through the wind tunnel below, buffeted by hot winds that nothing could tame, wild and free. She felt herself blown skyward on the wings of a tempest as Vincent's hot lips caressed her legs. His breath was feverish on her neck and chest. A hurricane of desire gathered her up and she felt Vincent's reaction. He was holding her as if she might fly away.

She threw back her head as the storm caught her and he nuzzled her neck, touching her lightly with his rough tongue. The sensation was her undoing and she let go of all restraints. His roar was summer thunder, soon over, but their climax was long and sensual, a tropical tempest. It deposited them together on a soft beach kissed by moonlight. They sought each other's lips again in confirmation and completion. He let her down softly next to him, still keeping himself inside her.

Catherine felt completely sated now, and looking at Vincent, saw the confirmation of joyous fatigue in his eyes too, along with disbelief and amazement. His purr was no more than the quiver of a whisker, but she could feel it. She had never known such satisfaction. She felt as if they had conquered the four elements with their love. Perhaps they had.

"Catherine," Vincent croaked, "is it always like this? I'm afraid I might not be able to do it again."

"No, my love, it isn't," she murmured, tears rolling down her cheeks in happiness. "We are something new – something that has never been, as you said once. But remember that I have been celibate for a long time – ever since I met you. And I have wanted you for so long. Then these weeks of waiting since that first time. You have tried me sorely."

They hugged and their love became a warm blanket, encircling them to the exclusion of all else.

She snuggled close to him, then spotted something which made her curious. One hand crept up his neck and under his tangled hair until she found an ear. It was as soft as the finest velvet. She grinned as she felt him shudder at her touch, and promised herself a better examination - later.

"Catherine," he protested, his chest beginning to heave with laughter.

"Vincent, you are a book that I'll never finish. Nor do I want to - but no more at present, I promise."

Then, in that soft voice that always sent shivers down her spine, Vincent quoted:

"Assuming, ascension, assumption assent

All of our nonsense is finally non-sent --

With honourable mention for whatever we meant

You are my content, and I am content

Incandescent invention, and blessed event

Tumescent distention, tumultuous descent

Our bone of contention at last being spent

I am your contents, and I am content"

"Oh," sighed Catherine. "Beautiful! Voyotsky, isn't it?"

"Yes," Vincent murmured, hugging her. "I have always loved the play on words, but until now, I never realized how perfectly they describe lovemaking. My contents are yours, Catherine – and I fear I am quite spent."

She was exhausted too, she realized, as she kissed him one more time, full on those remarkable lips. Then she turned her shoulder to him, felt his hands follow her, almost reluctant to move from where they had held her buttocks all this time. She felt a keen sense of loss when his manhood slid from inside her, but spooned her bottom against him, felt his sheathed and delicious warmth in the crack between them and snuggled as close to him as she could. One of his arms slid around her head and the other draped over her breasts, protectively. She could feel the hair of his hands there and the slight pressure of his nails.

Nothing could compare to the sensations inspired by this amazing man!

He sighed deeply in response and she whispered "I love you" - or maybe she only thought it. She drifted into sleep.

Chapter 4

When she awoke, Vincent's arms were still about her and his breath blew softly on her neck. The room was achingly bright. She had been afraid that he would be gone with the dawn, she realized, and was filled with joy that he was not.

The sun which blazed into the room promised a beautiful day. She lay still, wondering what he dreamed, and knew at once that he was awake, had been patiently waiting for her to do the same. She turned over to look at him and he turned onto his back, eyes closed, contentment in every line of him.

Vincent had felt the warmth of the sun for some time, but once Catherine awoke, decided to turn onto his back. The sensual caress and soft heat of the sun was completely outside his experience. He so seldom saw the sun below – and had never felt it on his naked skin. Even Devin had not been able to arrange that.

He felt his purr rising. His hands curled and relaxed. He sighed. He realized, at last, what he had been missing in his tunnel world. He was eternally grateful to Catherine for giving him this gift. He felt as if he could bask forever.

He drifted into a nap.

Catherine could feel Vincent's pleasure at the sun on his body and realized it was a new experience for him. She could not take her eyes off him. The sun turned his mane into a golden aura around his wonderful leonine face. She had seldom seen his face so entirely and never in such light. His profile, without the deep shadows the dark made of his features, was achingly majestic. She felt her heart flutter as she ran her eyes along his beautiful body, limned in gold, revealed in all its splendor. It seemed designed for sunlight, not candlelight and gloom.

His hands were turned palm up and as she watched, his hands curled. His tough nails resembled claws as his fingers tensed and stretched. The sight was so erotic she caught her breath. She could feel his utter contentment along their bond. More than ever, he reminded her of a large cat, stretched out and purring on her bed.

She leaned over him, took his face in her hands and kissed his lips, softly.

"Oh Vincent, if you could see what you look like to me. You are glorious. I love you more than words."

His eyes were winter sky blue as they opened and looked into hers. A smile touched his lips. "I *can* see, Catherine. Your love is my mirror."

