

Series 2 - Parallel Universe Fantasy

In a place very like our own

... perhaps in a parallel universe ...

three special, adult, tales

CONTENTS

Love's Legacy - p. 2

Christmas Fantasy - p. 5

Samhain Visit - p. 9

These stories are written strictly for the free enjoyment of fans of the "Beauty and the Beast" television series (1987-1991). No copyright infringement is intended.

Love's Legacy

*And when Love speaks, the voice of all the gods
Makes heaven drowsy with the harmony.*

- William Shakespeare

She stood watching the sun rise over the ocean, let its warmth run up her naked body like a benediction.

Soon, she would have to report to the hotel for the Beauty and the Beast Convention. If she had done her job, there would be little for her to do but sit back and enjoy the love that, every year, seemed to grow around its participants. The TV series had inspired and changed her life – as it had that of so many other women. More accurately, it had given her the courage to do so. Now, two decades later, it was an integral part of who she was. That inspiration reached across generations and touched women who had been only children when the show first aired. It had permeated a corner of the internet and allowed a community of artists and fans to flourish. Its light was passed on like the candles lit during Winterfest.

She stretched her arms over her head, basking in the kiss of the sun. She felt, rather than heard, his soft-footed approach behind her. He was the ultimate miracle of her B&B obsession.

She had bought this house because of its unobstructed view of the Pacific and the tiny private cove beneath it, where the sound of the breakers soothed her and let her mind soar unfettered to new heights of inspiration and imagination. She had found him down there, one late spring day.

Her brain had been filled with Convention details, anticipation of new stories from the ever-widening group of fans – and of course her own lascivious thoughts. She had thought herself peculiar to be so obsessed with a fictitious character, until she had learned that millions of other women were equally – or more – infatuated. Somehow, walking in her private cove, naked in the sun, helped her come to terms with this unrequited, impossible love.

She had strolled around a tall rocky outcrop, watching her feet ooze water from the sand. Then she had looked ahead and stopped in amazement. He lay in a small bay of sand, sound asleep and as naked as herself – more, actually. Her heart had fluttered as she moved closer, drawn to him, even as she wondered how close she could get before he noticed her.

Then he had opened his eyes, turned to look at her and sat up. Realizing that running away was now pointless and would be very undignified, he waited for her.

She had approached him and, uncertain what to say, had said nothing, simply sat down beside him. She had looked at the ocean and its glitter of sun diamonds and wondered if she was in a dream - albeit the best one she had ever had. But no, the sand was warm and rough beneath her bare bottom, the breeze off the ocean like a kiss - and she could see the unusual feet of the man beside her. She could see more in her peripheral vision, and that made her suddenly blush.

As if he had seen this last, he began to talk - about his life, why he came to this remote cove, about the cave and the long tunnel he used to reach it, where he lived and what he loved best. And his name.

She had talked in turn, without looking at him, about her own life, about the Conventions she organized, her love of the TV series – and its message of love which dissolved obstacles and transcended generations. Lastly, she had given him her name. It seemed suddenly appropriate.

He had put his arm around her then, and she had leaned to him, feeling a oneness she had never known before, as if some unknown, shattered pieces of her life had suddenly clicked into harmony. He began to stroke her neck and back. She had felt his lips under her ear and she had turned until she could face him and begin an exploration of her own. Their heat had built into a sun-like inferno and they had made fiery love on the sand, gasping like virgins released from bondage. Perhaps they were. It was as if two hearts had met and melted together. No previous encounters mattered at all.

Now in her solarium, she turned to him, caught the azure passion in his eyes, and closed the gap between them. He was warm and she ran her hands over his furry chest and then up his back as he drew her close to him. She looked up at his face and he bent to kiss her, his unique lips sending an electric charge that instantly aroused her. She felt his own response against her.

“How are you possible?” she whispered, when he released her lips at last.

“Because of Love, *‘the voice of all the gods’*,” he replied in that deep silken rasp which sent a thrill up her spine and ignited her fire.

He bent to lift her to him, placed her gently on the thick rug in the sunshine. Then he demonstrated how, with love, heaven was made drowsy – and nothing was impossible.

