

# FOR THY SWEET LOVE REMEMBER'D

*by Gwen Lord and D Yates*

Following the death of her father, Catherine had much to do, tying up all the loose ends of his personal life and dealing with his involvement in the law firm in which he was a partner. It was whilst she was studying his bank statements and all the endless receipts, she found that it became more obvious than ever before, the lifestyle she had taken for granted and the sort of person she had been until Vincent had entered her life. Many thousands of dollars had been spent on clothes, in order that she could be in all the right places, mixing with those considered to be *'the right people.'*

Caroline and Charles Chandler adored their only child and nothing was too much trouble or too expensive, if it was *'what Catherine wanted.'* They had a life to lead in the social world they desired, so as Catherine progressed through her childhood, the list of nurses and nannies got longer and longer. They spoiled Catherine and gave in to her every whim and fancy, to the despair of those who were employed to look after her. Once Catherine was in day school, her father would send a chauffeur driven car to collect her and bring her to his office, so that, at the end of the day, they could return home together. This was how Charles began to introduce Catherine to his dream of her joining him in the family firm.

It was her father's secretary, Marilyn, who from the very beginning became her friend and the one person she could rely on. Marilyn helped to make her feel welcome and needed. She would make her sit down and work things out for herself. She was the one who would shop in her lunch hour when Charles left money for her to get *'whatever she wants.'* It was Marilyn who would help with homework problems and, as Catherine grew older, it was only natural that she turned to this woman, who she knew would be there to support her when things went wrong, as they so often did.

Catherine was only ten years old when her mother died. One of those illnesses that not even money could put right. Her death was a sad blow to the young Catherine, who fell into Marilyn's waiting arms to cry endless tears, while her father took himself off on a cruise to attempt to come to terms with his loss.

Her father's secretary was an astute woman, who could see that whilst Catherine was spoilt, she was also a sensitive person needing guidance. Charles could always be relied upon to provide the finances to support whatever Catherine needed, but it was Caroline who had always been the one with the spontaneous hugs and kisses and bedtime stories.

When Charles recognized the closeness that had developed between his darling girl and his secretary, it was easy enough to allow it to continue. So, he accepted that Marilyn would be there to accompany Catherine on her shopping trips, visits to the beauty parlour and to arrange vacations to places others only dream about.

It was Marilyn who missed her when she was away, wondering whether she would meet some eligible young man. From the moment Catherine had been born, it was obvious to everyone that she would always have an attraction all her own.

She was now a very beautiful young woman and considered quite a catch. The homecomings were very special for Marilyn, who couldn't wait to have her back.

It was agreed, after Catherine graduated, that she would enter her father's law firm. Charles had always hoped to have a son of his own, who would follow him into the business. However, the best he could hope for was that his beloved Catherine would attract a suitable husband and then, perhaps, he might just get that brass plate on his building; '*Charles Chandler & Sons.*'

Meanwhile, he also hoped that Catherine would eventually get a feel for the firm, so that when the time came, she and her husband could take over. However, Catherine's heart was not in it at all, much preferring to socialize, always arriving late at the office, without a care in the world. Charles adored his daughter so much, that he never lost his patience, although the rest of the staff felt that if he had, it was long overdue.

In spite of everything, the relationship between Charles and Catherine was envied by everyone who saw them together. When her father suffered a severe stroke and died so quickly, it seemed doubly cruel. Here she was now, without mother or father, in a world she had chosen to detach herself from, since her life had changed because of Vincent. It was with thoughts of him, and all he meant to her, running through her mind, that she failed to notice at first, the door opening slowly. It was Marilyn's voice that brought her back to reality and they fell into each other's arms, almost afraid to let go.

It took a lot of soul searching and many months to sort out all the paperwork and free herself of the '*firm,*' but at last it was over and she was able to withdraw. Marilyn decided to take early retirement and went to live with her widowed sister in New Jersey, but not before reminding Catherine that she wouldn't be too far away and would always be there when she needed her.

Joe agreed to Catherine taking time off work; she had ten days owing to her. It seemed a heaven-sent opportunity to explore Greenwich Village and, feeling suddenly liberated, she decided to call a cab and do what she felt she wanted to do more than anything. As she watched the Yellow Cab head back to the city, she started to walk up and down first one street and then another, just as though her feet were guiding her, telling her where to go. A feeling of urgency filled her, until she was almost running, her orange duffle coat flying out behind her in her hurry. Then, just as suddenly, she found herself pausing to catch her breath, looking around her to see where she was.

Before her stretched street of mellow bricked brownstones, much sought after in this part of the area. Old traditional homes, with their half a dozen steps up from the sidewalk, to the glass panelled doors, with three or four floors above them.