She felt heat rising within her again, felt her face flush, and knew he could see it – and knew that he was its cause. She couldn't look in his eyes, but that just made her need for him increase. Their bond ignited and she knew that he was matching her need with his own. They eased into slow foreplay in the sunshine. She lay back and he knelt over her. She watched enthralled as his manhood extended. She arched her back in pleasure as he eased himself into her and his hands caught her, lifting her up carefully, until she sat on his lap and he sat back on his heels and buttocks. Her legs straddled his lean hips.

She wrapped her arms about his neck and remembered his ears, searched them out, one after the other, under the thick, sun-kissed mane as he nuzzled whatever he could reach. She found them to be almost round and softly-furred, like fine chenille. Her lips kissed them and her tongue explored the opening. Her teeth gently captured each ear so she could taste it. Delightful!

Vincent, nuzzling her neck, quivered inside her in reaction to this new sensation, making her gasp. He fit her so well, filled her so completely that it was difficult to think of anything else. She pulled his head around to her so she could reach his lips, kissed them hungrily, parting them, biting down lightly on them. She drove her tongue along the cleft and between those amazing canines, found his tongue, caressed it with her own. With her hands she stroked his neck, finding smooth warmth under his hair. She reached behind to where his long hair formed a V that eased into fur at the top of his back. There were soft curls at his nape. She stroked them and was rewarded with a hip thrust that made her arch her back in delight and forced her to leave his mouth in order to breathe. She flung her head back in the sunshine, her crotch a burning ache now.

Vincent's breath on her neck as he licked it was hot and fast. When he trailed his lips down her chest and began to nuzzle her nipples, she suddenly lost all control. He exploded inside her and she saw stars as her climax rose to a new crescendo with his. She gasped with joy and Vincent growled, then roared. That muted sound made her tighten her thighs and deliver an exquisite pain to them both, felt through their bond.

As they both relaxed, she threw her arms around his neck and buried her head under his hair, feeling a giggle starting in her stomach. His arms held her tight against him, their bodies slick with moisture that was tickled by the warm air from the open doors. He was panting as if he were short of air. She was a little breathless herself and wondered if there were limits to such happiness.

Vincent's love for her, and his certainty that it would never end, filled her with happiness and she sighed.

Under her breasts, she could feel the vibration of his purr rising again. She eased herself away, reluctantly, taking a wonderful deep breath so that she could look at this man who had given her so much of himself.

In the sunshine, naked, he was godlike. His skin was smooth and glistened pinkish gold between the thick mats of tawny, sun-bright fur on his chest. Along his upper chest, a patch of curly hair eased into long silken strands that extended along his arms and legs, a gilded nimbus in the sunlight. His face was noble, dignified - and she loved every part of it. His eyes were watching her and she knew he could sense her appreciation.

She knew he had no conceit – quite the reverse. He hated mirrors and she had removed them from her apartment walls after he had smashed one in the throes of his illness. Apart from a round mirror on her antique vanity table, which she had covered, and another in her bathroom, on the inside door of her medicine cabinet, the only other mirror she owned was a full length one hidden on the back wall of her hall closet. She desperately wanted to see them both in a large mirror, naked – in that position painted by Kristopher Gentian - but she kept that wish hidden, for now.

"Oh Vincent – you are exquisite! How will I ever be able to bear being parted from you, even for a few hours."

"Don't think about it, Catherine. We are together now. That is all that matters. I will not leave you until you tire of me."

"We have days ahead of us, Vincent. I could never tire of you. Will anyone worry about you below?"

"Father knows where I am and why," Vincent said, in that silken voice which made her tingle all over.

"He gave me his blessing – with a blush. He has not forgotten his assignation with Jessica. However, I fear by now the whole of our community knows I am here and is probably placing bets on what hour I will return – and in what condition."

Catherine laughed and placed her hands on either side of her lover's face. She planted a kiss on his cleft and

then his mouth, but lightly. Looking out the french doors, she got such a wistful expression that Vincent asked, "What is it Catherine?"

"Just a thought, Vincent. I'm very happy, but it would have been nice to lay on the terrace and sunbathe. That would be a new experience for you. But I'm afraid to expose you to the greedy eyes of women sitting in their sterile bowers with binoculars."

She laughed again. "But we can sunbathe right here on the bed, hidden by the sheers. Lay on your back, I want to admire you again."

She rose from his lap and rolled to the side, letting him slide out from her, a feeling so lovely that she was momentarily distracted. He obligingly lay stretched out on the bed, his legs slightly apart, his manhood sheathed again, but with such couched promise that her breath caught as she regarded him. Yes, the hair around that magnificent organ was a lighter gold and his testicles were lightly-furred in chestnut. She desperately wanted to feel him, play with him there, but restrained herself. She promised herself a intense exploration later.

His eyes were closed and his broad chest rose and fell, slowed as he began to nap under her gaze. She envied his ability to do that so easily. A slight rasp in his breathing revealed he was purring. His body was in superb condition. The sureness that he was hers now, in every way, made happiness rise inside her until she thought it must be branded on her forehead.

