

My Darling, Dreaming

by Angie

*"Life, what is it but a dream?"
- Lewis Carroll*

Halloween was over for another year, but the dreamlike quality of that special night would not depart ... not yet.

Catherine was dreaming of Vincent. She was seeing him close by, but through something ...mist? ... gauze curtain? ... frosted glass?

She was captivated, as she always was when she looked at him, but this time she could gaze at him to her heart's content. He apparently couldn't see her, didn't even know she was there. She was sure of that, in her dream. And something, a song, was playing, almost beyond hearing, in a haunting female voice. She knew the song, and the singer, but couldn't remember the name for either. She didn't care. She was focused on Vincent.

*"You're not a stranger to me
And you are something to see
You don't even know how to please
You say a lot but you're unaware how to leave"*

Vincent was walking through tunnels, and she was with him, silently, with no sense of herself moving, through chambers and vast spaces with cathedral-like ceilings she had never seen before. Having no fear of stumbling, she watched *him* – for she could see his face as they walked. He seemed more a part of this world than she had ever imagined, as she had never seen him. As if he owned it. He certainly knew it well, striding confidently through all the places. Where was he going?

Yet, for all his strength and bearing, she knew he was also a prisoner, forced to live in this stone world beneath the streets, at least in daylight. In disguise, he could visit the world above, but only at night – even during that one night of the year when everyone was ... otherwise.

The song continued as if it followed her thoughts, or had the words inspired them? She couldn't be sure.

*"My darling lives in a world that is not mine
An old child misunderstood out of time
Timeless is the creature who is wise
And timeless is the prisoner in disguise"*

She saw her face reflected in the misty mirror before her, and Vincent's face beside hers. She had often imagined them this way, but she had never seen them so. There were no mirrors in his chamber. No place to see themselves side by side. Now she gloried in that sight, and for

the first time was able to compare the two faces she knew best.

"Oh who is the beauty who the beast"

Who was truly the beast? It was not something she had every considered before ... something she would never have thought about, but for Vincent.

Appearance made Vincent the obvious beast, to those who didn't know him, but he was beautiful to her, body and soul.

Yet she, who had often been told she was beautiful, lived in a world that valued external, rather than inner beauty. Before Vincent, the men in her life were passing fancies, easily left behind. They wouldn't miss her, unless she had thwarted some plan of theirs, as Elliot, Steven, and even Tom, had made clear. She recognized that now; once it would not have mattered. Vincent had seen her inner self, before she even knew it existed, or what it looked like – and he had drawn her into himself, released the beauty inside her.

*"Would you die of grieving when I leave
Two children too blind to see
I would fall in your shadow I believe"*

She had left that fateful party *that* night because Tom had been so callous. Unbearably so, because his criticism had been directed at *her*. She had walked out on him, heedless of any danger. She'd never had to consider personal peril – but that night her world had shattered.

Fate had dropped her where Vincent could find her, perhaps the only person who could truly change her for the better, make her examine her life, without the pity she could succumb to because of her injuries. She would always follow him now, in spirit, be in his shadow.

The beautiful words and voice resonated about them – although she didn't think Vincent could hear them

*"My love is a man who's not been tamed
Oh my love lives in a world of false pleasure and pain
We come from difference worlds we are the same, my love
I never doubted your beauty I've changed
I never doubted your beauty I've changed"*

Their different worlds had made them what they were, but his was part of her now, just as he was. Inside they were alike, now, more so than ever. They had both changed.

*"Changed..... Who is the beauty
Where is my beast (my love)
There is no beauty
Without my beast (my love)"*

Suddenly, Vincent turned to face her through the mist. He saw her! His face relaxed, as if he had found what he sought in his travels - and it was she! He held out his hands to her. She walked forward, made herself feel the ground beneath her feet, stretched out her hands to touch his. She felt his strong hands grasp hers, and gradually the mist disappeared. Still, the haunting song surrounded them. Vincent cocked his head, as if listening. So he could hear it

too!

*"Who is the beauty
Who my love
Ah
Oh la bete la bete
Where is my beast"*

The song continued with whispered words. Catherine turned her head to look around them, hoping to see the source of the song ... but there was nothing. The mist was behind her now, Vincent before her.

He said nothing. He dropped one of her hands, and held the other, squeezing it gently as he turned to lead her into the tunnel ahead of them. She felt needed, precious, loved. Perhaps she was feeling him along there bond! Where were they going? In truth, she no longer cared/ She was right where she wanted to be, with him, with the man she loved.

*"My beauty my beauty
My beautiful beautiful beautiful
Beautiful beast" **

The song faded behind them. What more could she need? He was her *beautiful beast*. Perhaps she was his also.

She looked up at him and he smiled at her, showing all his teeth. She smiled back and a flush of pleasure warmed her from head to toes. He bent down to her ... and just before their lips touched ... she woke up, slowly, reluctantly.

She was in her bedroom. She turned her head to look at him and he was gazing at her, just as he had in her dream. He looked feral, beastly beautiful, and the night was departing outside in the world. She didn't care. He didn't.

"Catherine," he whispered, in a voice he knew set her afire.

"Vincent," she replied and moved closer to him.

And since this was not a dream, their lips met ... and held. And welcomed the day after the night before. This day, their worlds would not separate them. This day, they were the same.

END

**Stevie Nicks (1983)*