

FOR THY SWEET LOVE REMEMBERED

by Heather Peters

*This zine is for all tho have survived
The pain of the last two years.
The loss of our show has left
An ache in all our hearts.
Do not despair, however
The Dream lives on...
In us....through us....
What we have will never die*

PROLOGUE

Catherine Chandler smiled as she sauntered down Seventh Avenue with an obvious spring in her step. At this moment she thought - no, she knew - no one in the entire world could be as happy as she was.

She had just left Peter Alcott's office with the news that confirmed her suspicions of the last few days.

She was pregnant.

Waiting for the traffic light to change, she allowed herself to think back to the glorious winter night when she had conceived their child; a night filled with magic, and snow, and love... and Vincent. They'd been walking in the south quadrant of the park....

The lone couple strolled lazily from the shelter of the drainage tunnel, arms lovingly entwined around each other. The silence of the late night was broken only by the soft crunch of their boots as they began a fresh path of footprints on the newly fallen snow.

The park was empty except for the two lovers, so enraptured with each other. Their only companion was the ever-whitening foliage that greeted them. Large, fluffy snowflakes sparkled like jewels on their surroundings, and Catherine and Vincent appeared to have arisen from a mythical place, both cloaked in deep black that contrasted so completely with the snowy blanket.

It was after midnight, but neither of them was weary, each enjoying the other's companionship and the glory of the chilled January night. They walked purposefully toward the south end of the park, to find shelter beneath a favorite tree that beckoned merrily.

As they approached the century-old weeping willow their steps slowed. They came to settle themselves against the huge base, both of them feeling curtailed and safe from anything that would dare intrude upon their privacy. Their eyes rose in unison to take in the magical splendor of the grey night sky.

"Ummmm.... this is wonderful," Catherine softly murmured, hearing Vincent chuckle lightly as tiny flakes tickled his nose and mouth. He could feel her happiness emanate through the bond. Their eyes found each other and locked.

"Yes," he nodded. "Wonderful."

Vincent stood behind her and Catherine sensed in him a spark of playfulness as he encircled her slender body with his arms.

"What are you thinking?" She smiled widely as he nuzzled her ear.

He sighed and rested his cheek against hers. "About how fortunate we are."

She smiled then, knowing to what he was referring. Just tonight, they had finally discussed the possibility of Catherine moving Below to be with him, always. Soon, very soon, they would begin to move her belongings to Vincent's chamber and start their life together. Just the thought caused a tidal wave of warmth to wash over her.

"Yes, we are, Vincent." She closed her eyes briefly, savoring his warmth. "And after I've moved in Below, I'm all yours," she purred seductively.

Vincent smiled again. "Yes.... all mine." He brought his lips down to her mouth and kissed her deeply, all the while backing them slowly into the hardness of the tree.

Catherine welcomed not only his kiss, but the sudden evidence of his affection right out in the open. It was unusual, but Catherine attributed his passion to the anticipation of her move Below. They were finally going to be together.

As they broke the kiss, Catherine giggled lightly. "I think I could get used to this," she teased, as he pressed her closer to the tree.

His eyes bore into hers at that moment, and instinctively he drew his arms even more tightly around her, bringing her body closer to his own.

"Catherine, to be perfectly truthful, you are hard to resist," he said playfully, causing her to emit a deep throaty laugh.

"If you'll notice," she said through her smile. "I'm not resisting."

He nodded then, and lowered his head to sweetly touch her lips to his own once more, tasting the coolness of the snow and the heat of her mouth, then deepening the kiss.

Catherine moaned as she answered his kiss, parting her lips to receive him full and intense. She met his tongue, sucking it gently, eliciting a hoarse groan from deep within him.

Her joy sang through the bond as he brought his arms under her cloak and surrounded her with his strength, urging her body closer to his.

".... Love and harmony combine....," he murmured seductively in her ear.

It took Catherine a moment to realize that he was quoting a verse in a Blake poem they'd read earlier in his chamber, while they were discussing her eventual move Below. She knew the poem well.

".... And around our souls entwine....," she responded playfully, feeding him the next line, then began to lick the snow from his cheeks and eyelids. She realized how her actions would affect him, and was herself becoming aroused.

Vincent could feel his body harden as her mouth sparked his arousal. Slowly, he pressed her closer between the bulk of the tree and his own strength.

He tenderly pushed the hood away from her hair, desiring her more as each second ticked by. Catherine imitated his actions, slowly sliding his hood from his glorious golden mane, then ran her fingers through his thick strands, smiling as his eyes closed languidly in rapture from the touch of her hand.

Their eyes met again, and without words, Vincent knew of her desire, could feel her warmth and

heat through their bond. He needed to touch her again, to kiss her again.