With the sun shining on the fine fur of Vincent's chest, she could see the slight dimples and fine lines marking old injuries, most acquired saving her life. She had some scars from those encounters as well. What had she been thinking when she applied to work in the DA's office? How could she have put herself - and drawn Vincent too - into such life-threatening situations? Was any job satisfaction worth those risks? Did she deserve such love, such devotion, such protection, from a man like this?

Love was the answer, as well as the question, she realized. She would do anything for him, and he for her. But she knew now that she could not continue as before. Everything had changed. He was even more precious to her now. She could not risk him any more.

His response was to open his eyes and regard her, their bond transmitting his complete belief in her, his understanding. There would be no recriminations from Vincent. He knew that she did what she had to do. Their bond reverberated with his love, with no reservations or doubts.

Soberly, Catherine brought her mind back to his body, lying on her bed in the sunlight, a dream made real. There was more to see.

"Vincent, please turn onto your stomach. I haven't seen your back."

He gave her a look that spoke volumes and obligingly turned over, his arms angled up to the headboard, his head turned away from her and his eyes closed again. Now she could see his face in profile again and it stirred her anew. She drank in his golden-pink skin, looked at the hard muscles in his back, bulging slightly under soft amber fur, the narrow waist that eased into firm buttocks, the solid thighs that had clasped her so firmly and his lean, muscular calves. The long, fine hair along his legs, shoulders, arms and buttocks shone like spun gold. Under his arms, a fan of long hair caught the sun.

The tops of his feet were covered with coppery hair, like that on his hands, but his soles were a darker colour where they now lay exposed to the sun. His toes were large and long, with short, tough-looking nails, similar to those on his hands. She promised herself a better exploration of his feet with lips and tongue later, and felt his awareness heighten.

Between his thighs, she could see the soft rounds of his balls, a sight that made her catch her breath.

Catherine drank him in, wanting to forget nothing. She had never considered male beauty as a criterion for love. She liked intelligent men, sensual, poetic and caring men. Vincent had all the qualities she had thought impossible to find in one man. And he was so beautiful - body, heart and soul. She knew him better than she had ever known any man - and yet wanted to discover more, knew there was much more to him - and that he could never disappoint her in any way. She could look no longer.

Lying passive under Catherine's examination, Vincent felt her unequivocal admiration of a body he had kept hidden from her for so long. Now he wondered why he had been so adamant about it. So much time wasted, so much painful frustration. Truly he had been a fool! Love changes everything. He believed that old saying now.

He suddenly felt Catherine drape herself along his back and felt her appreciation of his soft fur and hard body. She gave herself over to sensation and began to stroke him, beginning with his neck and continuing down his ribs to the sides of his buttocks, wrapping her fingers in the longer hair there, then moving down to stroke along his thighs. He could feel his heat rising to answer hers and suddenly her nipples hardened against his back and he shuddered in reaction. Catherine licked the back of his neck and ran her tongue down his spine, slid her hands under his pelvis, easing closer and closer to his manhood. He could not prevent his back arching in desire as her fingers reached his testicles. He felt as tightly wound as the old grandfather clock in Father's chamber.

His penis was now painfully trying to extend into the mattress and he had to take remedial action. He rose sideways and dumped Catherine onto the bed, quickly turning to face her, trying to form his face into a stern expression, and knowing that he failed. His eyes captured her sultry green ones and he spoke gruffly.

"Catherine, you are torturing me. I hope you are prepared to make amends."

She smiled at him and for an answer, grabbed his manhood gently and clasped it between her legs. Her heat urged it to swell and stiffen.

Vincent growled at her touch on his penis an involuntary reaction he could not control. Something else he had never known before. He moved to position himself better, still on his side, before thrusting slowly into her moist passage. He clasped her breasts in his hands and bowed his head over them, breathing on them. She pulled his shoulders to her and tightened her thighs around him. He was now pulsing inside her, all rational thought gone. He thrust urgently and before he could stop himself was enmeshed in their joint orgasm, this time a mild, sensual and very quick release, as if a spring had been suddenly released. He sighed, emptied and sated both at once, again.

"Catherine, I think we must have used up all our hot passion for the time being."

Vincent looked contrite, but she knew he was not. He had enjoyed this lovemaking as much as the others. He had no secrets from her now either. She relaxed beside him, but kept her legs clamped to hold him inside her as long as possible. She nuzzled into his armpit, finding a hollow that seemed made for her. She sighed deeply, his thrum caressing her with his love.

They dozed again, the sun on them, warming them with its impersonal caress.

When she awoke, her stomach started to rumble, and Vincent's did as well, in sympathy. Catherine remembered her manners.

"Vincent, you must be hungry. I know I am. Let me find us something to give us strength. I think we may need it. I will never be able to get enough of you or let you leave me."

He grinned at her. "Then, Catherine, I am your prisoner. At least you are not planning to deprive me of food, although I fear Father may want to petition you for my release - eventually."