Holding her hand over her eyes to protect them from the glare of the mid-day sun, she noticed she was standing in front of one that was for sale. It turned out to be everything she longed for. It would provide a weekend retreat where Vincent could visit via the basement. She had no plans to move out of her apartment, it meant too much to Vincent. He always thought of the balcony as their window on the world. He would continue to visit her as many nights of the week as possible and look out over the city from a vantage point that was truly theirs, until now.

Their deep love for each other was really like a marriage without sex. Both wanted more, but not even Catherine's attempts at persuasion could encourage Vincent to take that final step. He was so afraid that he could ruin, or put in jeopardy, all that they already had.

Early one Sunday morning, Catherine went out for a morning paper. The birds were singing, the sun was shining and the world felt good. Taking a deep breath, she decided to walk along a few streets close by and browse through some of the small shops, which were run by cheerful people. How she wished Vincent could experience something like this, so simple, yet there were so many that just accepted it. To Vincent, it would be a memory he would cherish to his dying day. A sadness crossed her face. '*If only,*' she thought.

'*Why had she stopped?*' She seemed unable to move, as if hands were holding her back. '*What was going on?*' It was like the time she found the brownstone all those months ago, and here it was, happening again. Catherine found herself outside an old and dusty rundown antique shop.

Even the windows were dirty for want of a good clean. She could see a small center light casting eerie shadows around the inside of the shop. Undaunted, she opened the door and went inside. A small bell rang several times before she managed to close the door behind her.

Catherine shivered, it felt very, very cold. Somewhat nervously, she called out, "Hello? Hello! Anyone there?"

Nothing but silence greeted her, then from directly behind her, a gentle voice spoke, making her jump out of her skin. "May I help you?"

"Would you mind if I looked around?" she asked and waited for an answer.

The man's voice replied. "That is why I'm here, Catherine."

"How did you know my name?" she bounced back at him in true courtroom style. But, whoever he was, he had returned to the shadows, trusting her to look around.

Thrusting her hands deep into her pockets, Catherine eyed the array of objects that were scattered around, but nothing seemed to appeal to her. It was such a dusty room, that smelled old and dank. Suddenly, her eyes came to rest on a wooden box. Strangely, it was not dusty and seemed to call to her like a beacon in the darkness.

Lovingly she fingered the fine rosewood and picked it up carefully to see if it was damaged. Carrying it to the light in the centre of the room, she could see even in the poor light, that the graining was a pure delight. When she opened it, Catherine discovered it was a writing box, that further revealed a desk on which to write letters and such. The dark green leather was almost worn away with use, obviously well used by hands from another century. Again Catherine found her hands stroking the surfaces, touching the catches. As she wondered what secrets this box could tell, her fingers began to tingle, she felt a connection that was undeniable. At once she realized she had to have this writing box, she knew Vincent would love it. The craftsmanship, the feel of the wood, the graining but, most of all, the need to make it theirs was truly overwhelming.

There was a price tag attached to the clasp, which read one hundred dollars. Catherine felt in her pocket for her wallet and found she had ten, crisp ten dollar bills, the coincidence was uncanny, but undeterred she went in search of the owner of the shop.

"Hello, are you there? Hello.... I want to buy this writing box. Hello.... Where are you?" Catherine waited what she thought was long enough and after making sure the man was nowhere within earshot, she left the bills wedged under a brass candlestick, which was thick with dust. Placing the beautiful rosewood box under her coat, she left quickly and ran almost all the way home.

When Vincent visited Catherine later that evening, he was clearly eager to see her.

Her eyes glowed. "Vincent! Oh, you're early, come inside and close the door. I have something I want to show you." Her excitement engulfed Vincent too, he could sense her anticipation.

"I knew I had to come earlier this evening, Catherine." He looked almost shy for a moment. "I felt your happiness." Taking both her hands in his, they moved to sit down on a bank of cushions, in front of a log fire that was now burning brightly. They loved to sit and watch the flames, flickering and dancing while they took turns to read to each other.

Once they were settled, Catherine reached behind one of the cushions and put the writing box into Vincent's lap. "Look what I bought this morning," and she waited to see his reaction.

Stroking the box he murmured, "It's very beautiful."

"Hold it, Vincent, open it up. It's beyond anything I've ever seen."

As Vincent's large hands explored the box, she saw the look that came over his face as he touched it for the first time.

"Catherine, what is this, I feel so strange? I have never had these feelings before, what is it?"

Vincent's blue eyes pleaded with her for an answer.

"Me too, I felt it, and now you. What do you think it means, Vincent?"

"Tell me how you came to buy this," he said.

Catherine spoke urgently and relayed everything to him, missing nothing, just as it had all happened.

Vincent continued to look bewildered, his hands moving across the surface of the box as he said, "As I touch it, stroke its beauty, I feel I am connected to this. Catherine, just as you say you are. This is most strange."

"What shall we do?" Catherine moved to sit nearer, needing to feel his closeness.

"It is dark, I will not be seen. Come, you must show me this shop and then, maybe, we can piece this jigsaw together."

