

A BETTER CLASS OF READING

by Gwen Lord

The evening mist swirled around the lake in Central Park, as the promised bad weather advanced across the city, now sleeping after yet another busy day of relentless people and cars that made up the hub of this lovely, yet hard city.

By day, life went on in the usual way, but as the light faded, so did the safety of those in the park, and with the setting of the sun, the busy park was drained of everyone, afraid of what may lurk in the shadows.

A twig broke under Catherine's foot, as she picked her way across the damp grass, on her way to the tunnel entrance. In the distance, she could see the mounted NY Police men, as they stretched out across this vast park, rounding up tramps and people of the night, to ensure safety for all. But Catherine was not afraid, even though the twig breaking did make her jump. She knew no harm could ever again come to her, as Vincent guarded over her, whether near her or away from her. Their Bond was their connecting life line, and now she knew no need to fear again.

Breaking off from her walk on the grass, Catherine made a left turn, into the cement lead-up, to the entrance of the opening which was the way down, to her 'happy life'. She picked her way amid the collected water and the fallen leaves, and soon she was walking along the chill of the tunnel entrance which led Below.

As soon as she arrived at the iron gate, a rumbling heralded the mighty door opening, then she saw him silhouetted against the orange glow behind him, and more swirling mist. It was magical.

"Catherine," was all he needed to set her heart pounding.

"Vincent," she all but whispered.

He opened his arms and she rushed into them, so tiny against his huge height and size.

"I needed a hug so much Vincent, it has been a dreadful day, I'm worn out." She looked up into his soft and tender eyes.

"I know, I felt your tension and I have prepared a most relaxing evening for us, Catherine," he said, as he closed the large gate then turned and took Catherine's hand and lead her willingly

Below.

The walls of rough stone were, as always this time of year, running with water and mold grew. This made it very eerie and cold, so Catherine pulled her wraparound coat tighter around her and snuggled up to Vincent.

"How is Father?" she asked.

"He has a slight cold, and Mary is fussing over him like a mother hen," he smiled, as he recalled seeing them earlier in the day, as Mary was enjoying the rare chance to have a little extra time with the man she longed to be more than just ... Father.

"Have you sent for Peter?" she asked all concerned.

"No, there is no need for that, thank you, Catherine. Mary is making more of it than she would if anyone else had sneezed twice."

They laughed in agreement.

"It is a pity there is nobody who can help them, some person, Vincent, to open their eyes to ... each other."

They walked along in silence until they came to their favourite spot, by the Mirror Pool. Here, Catherine saw rugs had been laid out, and a small picnic basket was placed to one side, no doubt prepared by William. A few torches flickered in the disturbance of air, as they sat down and snuggled up to each other.

"Vincent, it's beautiful, thank you.

After the food had been eaten and the wine almost gone, Vincent showed Catherine two first editions he had selected. He wanted Catherine to choose which he was to read.

"Not tonight Vincent," she looked coy.

"You do not wish me to read to you, Catherine?" He held her face gently in his large furred hand, and looking into her eyes, he waited for her answer.

"I've brought something for you to read, not a first edition, but something I think you will enjoy as much as I do. It is a little magazine which is published every two months, and Edie and I buy it and read it over our lunch break at Four Seasons." Then reaching into her bag, she pulled out her copy.

"It is very pretty, the cover Catherine, with a couple on the front, which could have been you and me." He looked longingly at it, stroked it with his thumb.

"Inside there are wonderful letters, people write in, about favourite things about a programme

they love up top. And people write poems and the art, oh Elisabeth would love the art. Shall I read one page, Vincent. and you read the next."

Vincent agreed. As Catherine opened her Chatterbox, she read Rita's opening letter, then Vincent read the next page. Half way through reading it, Catherine stopped, and leaning over to Vincent, kissed him tenderly on the lips, and whispered, "Maybe we should send Rita a letter, and ask her advice on how to get Father and Mary together," she confided.

Together the two lovers read on until sleep over took them both, and the little book called Chatterbox, slipped on to the rug amid the cushions, to be finished later on, maybe even read again.

The End