Catherine moved and felt him slide from her, slickly, deliciously. She moved to roll onto her back, slowly and reluctantly, but suddenly felt an urgent need to use the bathroom, got up quickly and ran into it. The relief was incredible and she felt bubbles of his warm liquid seeping from her as well. No surprise, she thought smiling. She must be filled to overflowing.

She looked up to see Vincent in the doorway and realized his need was as great as hers had been. Quickly she rose and let him relieve himself.

"I'll turn on the shower. I think we could both use that," she murmured. She opened the door to the stall and moved inside to adjust the spray to wide and the water to body temperature. She looked over her shoulder at Vincent, who was gazing at her behind with his mouth open, panting through his long incisors, as if short of air.

"*She walks in beauty*," he quoted, his voice low.

"Come," she said, reaching for his hands, resolutely not looking below his chest so as not to get distracted again.

He took her hand and stepped into the stall, making it wonderfully crowded. For the next couple of minutes they luxuriated in the spray, until Catherine remembered the soap. She squirted some into her palm and began to rub it into Vincent's chest. She moved further down, bending slightly to gently soap his organs in an objective manner (a groan greeted that) and moved down his legs to his feet. He soaped her back as she did so, reaching under her from both sides to give attention to her breasts, almost distracting her from her work.

"Turn around," she ordered, and he did. She massaged soap around his neck, into his shoulders, under his arms, over his back and ribs, then down his spine, lingering over his muscular buttocks, down his firm thighs (garnering another groan) and calves. She tried not to be affected by her sense of his growing arousal as she turned him to face her again.

"My turn," Vincent declared huskily. He soaped her everywhere he had not been able to reach, even gently caressing her between her legs (her turn to groan now), before moving down her legs to her feet.

Then he stood up and they both turned around to get rinsed off.

Catherine now couldn't resist looking down and was not surprised to see that Vincent's penis was ready for action. She looked up at his face to see his eyes glinting aquamarine blue. He bent down to kiss her fully and passionately and once again she felt her knees turn to rubber.

He gathered her to him, lifting her so she could raise her knees and clasp her legs around his hips. Their wet skin seemed to transmit an electrical charge where they touched and Catherine put her arms around his neck, nuzzling him under the closest ear.

Vincent lifted her enough to find his position again and he entered her part way, moving himself in and out slightly, making her arch her back and gasp. He held her up tightly to his chest and nuzzled her head and neck. She groaned as he held back from full penetration. He was glad he could support her weight without effort.

His legs felt a little shaky, so he pushed her against the warm, wet wall and gathered her lips in his, nuzzling them, biting them softly as the water flowed down his hair.

She licked his nose where it joined his cleft, sucked the water from his lips and parted them, found his tongue with hers. He felt her arousal in her tense labial muscles and she throbbed against his organ, feeding a fire across their bond that made them both groan with desire. He pushed himself gently further into her and felt himself pulsing and swelling inside her. The sensation was too all-consuming to deny. He thrust harder then, completely into her, and her love and his exploded suddenly, without warning, elevating them into realms beyond Earth, yet again.

Catherine sighed and sagged against him, weak with release. Vincent, still wrapped in her legs, shifted slightly, feeling suddenly as if his strength had found its limit. He let her down gently to the floor, his organ sliding out to fall between them. She caught the tip of it between her thighs, clamping it, stroking the slick warmth of it with her legs. He sighed deeply. She looked up at him, green eyes smoking, and rubbed her belly against him as his purr vibrated between them.

Their bond told them everything they needed to know. She was sure words were inadequate anyway for how she felt now.

They moved to rinse themselves again under the lukewarm water. Catherine decided it should be a bit cooler, and gave the handle a slight kick with one foot. The resulting chilly water brought a gasp from both of them, but cooled their skins and their ardour. They both sighed.

She looked up at him, his hair glistening with water, his face relaxed with love, his brilliant blue eyes on hers. He was so beautiful! She stroked his face, touched his lips, and felt her arousal rising again. She knew he had caught it and she blushed.

"Catherine, you are insatiable, wonderful. I don't know how it can be so for everyone. No work would be done in this world – above or below."

She caught the implied question and smiled.

"Vincent, I have never loved like this. I have never felt so complete, so satisfied. Never. I didn't think it was physically possible to love so well and so often. I think our bond must be what makes it so so unique," she finished lamely.

"Yes, it is very strong now - as if your heart beats in my chest – as if our minds are one and magnify our passion tenfold. I'm afraid, dearest Catherine, neither of us can hide any emotions anymore."

"I know Vincent. I feel it too. But, I don't want to hide anything from you. You are all I want."

"We still have not eaten," he reminded her gently as she turned off the shower at last, showing his fangs and growling in mock anger, an expression that did not jive with his purr, tingling where her skin touched his in their light embrace.

She laughed at his humour. It was an aspect of his character she had not seen often, and wanted to see again. Had their love had brought him to this? She knew suddenly that it had demolished yet another barrier. There need be no complex explanations between them now, she thought with joy – and no misunderstandings.