Catherine was on her feet at once. "I'll get my coat," she called as she hurried away.

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As soon as they were in the street, Vincent followed Catherine, walking in the shadows. They talked to each other as they walked. It was now well after midnight with just one or two people around.

A young couple necking in a doorway were too wrapped up in themselves to even notice the sound of footsteps, but suddenly, a drunk appeared from an alleyway and tried to make a grab for Catherine.

This produced a menacing growl from Vincent, that rumbled in the night air. A stray cat meowed, which prompted a guard dog to start barking.

The drunk swayed unsteadily on his feet and looked very scared, as he dropped his bottle. He backed off slightly, and his words were slurred as he called. "Hey lady, what in hell's name was that?"

Ignoring him totally, they headed for the shop just around the next corner.

"Here it is, Vincent..." Catherine stood looking puzzled. "Where has it gone?" she appealed to Vincent.

He looked around then at the empty lot. "Are you sure this is the right street, Cath ..."

"More than sure, Vincent," she interrupted.

"So, where is it then, Catherine?" He waited patiently for her answer, as she looked up into his face, half-hidden within his hood.

"Well, it 'was' here this morning." She stood her ground.

"It isn't here now. Where do you think it has gone?" he asked in that teasing way he had, when she was so determined she was right. His sense of humour was something she loved.

Not put off at all by his gentle mocking, she stuck out her chin and persisted. "I tell you, it 'was *here*,' cause I remember thinking as I came out of the shop, that I might try the beauty parlour across the other side of the street... next week." The last few words tumbled out. "Look, Vincent, the beauty parlour is there." She pointed across the street.

Vincent bent down to touch the ground where Catherine still insisted the shop had been. To Catherine, in the dark, it was impossible to see anything, but to Vincent it was entirely different. His keen eyesight could pick out things yards in front of him. He could see it all now, where the walls and door had been.

"There was a building here once, Catherine, a long time ago, just the outline of the walls remain. I

think we should seek Father's help here, he's got to have old maps of this area, which could help us unravel this mystery."

"I think you're right, Vincent, but I get all goosebumps when I think that only this morning, I bought my writing box here for one hundred dollars."

As Vincent moved towards Catherine, his feet dislodged one of the bricks that were littered about on the waste ground. It caught his attention and he bent down to find some pieces of paper. Gathering them together carefully, he rejoined Catherine and held out his hand for her to see what he had picked up.

"What is it, Vincent?" Catherine leaned to take the papers from his hand. In the light of the nearby street lamp she could see ten, 10 dollar bills. Her expression was incredulous. "I think these are the ones I left under the candlestick, Vincent.... in the shop." Her words trailed away as her mind tried to grasp the situation.

Vincent took her arm. "Come, Catherine. Let's go and see Father!" And he guided her into the shadows. Holding her close, he murmured. "Don't be concerned, there has to be a logical explanation, doesn't there?"

"Yes, of course there does, Vincent." Each realized they weren't fooling anybody. This was weird. The sooner they were Below and could talk to Father, the better.

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"Ah, there you both are!" As always, Father's voice was warm and welcoming. His expression softened as soon as the two people he loved most in all the world were with him.

"Father, we must speak to you. We need your help and advice," Vincent said as he placed the writing box on Father's old carved desk.

"This is very beautiful, my son, but I suspect this is one of your buys, my dear," he smiled knowingly at Catherine. "For that lovely new home of yours, perhaps?"

Catherine answered his smile with a sigh. "Yes, it is mine, but there is a very strange tale to tell."

Catherine perched on the arm of Vincent's chair and, together, they retold their story, to the very last detail. Once Father had all the facts, he rose to his feet before either Vincent or Catherine could assist him.

"I think we need to get the maps out again for this particular area, like we did, Catherine, when we were looking for a tunnel which Vincent could use to gain access to your basement. They shouldn't be too hard to find. I'll just be a few moments, my dears."

He limped away to an adjoining chamber and was soon back with a map tucked under his arm.

With Vincent's help, he soon had the map flattened out on his desk and secured at all four corners. Although it was yellow with age, it was still legible. All three heads came together to study every twist and turn.

"You were quite right, Catherine, there 'was' indeed a row of shops where you say you bought this lovely rosewood box. According to the note here, it says that the whole block was declared unsafe over a hundred years ago and was left to decay. Finally, the whole area had to be cleared, as it was considered a health hazard. Nothing has ever been built on it to this day." He smiled. "So, the plot thickens, doesn't it?"

Catherine was the first to speak. "What do you think we should do, Father?"

"I'm afraid that is a question only one person can hope to answer, Catherine, my dear. You know who I'm thinking of, don't you, Vincent?"

"Narcissa," answered the velvet voice.

"When, Vincent, when can we see her?" Catherine pleaded with him. "She seems to live so far away in these tunnels, and I want to see her now." Her eyes begged Vincent for an answer, just like a child.