END

Christmas Fantasy

*Land of Heart's Desire,
Where beauty has no ebb, decay no flood,
But joy is wisdom, Time an endless song.*

- William Butler Yeats

It was midwinter and the snow lay deep and soft. The roof and porch overhang of the old, remote stone house were hidden under mounds of it. The pathway to the front door was unmarked and the wind chased snow flurries down a buried lane between two wooden fences. A full moon lit the landscape with adamant.

The windows of the house were dark and the moonlight shone through two windows on the second floor.

A rumble began deep inside the bowels of the house as an ancient furnace began to heat the water in the old ornate radiators. They popped and hissed for awhile, and then were silent. The moonlight's magic began.

He awakened in the dark, seeing nothing. He had good night vision, once he was fully awake. He concentrated. Yes, that was better. There was light coming from above him, just a crack, but he could see just well enough.

His nose seemed to be plugged, so he gave a snort and the smell of dust and cardboard greeted him. Well, that was only to be expected too. He was in a box - again - resting on something which gave strangely. He felt beside him. It seemed to be a plastic sheet of air-filled pockets.

He moved his arms slowly, getting the stiffness out of them. Then he raised them and sat up, pushing the cardboard lid aside. The box was low, so he could look around. He could see a beam of silver moonlight. It was very quiet. He lifted himself slowly to stand up, quickly stepping out of the box to escape the quaking bubbles, felt his leg muscles bunch. He was on a table, high above the floor of a vast room cloaked in shadows. He moved to stand in the light of the full moon in front of the window. He stretched out his arms in delight, feeling strength build in his body.

He looked outside. It was night and silent. There were big dark trees, their naked branches stark against the night sky, but beneath them lay a rolling whiteness gleaming in the moonlight, feathery lines blowing from soft peaks. Snow! He reached out to touch the window pane, felt the chill pushing from the other side.

He moved closer, wanting to see himself more clearly in the window's reflection. He was, of course, pale-skinned and hairless, but well-proportioned. His hands had pseudo-nails and so did his feet. Drawing strength now from the moonlight, he darkened his skin and added long amber body hair to his limbs and hands and short fur to his torso.

He bent to look closely at his face. The features were correct, but of course there was no facial hair either. He fixed that, flexed his face, and opened his mouth. That required some modifications as well. He felt his hair and realized it was wrong, stiff and straight, unnatural. He concentrated and it became golden and thick, wavy and long. He stroked it and felt it soften under his hands, thicken underneath. Yes, that was how it should be. Then he looked down at his hands and coloured his nails a pinkish ivory. He clenched his fingers and felt the muscles tense in his forearms.

Now he felt much better, as if he were dressed, although he was not. That reminded him of another concern. He let himself look at the reflection of the area below his waist, the part that defined him as much as the rest. What indignities had they imposed on him this time? He stared, but couldn't see anything. He groaned inwardly, looked down and felt around. There was nothing under the short fur he had created there, just the suggestion of a bump, like that on store manikins. Well, he could fix that – and in a moment he did so. He was tempted to exaggerate, but something stopped him. With a thought, he made his manhood the size it should be.

He felt a shiver inside, in that part of him that waited, and his body hair lifted. He stood very still, concentrating, and a sudden excitement ran down him like an electric charge. Then a whisper without words clenched his heart and he suddenly remembered the wish and promise he had made long ago. Perhaps this was the time.

He decided to wait naked. He jumped down off the table and made the last change, drawing strength from the moonlight until he could feel the wood floor beneath his feet and the table cold under his hand. He turned to look in the window again and saw the image of himself as he remembered. He opened his mouth to whisper her name, saw his canines flash. Those differences, which had once separated him from humanity, no longer mattered.

The room was chilly, but not uncomfortably so. He turned then to face the door of the room, sensing something, a warmth, beyond it. He found himself suddenly eager, impatient almost. The anticipation was a delight in itself. He relaxed, stood very still, half afraid that he would be disappointed, denied what he wished for most of all.

Had he been here before? He began to remember as he waited and marveled that he could do so. The other times he had awakened had been different. He had known, after a while, that she was not there and he had returned to his long sleep. He knew, suddenly, that he had not stood in the fullness of himself, before. He allowed himself to hope.