"Come Vincent, let's dry off a little and then see what my kitchen has to satisfy us."

"I'm not sure there is food enough in the world to equal what I have found in you," Vincent replied gently, looking down at her.

They towed off quickly, mutually deciding to let the warm summer air finish the job. Catherine took his hand and led him to the living room – and stopped.

"Vincent, why don't you relax on the couch. If you come into the kitchen, you will distract me and get nothing but water and soda crackers."

He looked at her sideways in pretend shock, let go of her hand, and padded to the couch. She turned away reluctantly and went into the kitchen.

...

Earlier in the week, she had realized that she had no idea what foods Vincent preferred. She had eaten below so seldom – and then had other priorities, primarily Vincent himself, that she had not really paid attention.

So, for this occasion she had chosen foods both conservative and healthy – and avoided anything strongly flavoured or spiced. She prepared a platter with various cheeses, cold ham, smoked salmon and cherry tomatoes. She heated up the oven and put in an unbaked baguette to brown. On a second platter, she arranged chunks of melon, papaya, mandarin oranges, pear and apple with some tiny cream and chocolate pastries.

Where was her butter dish? Ah there.

The scent of baking bread filled her nostrils, reminding her of Vincent, and she resolutely focused on cutting the loaf into thick slices, then arranging them in a basket. Lastly, she opened a full-bodied red wine and carried it with two glasses and the food to the table on a tray.

She padded over to look at Vincent, curled up on her dinky couch, breathing softly, eyes closed. She knew he was not deeply asleep, but he was napping and very relaxed. His unique profile surrounded by its mane of damp hair, was so exotic that it was mystical. His furry body seemed like a fantastic stuffed toy waiting to be played with. She regarded him with guilty pleasure and sighed.

He must have caught something, because he opened his eyes, rose from the couch and padded over to her in a single fluid movement that took her breath away.

"Catherine, my stomach is an empty sack and I feel like a tattered toy that has been so well-loved it has become real."

She smiled. She had read him that passage from *The Velveteen Rabbit*, the one she had read at her father's funeral. She had given him a copy of the book to read to the children below. Its message had touched Vincent deeply and it had become a favourite of the children.

"Have we food at last?" he continued, his eyes admiring her body, his voice deep with love.

She nodded, not trusting herself to speak, choosing instead to take his hand and avoid those azure eyes in order to lead him to the table. She resolutely did not look below his chest.

They both dug into the food, demolishing almost everything there and emptying the wine bottle in the process. She had never felt so hungry in her life. She wondered if perhaps she was feeling Vincent's hunger as well. She looked at him and saw the confirmation in his eyes – and an apology. She laughed deeply and heartily.

"Vincent, if I eat the way you do, you won't be able to lift me anymore – and that would be a tragedy. I must resist that particular hunger."

The day was very warm and Catherine was completely comfortable without clothes, a freedom she had seldom indulged – or had time for. Vincent too seemed quite at ease. They were now delicately eating the pastries. Neither was really hungry anymore, but the need for something sweet was irresistible. She looked at Vincent, curious.

"Vincent, is nudity accepted below?"

He looked at her with surprise, as if the question had not occurred to him.

"Many of us grew up together, you know. We see each other naked when we swim or bathe because we have communal baths – though we do allocate segregated times and there are private baths in some chambers. I share a small but beautiful bathing pool with Father. We don't walk the tunnels naked, for one thing because most are quite chilly, but our bodies are nothing we are ashamed of.

"Our children are taught to respect and appreciate their bodies. Shame for the human form is something we do not condone. They also learn responsibility – especially our fertile and hot-blooded youth. They know they can go to Father or Mary if they are having - um – challenges."

"But you always seemed so unwilling to let me see, or even feel, your body," Catherine remarked.

"Catherine, among my "family" I am accepted, have been since I was a baby. I join them swimming – we always swim naked – and I give the children swimming lessons. But you, my Catherine, had never seen more than my hands and face – and I know they are enough to frighten. I could not risk seeing the woman I love cringe at my appearance. It was not shame, but fear, which prevented me from letting you see more. It wasn't until you rescued me in the cavern that I realized you had no such fears – that I had not truly understood the love you have for me – and what such depth of love meant. But I still worried about your reaction to my appearance."

"But you all wear so many layers of clothes," Catherine remarked, wanting to hear more about below – and ask questions she had never thought about before.

"Catherine, the average temperature in the tunnels is about 50 degrees F. It is colder in the outlying tunnels, warmer where there are steam pipes or hot springs. Our layers are our insurance. We may be warm in some chambers, but never cold and never too hot. I don't really need so many layers with my ... um ... fur, but I like them. They are all made with love, so they are a comfort, making me one with those who protect me, accept me – and a reminder that I live in a unique place."

"And they keep females with raging hormones from following you around," Catherine chortled. She remembered all too well how upset Vincent had been when Lena had propositioned him - twice. She knew this was not usual, although she was well aware that other women in the tunnels found Vincent attractive. He was so many things to that community, brother, friend, teacher – and protector.