"Then I think we should go now and find her, don't you, Catherine?"

Relief flooded her face. "Oh, yes please, but I haven't got any warm clothing with me for the journey ahead. I know it will be very cold so far down in the lower tunnels."

Father leaned forward to pat her arm affectionately. "Don't worry, my dear. Mary will soon fix you up with something suitable."

Holding his arms wide, inviting their embrace, he chided them fondly. "Go, my children, and seek out the truth behind the mystery that surrounds this beautiful box." He, too, felt they were drawn together for something, and was just as keen to know the outcome.

Kissing Father goodbye, Vincent and Catherine set out to discover something that would change the course of their whole lives forever.

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"Welcome, welcome, my children." Narcissa waved her hands in their direction as they entered her chamber.

"We hope we find you well, Narcissa." Vincent leaned close as he greeted his old friend.

Narcissa laughed and remarked, "Some think I'm a silly old woman, but I know you haven't come all this way to ask after my health. So tell me, what troubles you both so much that you need to come this far to see me?" Her tired eyes looked at them, but did not see them. It seemed that she was now totally blind.

From under his cloak, Vincent brought out the wooden writing box and laid it in Narcissa's hands. Her long fingers stroked the magnificent piece of craftsmanship. Vincent and Catherine looked first at each other, then at Narcissa, and then back at each other again.

Reaching across the table, Narcissa's fingers found her special stones, which she held in the palm of her hand for a few moments before scattering them on the table. Picking up the stone nearest to the box, she placed it on top and then emptied the contents of a tiny bottle all around the wooden box. Within seconds a thick mist hung like a small cloud above the table. Vincent and Catherine stood very still, hardly daring to move, talking it all in. Narcissa called to them to come to place their hands on the box.

They faced each other across the table, prepared to take this one chance of discovering what truths they might learn and, perhaps, if they were really lucky, their connection to that rosewood box.

Vincent put his hand on one side and asked, "Catherine, are you sure you want to do this?"

Her answering "Yes," was softly spoken and the only reassurance he needed.

As one, they placed their hands on the box, totally unprepared for the bolt of energy that suddenly shocked them violently as the mist cloud enveloped them. Unable to move or speak, they just stared at each other, caught up in a state of disbelief and, at the same time, excited by the tingling they were experiencing throughout their bodies. All at once they felt themselves being sucked into a vortex, drawing them down and down into its spiraling depths. They had no sense of anything, other than that they were still together.

Once their journey ended, they found they were in a wondrous place, they didn't know where and, what was strange, it no longer seemed important. They had lost all sense of time, they were together, and that was more important than time itself.

The mist still surrounded them, but it cleared enough to show the way they should walk. Catherine

felt Vincent's hand tighten around hers, as they moved forward as if in a trance and yet aware of each other. When they looked ahead of them, they saw an opening through the mist and, without any hesitation, they went towards it. Once they passed through, they stopped dead in their tracks at what they saw.

They found themselves in a room very similar to Catherine's bedroom in their brownstone. In front of them were likenesses of themselves, which appeared at first, to be made of wax; a couple suspended in time. Vincent held Catherine's hand as he moved closer to look at their images. An unseen force pulled at them and, as Vincent put out his hand to touch the face like his own, Catherine also reached out to touch her own likeness. Without either of them realizing it, they let go of one another's hands and within seconds they were absorbed into the figures.

Gradually, an awareness filled Catherine and Vincent that they were about to be a part of something that would change their lives forever. They couldn't stop what was going to happen and the joy that began to flood through them left them breathless with anticipation. Gazing at each other, all they needed to know was that they were together, somewhere in time, and very much in love.

He spoke first. "Catherine, you managed to get away then?"

"Oh yes, Vincent. I couldn't bear to be without you, especially today, of all days."

"It was wrong of your parents to forbid us to see each other, what we have is beyond words, Catherine, we were meant to be together," he insisted.

"Last night was so wonderful, Vincent. Finally, to have you make love to me was worth all the threats and abuse heaped upon me."

At last they were able to embrace without fear that they might be discovered. Catherine shivered as Vincent held her tightly, sensing her concern for him. Kissing the top of her head he whispered. "Please don't be afraid, this is our secret place. No one will suspect that we are still seeing each other, especially if I continue to use the basement entrance."

Catherine smiled. "I know, but I want to shout my love for you from the rooftops, it's so unfair."

"Shhhh, my love, we have all the time in the world, nothing can ever separate us." Vincent drew Catherine to him and they looked around the room they had furnished together with such care. Every piece had a special meaning.

Vincent moved towards a small table and filled two crystal goblets with red wine. "To us," he smiled, handing Catherine her wine.

"To us," she replied, raising her glass to Vincent and the ring of the glasses as they touched echoed all around them. The wine warmed them both and they picked at the light refreshments that Vincent had prepared.