Their rapid breathing broke the silence of the night, and Vincent sought her lips again, claiming her mouth with a possessiveness that nearly took her breath.

"Vincent..." she moaned, as her arms stole under his cloak to embrace him. She needed to feel him against her and slid one trembling hand down to the source of his passion, now thickening with unbridled desire. His breathing quickened and deepened in intensity as she continued to touch that most secret part of him.

Vincent's hands lowered to the hem of her skirt, and lifted it as she clung to him, wanting him more than ever, needing his flesh against her own. His hand traveled up the length of one smooth thigh, and he reveled in her response to his touch. She moved up against him seductively as her hand felt the cool metal fastener of his jeans.

".... while thy branches mix with mine...." He forced the words from his lips as she released him from the constraints of his trousers. She could feel his heart hammering rapidly even through his clothes. She needed to become a part of him. and bunched the front of his cloak into her hands with a frantic need that would not be denied.

".... while thy branches mix with mine..." She repeated the lines of the poem in a breathless, throaty voice.

Catherine's hand guided Vincent to the warmth of her body and he pushed himself closer, as their sighs of pleasure pierced the silence of the night.

Finally, the warmth of their bodies met and joined. Vincent slowly began to love her, as Catherine's hands slid to his hips to keep him close. Rhythmically, they moved as one, their sounds of love and pleasure intermingled with kisses and caresses.

Their lovemaking grew primal and intense as they focused only on each other. As far as they were concerned, no one else existed on earth - only them, only their love.

"....And our roots together join...." He heard her scarcely audible voice breathe into his mouth before kissing him again.

At the sensual sound of her voice, Vincent's body quickened their pace, and Catherine basked in the glory of all of him. She surrendered herself to his power and to his being, giving him everything, and receiving all of him in return.

Her body trembled, then shuddered when she felt his body thicken within her, and tiny intermittent contractions gripped her as they clung to each other. She raggedly whispered his name over and over as he wrapped her into the shelter of his cloak. Even though it was snowing, they felt only the warmth of each other's passion-laden flesh.

Then Vincent threw his head back as his body tensed, releasing his sweet essence deep into her, allowing himself to cry out her name as they rose to their final release.

Their breathing resumed a normal pace as their eyes met and held a long moment. They were only vaguely aware that the snow still fell upon them - and all around them - in silent, sparkling purity.

He tenderly caressed her face in both his hands, his eyes absorbing every nuance of her face, feeling as well as seeing the love that shone through her and into her soul.

His voice, when he spoke, was a smoldering murmur. "... Joys upon our branches sit, chirping loud and singing sweet...." He smiled again, his joy on this night so very evident.

Catherine grinned. ".... Like gentle streams beneath our feet....," she whispered, only for him. She was so pleasantly surprised and amazed at his impulsiveness tonight, so happy that he felt so uninhibited.

Vincent's eyes remained riveted to her, as he completed the final line of the favorite poem. "... Innocence and virtue meet...."

They were silent once more, and stood together in quiet companionship, each knowing they were on the threshold of their future life.... together.

It was time to go back. Tenderly, Vincent lifted Catherine's hood over her head, while Catherine followed his action, drawing his hood back up as well. Moving away from the tree, they entwined their fingers together. Vincent brought her hand to his lips, kissing her fingers gently and lovingly.

Making their way back across the park, now glistening in clear, cool wintry splendor, their steps came slow and easy. They were almost reluctant to give up this time that belonged only to them.

As they approached the threshold of their underground world, they turned to look at the park once more. Catherine sighed as she smiled up at him, and Vincent looked a question at her, sensing the humor in her mood.

"What?" he asked.

She giggled. "Promise me we can always read Blake before we take a walk in the park."

He smiled. "I promise."

CHAPTER ONE

She was anxious to tell him her news, but knew he was in the lower tunnels on an important job detail and wouldn't be back until much later. In the meantime, she would return to her apartment, shower and change. It was Friday and she could spend the entire weekend with him. They had tentative plans to take some of the children to visit Elizabeth, whose tunnel art was inspiring and beautiful, but also served as a wonderful history lesson for the children.

For over a quarter of a century, Elizabeth had provided the tunnel denizens with a chronological - and visual - account of Vincent's world. Catherine was excited as the thought of a weekend with Vincent warmed her.

It was still early when she dried her hair and changed into comfortable jeans and a sweater. Catherine went to her nightstand and opened it, bringing out an antique oak chest. Placing it on the bed, she took a small key from the drawer and unlocked the box. She smiled as she lifted her leather-bound journal and took it to her desk.