Vincent got a serious look on his face. "Yes, we have to be very aware of the emotional undercurrents in our society. It's what keeps us strong. Disharmony has a way of spreading and could destroy us. We have had our challenges, as you know."

Those times seemed remote today, in the sunshine, here in her apartment above. Catherine suddenly found herself yawning mightily. The lovemaking, the shower, food and the wine had relaxed her so much she was in danger of falling off her chair.

Vincent rose, turned, and lifted her legs and held her under her buttocks on his broad back. The softness of his fur against her breasts, as she wrapped her arms around his neck, was lovely. She sighed as he carried her into the bedroom, then lay carefully on the bed with her.

"You are no tattered toy, my love – but cuddlesome just the same," Catherine murmured.

She snuggled closer along his back, wrapped one leg over his and draped one arm over his ribs. He held her hand and in that position as she drifted into sleep.

Chapter 5

When Catherine awoke, she felt as if she had slept a lifetime away and left the known world behind. It was a feeling she felt whenever she thought of Kristopher Gentian and his portrait of them. She felt wonderful. The room was suffused in a rosy glow and a glance revealed the day was coming to an end. Where had the time gone? She had not looked at a clock since the day before – and felt strangely liberated.

Vincent! She had to look over her shoulder to see his reassuring back, although she could feel his body heat still warming her. She did not remember turning over. She realized his being there in her bed was going to take some getting used to. She hoped, on second thought, that she never took it for granted. It was such an amazing thing that she held her breath, afraid it was a dream. But no dream could be so wonderful.

He was still, his ribs expanding slowly with his soft breathing. Was he truly asleep now? She kept her mind resolutely calm, not wanting him to wake. She turned onto her back, wanting to feel his presence, his scent and the sunset. She closed her eyes and drifted into another dreamless sleep.

When she awoke again, it was to find Vincent turned towards her, his eyes on her, drinking her in now. The room was lit only by starlight and the city's night glow. It was very quiet.

"I love to feel you wake up," he murmured softly, then recited in dulcet tones.

"Out of your whole life give but a moment!

All of your life that has gone before,

All to come after it -- so you ignore,

So you make perfect the present -- condense

In a rapture of rage, for perfection's endowment,

Thought and feeling and soul and sense --

Merged in a moment which gives me at last

You around me for once, you beneath me, above me."

"Oh my love," sighed Catherine, reaching to grasp one of his hands in hers and placing it over her heart. She closed her eyes and sighed, feeling so relaxed that she was not sure she could move. But her bladder was insistent, so she reluctantly let go of Vincent's hand and slipped off the bed to use the bathroom.

Vincent waited until she was back in bed before rising to do the same.

When he returned, she held out her arms and he lay close to her, hugging her and covering her face and neck with kisses. She nuzzled an ear as it came within range, buried herself in his hair, then explored his strong neck further with her lips. The skin there was hairless and as smooth as satin. She desired him as she had never wanted anything in the world.

Vincent caressed her buttocks then moved his hands in lazy circles around her thighs. Suddenly, he drew a long finger between her legs. The muscle spasm of delight that resulted made her clutch him and was nearly her undoing. She grabbed the back of his neck to bring his lips down to hers, but he had other ideas.

Vincent lifted his body over hers, holding her hands clasped beside her head. Then he leaned over her face, his hair a curtain that hid them and began to kiss it slowly, his lips barely touching her, his soft upper lip drawing circles around her eyes, nose and mouth before he planted a seductive kiss on that last.

He could feel her growing arousal whispering along their bond, but was not to be distracted.

He moved downward, to explore her neck and breasts, massaging her with his lips. He moved around her belly in slow arcs, letting his hair brush her and drawing shivers of delight from her. She was panting by the time he gave her belly button a complete examination with lips and tongue. He let go of her hands and she stroked his hair and ears.

When he reached her pubic triangle at last, he stroked her hips and sank his mouth onto her, pausing to draw up her scent and delighting in this new sensation. Her hair was coarser here, curly, tickling his face. He was enthralled. He kissed her and began to explore with his tongue, tickling her clitoris, pausing only briefly when her back arched in delight, to cup her bottom in his hands. He nuzzled deeper into her secret place and eased his rough tongue around her labia folds, softly into her openings, felt her swell and open to him. He carefully let his long incisors comb her hair and felt her losing control as he sucked on her, enjoying the taste of her fluids. He pressed his face to her, smelling her scent and running his nose along her, massaging her with his lips at the same time. He pushed his tongue deep into her vaginal opening, tasting this special place, exploring it - and felt her lose control completely. Her orgasm exploded and she moaned and wound her legs about his neck, pulling him down onto her, keeping him there, wanting more.

But he was not finished. He licked up her juices, making her arch her back again in ecstasy, then caressed her clitoris with tongue and lips until she released, again and yet again, their bond clearly transmitting her extreme passion.

