

# True Son

by Angie

*'City! I am true son of thine;'*

Alexander Smith

Vincent sat idly in his big chair reading a thin little volume of Scottish poetry he had found tucked away in Father's library. He was waiting for Catherine, so they could walk to the lookout ledge across from the great waterfall. There they would celebrate their anniversary in a place they both loved, and enjoy a picnic dinner William had prepared for them. Catherine had sent down some wine earlier and the well-stuffed hamper waited by the chamber door.

Catherine wasn't late – yet – but Vincent knew from experience that she likely would be. Something always conspired to delay her, even on this day of all days.

He paged through the little book, scanning each poem ... then stopped. He had not heard of this particular poet, Alexander Smith, whose life - 1830-1867 – had apparently been shockingly short. A line in the poem, entitled '*Glasgow*', riveted his attention. Not a poem about rocky barrens and bleak moors, as were so many of the others, but about a great city.

*'City! I am true son of thine;'*

He read the last two lines of a stanza softly to the silent chamber.

*'Instead of shores where ocean beats,  
I hear the ebb and flow of streets.'*

Then:

*'In thee, O city! I discern  
Another beauty, sad and stern.'*

Vincent continued reading, because the poem seemed to be speaking to him directly, even more so than Robert Frost's '*Acquainted with the Night*'. He read it out, a little louder, wanting to hear it fill his chamber.

*'Draw thy fierce streams of blinding ore,  
Smite on a thousand anvils, roar  
Down to the harbour-bars;  
Smoulder in smoky sunsets, flare  
On rainy night, with street and square  
Lie empty to the stars.  
From terrace proud to alley base  
I know thee as my mother's face.'*

He felt a pair of soft hands stroke his hair and looked around at Catherine. He hadn't sensed her arrival! But he had to finish the poem!

"Listen, Catherine," he implored her, and returned his gaze to the page. She sat down beside him and waited silently.

*'When sunset bathes thee in his gold,  
In wreaths of bronze thy sides are rolled,  
Thy smoke is dusky fire;  
And, from the glory round thee poured,  
A sunbeam like an angel's sword  
Shivers upon a spire.  
Thus have I watched thee, Terror! Dream!  
While the blue Night crept up the stream.'*

Vincent paused a moment, clearly greatly moved, and then continued.

*'My childhood, youth, and manhood brave;  
Thou hast that unforgotten grave  
Within thy central din.  
A sacredness of love and death  
Dwells in thy noise and smoky breath.'*

He sighed. "How is it possible that a Scotsman understands the soul of a great city?" he mused.

Catherine spoke softly. "He was a poet, Vincent, and he had a poet's eye – as you do."

Vincent looked at her. "He says what I have always felt, but cannot define, Catherine. I am not a poet - but these words ... they speak for me.

"Father does not understand my love for the City, or perhaps does not want to. When I am above, walking the streets and alleys, even sitting on a rooftop, I feel its heartbeat throbbing. That heart speaks of endurance, love, hate, birth, death. The good, the bad, the shades of grey ... I sense them, all those many million faces. I am *of* them but not one of them. *They* are New York."

He paused and Catherine spoke again.

"You, my love, are unique, but just as much a part of this city as me. You were born here, live here, breathe here, work here, love here. There is no more you can give any place on this earth."

"And on this day, of all days, I am reminded that love comes to all of us, Catherine, even one such as I."

"One such as you, Vincent, deserves everything. Without you, I am nothing. You have opened my eyes ... and my heart."

Vincent lifted her to her feet and they hugged for a long time. There was nothing more to say. Silently he let her go, took her hand, picked up the hamper, and together they walked slowly to their destination.

END