"I'm not really hungry, Vincent, are you?" Catherine's eyes held an unspoken promise.

"Actually, yes, I'm very hungry as it happens" and then he laughed at the expression on Catherine's face. "I'm ravenous, I long to feast my appetite.... and the only way I can satisfy my hunger is to make love to you, Catherine!" He pulled her roughly into his arms. "I want you so badly, and I need you now. Come, beloved, you are mine," he breathed, his mouth close to her lips. "All mine."

Catherine moulded herself to his body seductively, leaving him in no doubt that she wanted him just as passionately. She could feel his need for her rising like a tidal wave, ready to engulf them. Small beads of perspiration gathered on his brow and his hands shook as they cupped her breasts, gently squeezing them, enticing her to tell him what he longed to hear.

"Vincent, I am yours, now and forever. Take me, make me whole again, please," she implored.

Vincent needed no further encouragement. His hands caressed her shoulders and then he playfully

toyed with the buttons holding her bodice together. She laughed as he carefully undid them, tormenting her with just another way of arousing Catherine's passion. His hands now pushed her dress further and further down her body, and she gasped with anticipation when it finally fell to the ground. As Vincent's tongue teased the sensitive skin behind her ears, and he trailed her kisses down her throat, Catherine found herself moaning aloud.

Returning his kisses, her fingers attempted to unbuckle Vincent's belt. He stood back from her slightly and withdrew his belt completely, pulling his shirt out of his pants. Without any hesitation, Catherine undressed him.

Their breathing was becoming laboured with the desire they felt for each other. At last, Vincent scooped Catherine up in his arms and carried her to their bed. He kissed her eyes, he stroked her hair, his gentleness almost overwhelmed her.

"Vincent, I...." Catherine could hardly speak.

Vincent put a finger to her lips. "Not yet, my love. Allow me to love you in my own time."

Vincent marvelled at his self-control. He wasn't afraid anymore, he felt liberated. He loved and was loved in return. His fingers slipped the lacy straps of Catherine's underwear off her shoulders and he rained kisses over her throat and neck. His hands moved under her and Catherine felt the rest of her clothing being removed. The moment she was naked, Vincent turned his attention to her breasts and saw that her nipples were swollen, and he ached to touch her.

Sensing her need too, Vincent took the throbbing bud into his mouth, sucking and nibbling, until Catherine was squirming with pleasure. Quickly he squeezed and tweaked the other between his finger and thumb. His arm gently raised her so that he could use his mouth and fingers to stimulate her breasts, while his other hand massaged her body, almost driving her wild with desire. Eventually, his fingers probed her most sensitive area, leaving her whispering his name over and over.

Catherine was near to fainting with the exquisite touch and feel of him, not wanting him to ever stop. Vincent trailed his tongue down her body, dipping into her navel as he worked his way down towards the one part of Catherine that was his alone. The smell and taste of her was proving to be a heady mixture, and Vincent found Catherine was able to excite him in a way no other ever could.

Her hands now explored his body, urging him to make her his own again. Kissing Catherine gently, his tongue traced the outline of her mouth and as he deepened the second kiss, her tongue sought his.

The kisses that followed were the prelude to their lovemaking. Vincent eased Catherine onto her back and his hands gently parted her thighs. Ever mindful of his physical size, he supported his weight on his right elbow. Within seconds his manhood was begging entry and, kissing Catherine with a passion that rocked the gates of Heaven, he used his left hand to guide his throbbing erection to its destiny. The union between them was intensely passionate, neither of them holding anything back. This was meant to be and however long they remained enjoined, nothing would prevent them loving each other over and over again.

Holding each other very closely, they marvelled at what had taken place in such a short space of time. "We really are meant for each other, aren't we?" Catherine's question hung in the air between them.

At last Vincent spoke. "Oh, my love, if I lost you, I would lose my reason for living. Does that tell you how much I believe we are meant to be together?"

Catherine climbed on top of Vincent and kissed him thoroughly, making sure that all the time she did, she moved her body in such a way that he was sure to respond. As his hands reached to hold her, she wriggled down his body and quickly sat astride him.



Laughing provocatively, she told him quite emphatically, "Oh no you don't, now it's my turn!"

Catherine touched every part of him and nibbled and kissed her way up and down his body, making sure she missed nothing. Finally, she raised her body and managed, with a little help from Vincent, to take his erection completely, as she rocked back and forth. The sensations that coursed through her body made it impossible for her to speak, but Vincent held her arms and felt such completeness when their orgasm came simultaneously.

Catherine collapsed on his chest, blissfully happy. As they recovered, she whispered sexily, "Good thing you held my arms, Vincent. I might have toppled off!"

Laughing as lovers do, at the silly conversations that take place after such sexual intimacy, Vincent responded. "You're quite outrageous, you know that, don't you?"