She was completely at his mercy. Her hands grabbed his ears to keep from drowning in an endless wave of orgasms that almost overwhelmed her. He rasped his tongue along her slit and she lifted her legs over his back and twined her ankles to lock him to her. She tightened her legs to lift herself higher off the bed, gasping and mewling in beautiful agony as he elevated her to ecstasy again and again. Her body did not seem to belong to her any longer. She felt as if she were dissolving. She was not sure how much more she could take. At last, she managed to gasp out "mercy" as he sucked and massaged her.

With that thought, Vincent withdrew his tongue and slid his mouth slowly away from her, letting her gently down onto the bed. She let her legs unclamp and closed her eyes, which were burning with unshed tears. She was completely undone, satiated, unable to think.

"Oh," she breathed. "Oh, oh."

He slid to her side and hugged her to him, contrite but obviously happy he had been able to please her so.

She buried her face in his shoulder, unable to look at him. She began crying freely now, in reaction.

"Catherine, I'm sorry," he murmured, concerned. "You tasted so wonderful, I couldn't stop."

"Oh Vincent," she whispered hoarsely into his shoulder. "Don't be sorry. I am just so happy, so fulfilled, that I'm boneless."

She sighed, let her body relax into his arms and slid again into that dark, soft place reserved for lovers.

She did not sleep long, but felt wonderfully refreshed when she opened her eyes again. Vincent still held her and she knew she must do something special for him now, in return.

He did not move, waiting for her to make her intentions clear, which she did by nudging him onto his back.

"Time for some in-depth research," she told him, and felt his curiosity.

She reversed herself on him, laying along his length, and began an inch by inch exploration of his feet. They were large, long and beautifully-shaped with hard nails like those on his hands.

She ran her hand along their tops, loving the feel of that silky hair which seemed to be his trademark. She put her cheek to it, smelling his scent, while she clasped one foot in each hand, kneading them, barely able to span them with her fingers. His toes curled in reaction.

His toes were long and she massaged them one by one, licking between them, discovering that he tasted salty and clean. She felt him shudder down his length as she kissed the tips of his toes then sucked them one by one, mindful of his nails.

Then she explored his soles with her hands, which had tough-feeling skin and big pads, as if he could cling to rock faces with ease.

She ran her lips against the hair on top of his feet, moving up to his ankles, discovering as she eased herself backwards that her own feet were tangled in Vincent's soft hair. It was a new and wonderful sensation, but now was not the time to dwell on it. She filed it away as something to explore another time.

Vincent was now holding onto her ankles, as if for support.

She ran her hands over his ankles, massaged his Achilles tendon and ran her hands up his legs to his calves, stroking his hair and kissing him. She felt the firm muscles there and massaged them before moving her fingers to the back of his knees. She put her head between his legs and lifted one leg after the other, licking behind his knees, while stroking his kneecaps. His muscles shuddered under her hands.

Now she had to move backwards more carefully. She could feel his penis pulsing beneath her and was not yet ready to attend to it. She lifted herself carefully over him, his warmth so inviting on her stomach she risked distraction. Vincent's muscles were tense under her stomach.

Resolutely, she dragged her mind back to the business at hand. Her legs were straddling him now and her feet were the air as she continued her upward journey. She licked his inner thighs, which he obligingly spread further apart for her. They were warm and soft-haired and she ran her tongue up them slowly and sensuously, first one, then the other, stopping just short of the scrotum.

Vincent was quivering, his breath hot against her thighs, which he grasped as if to prevent himself slipping over an edge. She moved to his crotch, pressing her face into the wonderful soft hair that surrounded his manhood, running her fingers through it, smelling his scent. She dropped her head to his testicles, squeezing them both gently, stroking the soft fur which covered them, then rubbing her cheek around them before nuzzling them with her lips. They were wonderful, velvety. She began to massage one with her hand, cupped it. Then she explored the other, giving it equal treatment.

Vincent's chest under her was rising and falling rapidly now and she could hear him gasping softly. She tongued under his penis and it responded by lifting, still partially in its sheath, towards her face.

Now for the piece de resistance she thought with satisfaction, and felt Vincent's shiver of anticipation at hers. She grasped his column between her hands and began a minute exploration of it with her tongue, beginning at the base and spiraling around it. She massaged the foreskin lightly, still awed by his size, but enjoying every touch. She felt her own arousal build as he emerged further under her ministrations, swelling, stiffening and lengthening, as if to her whim.

She finally reached the flared crown as Vincent's tension became solid under her belly. She ran her tongue around it, teasing, seeking that most sensitive spot. Vincent groaned and growled in reaction and she felt wet heat between her legs, felt his hot breath on her. She was determined not be distracted.

Clasping his penis at the top, she bent her head to it and began to massage it with her lips, sucking it, licking it and blowing on it in turn, massaging his hot length as she did so. He seemed to thicken even more. Then, as Vincent arched his back under her, still growling and unable to control that reaction, she bit gently around the opening, moving her mouth to enclose it, finally clamping her lips around it and lightly biting it. She suddenly sucked hard while tightening her grip on his column.