They had entered the limbo of legend, he and she, like the other mythic star-crossed couples - Lancelot and Guinevere, Tristan and Isolde, Hero and Leander, Romeo and Juliet. Some of these had been, like themselves, mythic from the start, the product of a rich imagination. But he and she had gained a life nevertheless, albeit too briefly. Then they had been left to languish as memory, legend almost. He knew this, just as he knew that many, many years had passed.

Suddenly, his sharp ears detected soft footsteps beyond the door. He immediately stood straight in the moonlight. His excitement became tangible, physical. It raced like fire through his veins. His blood roared in anticipation and his muscles twitched.

The door opened and he saw her there, limned in the moonlight streaming across the floor. He drew in a sharp breath, sighed softly. He couldn't move.

She was naked too, he realized, but that was unimportant in the light which seemed to radiate from her face and green eyes. She was as beautiful as he remembered. He waited, wordless, gazing at her, hardly believing what he was seeing.

There was a gasp as she caught sight of him. She ran across the floor to him, into his arms, almost bowling him over, as she had done before, so long ago. He whuffed explosively, felt her lean into him. All her love was whispered in his name as she gripped him in a hug that made him quiver with delight.

He bent his head to nuzzle her hair and her scent inflamed him. Their bond came to life and flared with a passion that made them both shudder. He held her close, felt her melt into his arms, as he mumbled her name. His manhood was straining against her belly.

She rubbed her cheek along his chest and he felt a dampness, realized she was crying. He felt tears running down his own face as well. She looked up at him and their tears mingled. He dropped his head and their lips met at last, in a kiss which was deep and passionate – a promise fulfilled.

They looked at each other, wondering how they had come to be, why it was this night, of all nights. They held hands and looked out the window, and both suddenly realized it was a special time of the year. They looked at each other again and felt another purpose, the urge to give thanks, reciprocate. They closed their eyes and concentrated.

Into every story and image of themselves, they sent a gift, a little magic, a nugget of joy, an encouragement for peace. Thus they expressed their gratitude to the people and the patience which had kept their memory alive through the long dark years.

With a sigh, they gazed at each other again, their hearts beating as one. Their timeless love shone from their eyes, filling them with a joy unbounded. The Fates had relented and all indignities were forgiven. Nothing else mattered.

Then on a soft rug in the midwinter moonlight, they consummated their love. They would never be separated again. Their endless song would be sung together, in their own *Land of Heart's Desire*.

END

Samhain Visit

(aka Clearly Fantasy)

*And if love's a tale for fools
I'll live the dream with you*

- Melanie

A dozen women filed into a windowless room in a New York brownstone used as a mail drop and meeting place by a number of small groups. Theirs was identified by a brass plaque by the front door as "B&B –TV NY". Other more explicit names had been co-opted by an animated cartoon and a soap opera – despite the fact that this group was older than either. It didn't matter. New members found them in the usual ways.

Inside the room, they made themselves comfortable on cushions on the floor, forming a broken semi-circle. The last one in closed the door and then the only light was from a hundred smokeless, scentless candles on small tables. A transom above the door ensured they would not suffocate.

The women sat quietly, each with her own thoughts, but reaching out to the others with what they thought of as their empathic bond. They believed it had brought them together over the years, first in letters, fan zines and 'cons', now through the internet. How else to explain the powerful force which had made them all richer, changed their lives for the better?

Tonight, though, they had gathered for something special - a dream. This was a night when, tradition said, the walls between worlds grew thin. It wasn't the official Hallowe'en night, but the one following - a true Samhain night. By coincidence, this night also had a full moon. It was a night to try something magical – to find that pathway into elsewhere. They had no doubt that these existed. Fandom itself was proof of that. It had a life of its own.

This night, though, the women gathered because of their love – almost an obsession - for a special character. They wanted, on this night, to see him, feel him, even love him – at one remove, of course. They hoped to share the senses of the one closest to him.

In the quiet room, they began to chant quietly, together ...

'The first time I loved forever

I cast all else aside

And I bid my heart to follow

Be there no more need to hide

If wishes and dreams are merely for children

And if love's a tale for fools

I'll live the dream with you'

They did not hold hands. There was no need. They knew their hearts as well as they knew their faces. Then, a connection blossomed among the women, as they had hoped it would – and suddenly their minds were transported elsewhere. Each woman sighed softly in happiness and expectation.