Nodding her head, Catherine moved higher up Vincent's chest, to nuzzle into his neck.

"You complaining?" she countered sleepily.

"Never," came the satisfied reply.

Covering them with a quilt, Vincent held Catherine close while they slept. When they woke they felt at peace with one another; a remarkable calmness surrounded them.

Touching each other intimately, they whispered terms of endearment and pledged their undying love for each other. In the moments that followed they loved again, this time with a gentleness that almost broke Catherine's heart.

"Oh, Vincent," she whispered. "What did I ever do to deserve you?" Her breath caught in her throat and she clutched him to her, as she moulded her body against his.

Lifting her face to look deep into her eyes, he paused to sweep the hair from his eyes before he answered. "Oh, my love, I only began to live when I found you. I never realized in my wildest dreams that I would be loved in the way that you love me. You are my heart's best treasure, every desire I ever dared to have has been fulfilled by you. I am the one who doesn't deserve you." He held her closely and kissed her eyelids. She felt his tongue and lips capture her tears as they escaped.

Inevitably, they healed each other as they loved again, with a mounting desire that would not be denied. Rocking their bodies gently, Vincent cradled Catherine against him, they were complete.

When Catherine woke some time later, she noticed that Vincent had dressed and was sitting at the writing desk by the window. She knew what he was doing and pulling on a robe, Catherine sat on the arm of his chair. At once, Vincent put down his pen and his arms encircled her.

"You want to see what I have written?" he asked as his arms tightened their hold.

"Only if you want me to," and she wound her arms around his shoulders, bringing his head to rest against her.

Vincent picked up his journal and began to read to his beloved his innermost thoughts about their relationship. Catherine hugged him to her and whispered, "Read the last two lines again, please Vincent. They are wonderful."

He smiled, hugging her to him and replied. "Yes, I think so too. '*Shakespeare*' knew everything."

He turned back to his journal and read again;

*For thy sweet love remember'd such wealth brings*

*That then I scorn to change my state with kings*

They sat quietly, allowing the words Vincent had read to wash over them. As Catherine stood up,

Vincent caught her hand and held it to his mouth. Kissing her fingers one by one he announced, "I think we should consider carefully what we are going to do with the rest of our lives. If you are agreeable, I think we should get married and then at least one hurdle is overcome. The rest will follow, I'm sure."

Catherine's eyes glistened with unshed tears as she kissed him. "Yes, yes, yes! If you knew how much I want to be your wife.... you must record it in your journal.... now." Her hands fluttered above his, urging him to finish the day entry. She watched with excitement as he wrote;

*My love and I are to be married very soon. That she wants this too has made me the happiest of men*

Vincent closed his journal and carefully concealed it back inside the rosewood box. This had been a recent gift from Catherine and he stroked the inlaid top lovingly. Catherine leaned forward to place her hands over his and, as he opened his fingers, hers came into contact with the glass-like surface.

It was in that instant that Vincent and Catherine felt the same tingle and became onlookers again, privileged to see this young couple, as themselves. They recognized now the reasons why at first they seemed to see their own images. The girl was very beautiful, her hair had golden tints and her eyes were the kind that would melt the strongest heart. The young man had a tawny head of shoulder length hair and was ruggedly handsome, with the most amazing blue eyes. But they could see very clearly now that, with love anything is possible. As the vortex claimed them again, Vincent gathered Catherine into his arms and they lost consciousness.

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When they recovered and found themselves back with Narcissa, Vincent's first concern, as always, was for Catherine.

They were still wrapped in each other's arms and he lifted her face to ask, "Please, tell me you are not harmed. Remarkably, I feel all right, although I must sit down, my legs are giving way."

He guided Catherine to the nearest chair and pulled her onto his lap. Catherine stroked his hair, gently pushing it back so that she could see his face properly.

"I'm okay, Vincent," she insisted. "Don't worry about me." They held each other close, relaxing from their experiences. Gradually, Catherine felt Vincent's arms tighten around her and she gazed into the face she had come to love above all others and asked him softly. "Tell me, what is it, Vincent? You know you can tell me anything."

Vincent shook his head and sighed before he spoke, he seemed at a loss to comprehend what he had seen, experienced with Catherine.

"Envy is not something I'm proud to speak of, Catherine, but I find myself wanting so much what they had. Do you think you are ready to make such a commitment?"

His voice trembled slightly with the emotion that he was feeling for this very special woman, he knew he could not exist without her and so much now depended on her answer. He waited, almost holding his breath, for her to speak.

He prompted her gently. "Catherine?"

She stood up and paced around the floor and then came back to kneel at his feet. Her eyes were bright and there was a flash to her cheeks. Taking both his hands she kissed the knuckles and answered.

"I'm not that sure what you're asking, Vincent. Is this a proposal of marriage? Do you just want a

sexual relationship, or more than that?" She moved back onto his lap and cradled his head against her as she continued. "Because I really would prefer to know, if it's all the same to you."