Suddenly Vincent roared his almost silent ecstasy. His juices exploded into her mouth. As his body heaved in reaction, she found herself wishing she had chosen a more traditional position because she would have liked to have seen the look on his face as he climaxed. Next time, she decided – and caught his immediate willingness as he slumped beneath her, now completely spent. She licked the residue from him and then hugged his manhood

between her breasts as it softened and retracted. She lay down on him, her head between his calves and stretched out her legs, satisfied. She knew he was satisfied now too.

Under her, a rumble began in his abdomen and his purr grew until she felt it from her toenails to her hair.

Suddenly, he took her feet in his hands and began to lick the soles of her feet. She giggled. "No, no – I'm ticklish."

"Then bring me your lips where I can kiss them," he demanded hoarsely. She did and he did, long and passionately.

"Catherine," he mumbled through their lip lock. "You may research me whenever you wish."

"Oh Vincent, how much more of this can we stand," she asked when he released her so they could both take a lungful of air.

"Truly, I don't know," he whispered in her ear. "I don't want to discover our limits. Perhaps there are none."

"Well, we both had a lot of repressed passion to overcome. That must be it."

"Undoubtedly."

"And to think it was Father who told me that once would probably not be enough. He would be shocked if he knew how very right he was."

Vincent's laughter met her own and they hugged each other, their love enveloping them.

Catherine was no longer sleepy. She looked at the clock and saw that it was approaching midnight, on this the second night of their love. She had an idea.

Vincent, ever attuned to her mood, looked at her.

"Catherine?"

"Vincent, let's go below now, to your chamber. We must inaugurate your bed too – and I want to spend some time with you in your world. I've taken a week off."

"If you wish, dearest Catherine, we shall do just that."

"Good, then let's get showered and dressed so that we won't shock anyone."

They did that, separately this time, Vincent allowing Catherine to go first. He was napping again when she emerged, but rose quickly and padded gracefully to the bathroom. She sighed, sure she would never tire of watching him move.

While he was showering, she packed a small bag. She hoped to wear tunnel garments while she stayed there. She hummed "Wind Beneath My Wings" as she tried to zip up the bag, now bulging with all kinds of things both whimsical and necessary. She could not be bothered to discriminate.

Vincent emerged from the shower and catching her smile, clasped her from behind, distracting her momentarily from her task. He planted a kiss on the back of her neck then released her to dress himself. She looked at him, saw that he was regarding her with an expression she could not decipher.

She still remembered Vincent's unspoken shock at her voice as she sang to Ellie and decided that was it. She ceased her singing. But he kept staring at her, a look of absolute intentness on his face.

"What?" she asked as she put on her crystal necklace and walked over to him. She slung the leather pouch carefully over his head as he bent down for her. She looked up into his eyes, seeing something there she could not name, but which made her feel suddenly self-conscious.

"You glow," he said, and gave her nose a soft kiss.

She clasped his face between her hands and planted an equally soft kiss on his mouth.

"You are a dream come true," she whispered. "It's a good thing I am off work for a few days. I would not want to have to explain my "glow" to my too-curious, and much too-discerning, boss."

Vincent got an unusual expression on his face and Catherine laughed.

"Vincent, if you could see your face. You look – if you will pardon the simile – like the cat which has just swallowed the canary."

Vincent roared with laughter, caught her up and swung her into his arms and into a hug.

“Catherine, I do indeed feel smug. I feel as if I have stolen the greatest treasure in the world.”

Catherine buried her face in his hair and kissed his neck before he put her down again.

“You did not steal it Vincent. It was yours to take. I was saving it for you. That treasure is love. I am yours forever.”

Catherine took Vincent’s hand, picked up her bag, which he quickly took from her, and led him to her front door. This once, she wanted them to leave together rather than have him clamber down the fire escape.

It would be the first time he had ever done so, but he did not seem worried. His keen senses would tell him if anyone was close, but there was no one. They quickly went to the fire stairs, mutually concluding that the elevator was too great a risk. They padded quietly down the long flights to the storage room. She was somewhat more fatigued than she should have been when they reached her threshold. Too much bedroom aerobics, she thought, completely unrepentant.

They climbed down the ladder, Vincent first with her bag. He solicitously kept one hand on her behind as she descended, and she appreciated the support. He seemed fascinated by her fundament. The thought delighted her. She had wanted his touch for so long.

Once she had joined him on the ground, they held hands and looked at each other, aware that everything had changed for them now. Catherine turned and hugged him close.

“I feel as if I am coming home,” she whispered into his chest, where she could feel his heart pounding, matching that of her own.

Vincent held her tight. “You are home – and I am always here for you.”

She felt tears beginning, and mumbled into his shirt.

“Oh Vincent, I’m so happy.”

“I too,” he whispered into her hair. “You have given me love in the moonlight, sunshine, and starshine. What more could I wish for.”

She looked up at him, her eyes mischievous. “Well, now we must try love by candlelight.”

“And perhaps chamber light – or none at all,” suggested Vincent.

Catherine closed her eyes and held him close. There was no need to say more.

END