Catherine woke languorously. Or was she awake? She couldn't be sure. The bed was awash in silver. She looked up and realized a full moon was shining down through the skylight. Spooky almost. Last night had been Hallowe'en, so this was Samhain. Brigit O'Donnell had once told her that the walls between the worlds were thin at this time.

The room beyond the bed was very dark and it was uncannily silent, as if the universe had been reduced to their bed, or an audience in a cinema was holding its collective breath, waiting for the climax. Catherine, whose senses had become very acute over the years, wondered at these allusions and knew suddenly that this night, they were real. She sensed love, hope and desire – all emotions she

knew well. They had changed her life forever. She smiled to herself. On this night, she had to let magic have its way.

She turned her head. Vincent was asleep beside her, breathing softly, his chest rising and falling. He lay on his back and was stretched out to cover as much of his side of the bed as he could, without encroaching on hers. He looked like a god in his prime, virile and strong, a dream limned in adamant and shadowed with onyx where the moonlight didn't touch him.

She could hear almost her blood hum as she looked at that place where Vincent's legs joined. The soft pulsing there sent a warm flush over her. She held herself quietly, not wanting him to awaken just yet. If she let her arousal get too insistent, he would know immediately, so well was he attuned to her – although he often liked to feign otherwise.

She gazed at him, caressed him with her eyes from head to toe. Truly, he was magnificent - and seemed only to become more so as the years passed. His hirsute body seemed ethereal in the moonlight, softly drawn. In fact, there were no sharp planes on him. His was a body that seemed to invite touch, and he loved to be touched. That had not changed either.

They were both growing old now, and tonight they were alone in their brownstone. Their children were adults and had their own lives – although they were always just a shimmer of the bond away, but their own private bonds with loved ones were special.

Catherine ran her eyes over that beloved head. His hair, a rippling waterfall, was still long and soft, but mostly grey. In the light of the moon, it shone like a silver halo. His face, that part of him that was the least easy to disguise, and which for years he had hidden from all but his family Below, was softened now, relaxed. Here too, silver touched the soft hair on his nose that extended into his eyebrows. Gold and silver combined in the hair on the lower part of his face – that hair which would have been a beard in other men. On Vincent, it was as soft as a baby's brush – and it didn't grow. The skin around his eyes gleamed in the moonlight and he seemed otherworldly. Yet no man was so rooted in the earth, so aware of the blessings of life.

She let her gaze next move down his strong neck and over his broad chest with its silver-limned fur and the slight mound of his nipples and then down to his stomach, with the slight bulge that age had given him. He was still breathing slowly, had not yet noticed her warm regard. She let her eyes move up a little to cast along an arm, lean but still muscular and strong, covered with the long silky hair that she loved to feel against her.

Then his hand. Yes, those hands were special, and hers alone. They were well-shaped, long in finger and sharp of nail. And strong. They were legendary Below, for their ability to sense a pregnancy, soothe a baby, admonish a naughty child. Catherine knew all of those talents, but suspected she was the only one to have seen those hands in their most ferocious aspect. He had come to her rescue often in those terrible, early days before she had realized the toll such violence took on him. For a long time now, she had known another talent of those hands – one that set her blood roaring in her ears.

Her eyes traveled downward again, running down one leg, pausing to admire the muscles in thigh and calf and the long hair which seemed to emphasize rather than hide them. When she reached his feet, she sighed quietly. They were as exquisite as the rest of him, softly haired, large and firm on the ground. He moved like a dancer on those feet. There was nothing awkward about him anywhere.

Now she allowed herself to look closely at his manhood and let her heat build. She saw it shiver minutely, and knew that he had become aware of her examination. Now, there was no more need to wait.

The women in the candle-lit room gave a collective sigh. Had they experienced no more than this seductive visual examination of their beloved Vincent, they would have been content. They realized

now that they could see what Catherine saw and hear with her ears, but they would not know her thoughts. That was almost a relief. It made them feel less like the Watcher and more like a receptive audience.

There was more to come. They almost held their breath in anticipation, but carefully did not let themselves be distracted from what was happening in that other realm.