Vincent felt her shaking and held her at arms' length to see utter mischief dancing in the green depths of her eyes.

"Why you little...." He started to laugh himself. "You're quite outrageous, you know that, don't you?"

"Now, when have I heard that before?" she asked and held Vincent's face between both hands as she kissed him very soundly. Vincent's response was immediate, lengthening and deepening the kiss until they were almost breathless.

"You see, you see!" Catherine gasped when she was allowed to speak. "It's perfectly easy when you cooperate! So, where do we go from here?"

Vincent was still a bit stunned after kissing Catherine so intimately, and he knew now that he had to have her sexually. What they had soon proved that they would overcome his reluctance. He finally admitted to himself that he had known for a long time how much Catherine desired him and he was just afraid to take the plunge in case he ruined everything they already had.

"Vincent?" It was Catherine's turn to prompt him.

He sank his teeth playfully into her neck and when he released his hold, she distinctly heard him say, "Your place or mine?"

"Vincent! You still haven't answered my questions. Where is our relationship heading?" She began to squirm a little as Vincent's desires became obvious; his hands explored her body and she felt herself drowning in the desire flooding her senses.

"I want it all, my love. However, for the sake of propriety and Father's finer feelings, and the fact that I can't live without you, if you are agreeable, then I would prefer a marriage commitment."

His face showed how much he wanted her and Catherine whispered back; "Tunnel style?"

He nodded. "It's a very simple ceremony, but then you know all about our way of life. You're so much a part of it already, please tell me what I long to hear, Catherine."

She leaned into his body. "Oh, Vincent. Of course, I'll marry you. The sooner the better."

A noise behind them brought them back to reality, as Narcissa came out of the shadows.

"Then you should go now, my children, and get on with your own lives. You've wasted too much time already." Sensing that Vincent was somewhat taken aback by the directness of her remark, Narcissa patted his arm affectionately as she reassured him. "I once told you, Vincent, that you would find your destiny and when you did, you would know."

Vincent nodded into her unseeing eyes. "Yes, at last I have seen for myself what is possible when two people truly love each other." His hand moved to hold Narcissa's face so that he could brush a kiss on her cheek.

Narcissa waved them away, saying, "Go quickly then, tell the Father your news, he will be pleased for you, I feel it in these old bones!" Her laugh echoed after them as they retraced their steps and began the long journey back to the upper levels. They stopped several times along the way, just to watch a waterfall, holding each other close, embracing with a new found sureness.

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It was almost supper time when they arrived back in Father's chamber. He rose to his feet to greet them.

"My dears, it seems an age since you left. I was beginning to feel a little anxious. You're here now, though," and turning his attention to Catherine, put an arm around her shoulders. "You were warm enough, Catherine? I haven't been down that far for quite a while and I know it can be very cold."

Catherine kissed his cheek and assured him that she was okay and that the trip had gone very well. Vincent managed to skirt around a good part of what had taken place, but they told Father they felt they had been transported backwards in time and the original owners of the rosewood box seemed to have a message for them.

Knowing Narcissa of old, he wasn't surprised, but said that what one couldn't disprove should not be pooh-poohed either. He seemed to be quite excited about something and they settled themselves down to hear what he obviously was dying to tell them.

At this point Mary came bustling in with a tray of tea and once everyone was served, Father began his tale.

"I hope you won't think I've been fussing, Vincent, but when I heard how close to Catherine's brownstone the shop had once been, I decided to call on one of our new Helpers for some assistance. You have both met him, his name is Jeremy. Very clever chap by all accounts and heads one of the large construction companies in the city. I asked him to take a look down in that particular area. Since we had the maps, it seemed sensible."

He looked towards Vincent, shaking his head as if by way of apology. Vincent was interested, he could see that, so he continued.

"It seems that there is still access to that street, even though some of the properties have been demolished. In fact, I went with Jeremy and between us, we discovered a basement to the shop itself. Well, more like a basement with a cellar beneath. We had taken a couple of the strongest men with us and they managed to pry open a door that has been closed for a very long time. It took a great deal of effort but, oh my dears, it was well worth it."

Father was obviously enjoying himself and his face glowed with the satisfaction he was feeling.

"After we managed to get the door open, we found this small cellar and several pieces of furniture." He glanced over his glasses as he continued. "Some will be very useful but, one piece I put to one side for you, my dear Catherine."

He got to his feet and motioned for Vincent to follow him into his small bed chamber. A few minutes later they reappeared with a rosewood writing desk. Catherine's heart almost stopped beating, it was the same desk she had seen in the bedroom, she just knew it was.

Vincent put it down in front of her and then placed the rosewood box on top. They went together perfectly.

Catherine blinked several times as if her eyes were deceiving her. Vincent just stood and marvelled at what he saw.

He turned to Father. "And is this area safe, Father? You took a risk, you know."

Father nodded. "Oh, yes. Jeremy has taken care of everything and from what he was able to tell me, there are no plans to excavate. Apparently, the intention is to have a single story building; they are planning some kind of drug rehabilitation centre. So, we have no fears that drilling could in any way affect us, now or in the future. I was just concerned that you were visiting that area, Vincent...."

His voice trailed away somewhat embarrassed by his obvious show of concern for his son.

Vincent placed his arm around Father's shoulders and kissed his brow. "Thank you, Father. I'm very happy about this particular demonstration of how much you care. Our bedroom at the brownstone will be a fitting place for your latest find."

Almost as soon as the words were out of his mouth, Vincent realized the implication and followed on rather quickly. "Father, we would like you and Mary to be the very first to know that Catherine and I plan to marry, just as soon as it can be arranged. I hope we can rely on you to perform the ceremony."

Mary and Father were quite taken by surprise at the suddenness of the announcement, but after hugs and kisses all around, made plans for the wedding to be in a couple of days.

It wasn't difficult to act tired, but Catherine feigned tiredness quite beautifully, so much so that Father began to scold Vincent.

"For goodness sake, my son. Take Catherine home, or see that she has a guest chamber here. The poor girl's dead on her feet."

"Of course, Father. Whatever you say. Catherine?" He looked in her direction.

Getting to her feet with a weary smile, Catherine answered quite happily. "Oh, I think the walk will be good for me, time to stretch my legs, don't you think? Our brownstone I think, yes?"

She bounced the question back at Vincent. Smiling disarmingly at Father, she then looked at Vincent.

"Can you be spared? Will you stay the night?" The question was so innocently asked, but Father had noticed the look that passed between them.

Giving Vincent no time to think of a suitable reply, Father interrupted. "And what good do you think he will be here with us if you are at the brownstone? Clear off, the pair of you, and take your furniture with you."

It was said with such good humour that they all burst out laughing at once.

Mary put her arm through Father's as they watched them go. Catherine had the rosewood box and Vincent carried the small writing desk. Mary squeezed Father's arm as she chided him.

"Jacob, you go too far at times. They'll only put up with so much teasing."

Father turned and kissed Mary's forehead. "I know, but you must allow me some small pleasures. At my age, they're all I've got to amuse me."

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Vincent and Catherine were amazed at how much they had achieved and that Father had seen fit to tease them so unmercifully. They soon had the writing desk installed at the side of the window in Catherine's bedroom and stood back together to admire it.

"I feel as though it has come home, don't you, Vincent?" she asked.

"Mmmmm," he responded, "but what's more important, I feel as though we have come home," and he pulled her into his arms and held her tightly.

Catherine could sense there was a change in her beloved Vincent and pushing her body quite deliberately against him said seductively, "So, are we going to wait until we are married, or do you think we should be like our friends and test the water first?"

Vincent lifted her in his powerful embrace and whispered, "I thought you'd never ask. I hear that forbidden fruit is always the sweetest!"

"Vincent!" Catherine struggled helplessly against him, pretending to be shocked. Vincent laid her gently on the bed and they kissed with a tenderness that warmed them. In the moments that followed, they found that there would be no going back, the only way for them was towards tomorrow. It beckoned with a promise that, with love, anything is possible.

When Vincent claimed Catherine for his own, he possessed her totally, proving there were no more doubts. Catherine was blissfully happy and knew now, what she had always believed to be possible, that Vincent would be the lover she had dreamed about. In that silent contentment that surrounds lovers, Catherine heard Vincent's whisperings and, at first, she thought she had misheard him.

"What was that you just said?" she asked, trying not to give herself away.

There was a new confidence about Vincent, he was daring to be bold in the art of love and Catherine welcomed it.

She nudged him gently. "Well?"

Vincent opened his eyes and gazed adoringly at her. "I said, now it's your turn!"

She knew he was testing her and she loved him all the more for it.

"I promise to hold your arms again, my love!" His voice was very husky.

Catherine tested her teeth on his upper arm, feeling his body tense with anticipation. Her mouth began to trail kisses over his body and, before he knew it, she had taken over completely.

Touching him, tasting him, hearing the pleasure of his involuntary responses, she finally sat astride him.

Her face glowed with the love she felt for this remarkable man and she teased him now at his most vulnerable.

"Vincent, why would you want to hold my arms?"

His hands reached to hold her still, his expression one of sexual expectation, as he raised her body with his own.

"Oh yes, I remember, in case I topple off!" She grinned at him.

At this, she collapsed on his chest, bringing her mouth close to his.

"Know something, Vincent?" she asked, as she proceeded to kiss him.

"What?" he whispered back.

She had begun to move further down his body, kissing and nipping him all the way.

"I want it all too!" Her voice caught in her throat. "More than anything!"

The END