Vincent knew when Catherine awoke, although he knew she didn't realize it. He had become a master of controlling his responses to this woman he loved above everything and everyone. They were one, so much so that he almost shared her dreams.

He had not opened his eyes, but he sensed a deep quiet in the room – as if he and she had been transported into a realm of silence, apart from everyone. This was a Samhain night, he knew. Had the walls indeed grown thin? Perhaps they had. It was almost as if they were being watched. Perhaps they were. He sensed no danger, though, quite the reverse. Shadows seem to whisper of love and hope – but overlying all that was desire. They were emotions which surely defined himself and Catherine.

He felt Catherine's hot regard of his manhood and could not prevent a slight quiver. She knew he was awake now. When she moved to snuggle along his side, he opened his eyes. The room beyond the bed was black velvet and the moon illuminated himself and Catherine like a spotlight. It felt like a caress, soft and magical. He sighed to himself.

Catherine leaned up against Vincent's side and felt his arm move against her back. She gently ran a hand over his furry chest, so softly that it barely moved the hair. Then she touched a nipple and began a seductive massage, saw it crinkle and rise - then felt the arousal growing in him. She felt him quiver, knew he could not now hide his arousal. His manhood was now growing firm, she noticed with satisfaction. Well, there was no need to wait.

She slid on top of Vincent's chest, but far enough down that she could give his nipples a lip massage. He was resolutely keeping his eyes closed. She knew he liked to savour sensations that way, but his manhood was pulsing beneath her belly, distracting her. Then Vincent put both arms around her and began to stroke her back, first with one hand, then the other, pausing at every pass to cup her bottom and massage it.

With a sigh, Catherine slid up further, then tilted her hip a little. Vincent groaned in anticipation and then growled softly as she slid her hand between them and down between his legs. She found his soft testicles and stroked them, then cupped them gently, squeezing just a little. Then she ran her hand upwards, along the now firm column that pressed against her. She felt the slight sensation of moist warmth against her stomach, wished she could taste that precious fluid. Later, she promised herself.

In the candlelit room, the women had suddenly realized they could feel what Catherine touched with her hands. Her examination of that most precious part of Vincent's anatomy left them breathless. The sound of his soft growl sent a quiver through them all. They were grateful now that they could not feel Catherine's arousal too. It would have ignited that slender thread between worlds and burned it to ash.

Catherine sighed, forsaking Vincent's manhood to slide up his body until she could approach his lips with her own. That, of course, was what he had been waiting for. She paused above his face and waited until he opened his eyes – which he did. Their deep blue seemed almost violet in the moonlight. He whispered her name and she saw the points of his canines, a sight that never failed to arouse her further. He knew that too. Her blood roared now. She dropped her lips onto his and moved her hands

to stroke the soft ears under his hair.

The women in the tiny room were now quivering. Never had they known such joy. They heard Vincent say Catherine's name – the first time they had heard his voice - and it turned their muscles to jelly. Then they saw his sharp teeth and had to hold hands tightly to gain strength from each other. How much more would the Samhain spirits allow them?

Vincent's lips were soft and very mobile. He loved to trap Catherine's tongue and draw it through the cleft in his upper lip. It was encouragement for her to gather that unique erogenous zone between her own lips and knead it, suck it, prod it further with her tongue. She felt him shudder under her as she brought her hands to his face to keep him trapped while she did so, although she knew he would never move away. She could feel his urgency now, a small sun searing along their bond.

One of his warm hands was now clasped on her rump making slow circles, while the long finger of the other was prying into her secret place. She moved her legs apart and quivered as she felt his finger move inwards, slowly and carefully. She waited for that first touch on her clitoris and shuddered in joy when it came. Then he stopped and opened his eyes to look at her again.

With an economical movement, he rolled her onto the bed and draped himself above her without touching her. That distance was almost agony to Catherine. She looked down along his hovering body and saw his manhood poised, a sight the reflected moonlight seemed to make magical. Vincent was certainly all of that and more.

Once again, the women sighed deeply and clasped each other's hands reflexively. They had never expected to see the full beauty of Vincent in this way, poised above Catherine. It was almost their undoing. So beautiful, they thought, so virile. With an effort, they forced themselves to remain aloof. They must not break the bond between worlds.

Catherine reached her arms up to pull his head down to her and he complied, but only his head. He planted a soft kiss on her lips and moved up to her nose, then across to each eye in turn. His body was so close she felt his heat, a feather light touch from the hair on his chest. She shuddered in desire and a whimper escaped her.

A smile quirked Vincent's lips and he slowly let himself descend onto her, his knees resting on either side of her, his manhood tickling her delightfully as he slowly let his weight rest on her, but not all of it. He still feared crushing her. Then he gathered her to him and angled his hips so that he could find her moist passage. He moved inside and then a little more. She put her arms around him and stroked the long hair on his muscular back and buttocks, those places she had not been able to see in her earlier examination. She ran her lips and tongue over his neck and around to one ear.

The spicy scent of his aroused body matched the musk from her own and they basked in it for a moment or two.

Then Catherine gasped, then sighed as she felt him enter her all the way. Nothing could equal the joy they felt in each other at this time – and each time was as delightful as the last. Their love for each other had not diminished with time, rather it was now mature and rich. It rolled over them and along their bond with a force like the sea. It was unstoppable, inevitable, timeless.

Tonight of all nights, that timeless quality seemed to define them. They both sighed in delight.

In the tiny room, the women had moved closer until they were shoulder to shoulder. Their arms had moved to encircle the waists of their neighbours. They needed that greater contact to force them to sit upright. They did not look at each other though, out of embarrassment. There was no question that they were all feeling the sensations from that other world. They had all dropped their heads and closed their eyes. They could not feel the emotions or read the minds of their favourite couple, but they could see, touch and hear. The feel of Catherine's hands on Vincent's back was delightful. When the scent of love reached them, they all shuddered. Speech had become unnecessary in either world.

Vincent was a gentle lover, a considerate one. Oh, they had had their more energetic days in the beginning, and for many years. Now their lovemaking was quieter, more controlled, but just as hot as ever. They both loved to draw it out as long as possible, to savour every moment of this more seductive expression of their bond.

However, once his manhood swelled to fill her, Catherine knew she would not be able to hold off her climax for long. Neither could Vincent. It was all in the timing though, and their bond made it easy for them to know the exact moment when they could let go and soar together.

Slowly, Vincent moved a little and Catherine's hips rose to press against him. He still had his hands under her, and that sensation stoked her arousal further. Suddenly a wave of unbanked desire flooded her and she let it rise, felt Vincent respond and join her. They felt their fires turn nova, tempering them into something new, welding them together for eternity. Vincent gave his deep, silent roar and Catherine moaned as their climax sent them higher and higher, as if this night they could travel above all worlds.

Then they descended slowly, as if gliding on airy wings and they sighed together. Vincent slid onto the bed, taking Catherine with him, so that she rested against him and he could hug her to his chest and kiss her head.

"Oh, Catherine," he whispered as his purr began to vibrate down their length.

"Vincent," Catherine gasped, unable to say more. Their bond was a river of love and no words were needed.

The climax to the lovemaking had not affected the women much. They had been able to feel Vincent's body under Catherine's hands and smell the scent of lovemaking. But naturally, Catherine had her eyes closed.

When the couple brought their love to a sensually vocalized climax, the women lost some of the dignity they had recovered. Vincent's roar was felt rather than heard, but they let it wash over them and didn't move. The sound of the names being spoken gave them a thrill of happiness. They were still connected to that other world, so they waited.

Vincent and Catherine lay quietly for a few minutes, savouring the delight of their bodies touching and his purr. She rested her hand on his hip and stroked it softly. Then she felt his manhood soften inside her and Vincent moved to let it slide out. That sensation was delightful, but sad. Well, she wasn't done yet.

Catherine pushed on Vincent's chest to signal him to lay on his back, which he did, sensing further delights. She moved down the bed to come up between his legs, which he obligingly opened wide for her. She looked up at his face to see his eyes burning with moonlit fire. They had no secrets. She grinned up at him.

She stretched her hands over his hips to cup the side of his buttocks, then with that leverage, lowered her face to his manhood. She ran her tongue along the flaccid length of his penis, prodding it, licking it

clean. It quivered and she watched it begin to stiffen again with delight. Then she buried her face in his furry testicles, mouthing them, licking them, smelling them. Ah, she would love to spend hours in this wonderful place. This was what defined her lover – not his face or hands, but this, the very essence of him, that place that was hers alone. The taste of him – and some of her as well – was arousing her again. She looked up and saw that his eyes were closed. She could feel his delight along their bond.

She finished her lip massage reluctantly, to move a little until she could kiss the end of his penis, felt him quiver under her. She caught the single drip of fluid from the end of it and sighed with happiness. Then she moved up further, until she could feel his column between her breasts. His warmth there was erotic and she found she couldn't move – didn't want to.

There were collective gasps in the small room, so many that the candles flickered alarmingly. They had been able to taste what Catherine had, felt Vincent's purr through her hands. Combined with the scent of their lovemaking, it was exquisite pain. The women now had their heads pressed together in the centre of their circle and were hugging each other tightly, breathing in gasps.

Vincent knew what Catherine wanted – what he wanted himself as well - but waited, enjoying the sensation of her breasts on his manhood. There was one more thing to attend to as well. He looked down at the woman he loved.

"Catherine."

She looked at him and saw the question in his eyes, knew what he was asking and chuckled. Her voice was deep and throaty.

"Yes, Vincent. Do you think they have had quite enough of us?"

"My love, I don't think they will ever be quite the same again."

Catherine moved up to plant a deep kiss on Vincent's unique lips. The taste of her and himself on them was the final benediction – and goodbye. He made a slashing motion with one sharp-nailed hand and the thread between worlds was snapped. Moonlight flooded the room beyond them and the sounds of the city suddenly began to grow.

They were alone again in their world. They both sighed.

Vincent and Catherine KNEW – and had allowed this silent observation! In their hidden room, the 12 women shuddered in relief and embarrassment. Then the lover's last kiss completely unnerved them and they sighed in agony. Slowly, one by one, they lifted their heads and looked around at each other. In each face, they saw the truth of what Vincent had said in that deep silken voice. It was no more than they had expected – no more than they deserved. But they could not find it in their hearts to regret their experience. It would never happen again. There would be no other full moon on Samhain in their lifetimes.

They also knew they would never be able to discuss this night with anyone, not even each other. It was a knowledge that each woman would have to hold inside and carry alone.

With a sigh, they sat back on their cushions. One woman rose, and at a nearby table began to pour champagne into plastic wine glasses. Another handed them around and soon all were happily sipping and reflecting. They smiled at one another as the champagne relaxed them. They filled their glasses again, and then again, but they didn't speak. There were no words left now.

Later, the noises from the world outside began to intrude and they knew dawn was approaching. The women nodded to each other and filed out the door and out of the brownstone. One woman stayed

behind to blow out the candles and bundle them, the bottles and the glasses into a huge basket. She piled the cushions onto a table, then locked the room. She left the key to the small room a hook beside the door of the tiny communal office, next to the key for the washroom.

The office looked mundane in the growing light from outside. With its piles of paper on every flat surface and notices on every wall, it was far removed from Samhain's magic and the cold dash of reality the woman badly needed.

She left the brownstone and locked the door behind her. As she went down the steps and along the sidewalk, the sun was casting a red glow on the buildings. A new day had begun. She carried her basket only a short distance before going down a few steps. She opened the door at the bottom, locked it swiftly behind her and left the basket in the hallway. She moved into a small room at the back and lit a tall three-coloured candle in an ornate holder. Facing her was a long portrait. It was a print, but framed and protected by glass. She sat down in a small chair and let herself relax. It was over. They had done it.

The couple in the portrait seemed to smile understandingly at her. She was grateful they had been willing to share their love, this once. She had no idea how she was going to come to terms with that. She sighed and closed her eyes. A moment later, she opened them and looked at the picture again. The couple now looked almost remote, as if they shared a private place. The woman smiled. Yes, that was as it should be. But the Beauty and the Beast dream was alive and real. That was all that mattered in the end.

"Now my love, we are alone," Vincent whispered to Catherine. "I think this would have been too much for them anyway."

He rolled her off his chest onto the bed and what followed was the sweet and sensual continuation of their lovemaking, a kind of luscious dessert – but one using all the senses available to them.

END