She'd been keeping a diary for over two years. She had always admired the way Vincent religiously recorded his most private thoughts in his journal, and writing her thoughts down seemed to act as a catharsis. Tonight, though, her diary would serve as a secret friend with whom she could share her happy news.

Reverently opening the book to a clean page, she picked up a pen and began to write....

'....Friday, February 22...I just came from Peter's office with the most wonderful, miraculous news....I'm pregnant! Can't wait to tell V. Imagine, in less than eight months, I'm going to have his baby!....'

Catherine looked at her watch. Vincent would be arriving home soon and she was impatient to move Below.

Carefully, she closed her journal, locked it, and placed it back in the chest. Grabbing her coat and house keys, Catherine turned off the lights in her apartment and ran for the elevator. She had to get Below to tell him.

Wiping the sweat from his brow, Vincent reached inside his heart to feel her excitement. For the past hour or so, he'd sensed such a rush of happiness from Catherine through their bond, he was unable to continue with his work.

She's coming Below, he thought, as he locked the last pipe fitting into place. He knew she'd be waiting for him in his chamber, and the thought warmed him. Soon, she'd be moving Below to live with him, and as he made his way back toward the home chambers, he smiled. Just the thought of waking with her in his arms every morning caused him to quicken his pace, He could still sense in her a flow of joy, and yes, love for him. She was elated about something, but what?

The elevator was especially slow arriving in the lobby of her building. *Wouldn't you know it?* she mused, as the car stopped at almost every floor. *Just when I need to go to him, it's taking forever to get there.* She began tapping her foot impatiently, silently willing the elevator to move faster. It didn't work.

Surprisingly, Vincent arrived at his chamber before her, quickly washed, and changed his clothes. As he tied the heavy vest he wore, he heard a slight commotion outside his chamber.

"Vincent, you there?" Mouse's voice called in question.

"I'm here," Vincent answered, turning to see the young man at the entrance to his chamber.

"Okay, good. Okay, fine." Mouse hurried into Vincent's chamber. "Need you to come – now - need your help," Mouse cryptically announced.

"What is it, Mouse?" Vincent asked, obviously concerned.

"Loose rock, falling off wall, need you to come."

Vincent touched the young man's arm in a question. "Where, Mouse?" Vincent's heart began to pound. In the back of his mind he kept asking himself, *Where is Catherine? Why isn't she here yet?*

Lowering herself from the ladder, Catherine broke into a run to get to him. *He must be waiting for me*, she thought, as she quickened her pace. Vincent had once shown her a quicker path that led to his chamber, but they rarely used it - it was unsafe because the rock walls had been eaten away by erosion through the years. But tonight it was important that she get to him, and was sure he wouldn't mind that she'd taken the alternate route. She'd be extra careful.

Vincent repeated his question to Mouse as he felt a spark of fear touch him. "Where, Mouse?" Inwardly, he dreaded the answer and didn't wait for Mouse's reply.

Grabbing his cloak, Vincent fled from his chamber, feeling Catherine's nearness in his heart. For some reason, he had to reach her, quickly....

Catherine was glad that she wore her comfortable, serviceable high-top sneakers, especially in this part of the tunnels. She was secretly proud that she remembered the path, and knew she'd be at his chamber in a matter of moments. She began to run....

She didn't take the usual route to get to him, he knew that. Breaking into a jog, Vincent turned to

take the seldom-used short cut to meet her. It was also the route that Mouse had just described. The weak rock walls were collapsing, he could hear... he could feel it... Catherine....

At first Catherine didn't hear the rumble from above her. *It must be the subway*, she thought, as the noise became louder. She looked up....

He was almost there. He thought his heart would explode as he heard the falling of rocks just around the next corner. He rounded the next turn and saw her just as the wall above her began to disintegrate.

"CATHERINE!...." he roared as their eyes met.

The ground beneath her seemed to give way as she stumbled. The last thing she remembered before she collapsed under the weight of the rocks was the sound of her name, echoing in the chamber all around her, and his eyes, so blue, and so stricken with terror....

It seemed as though the entire community heard his roar of despair. Within seconds, Jamie, Mouse, Zach and Kanin were drawn to the scene. They could Vincent running toward Catherine, who was lying unconscious on the tunnel floor.

"Oh my God," Jamie exclaimed as they ran toward Vincent to help. Several rocks had fallen on Catherine, one apparently hitting her on the head, as evidenced by the slow stream of blood running down her forehead.

"Catherine... Catherine...." Vincent kept on repeating her name as he knelt beside her, tossing rocks from her limp form as though they were pebbles.

She didn't answer him, as he tenderly brushed strands of hair away from her face. Frantically, he searched for her within their bond. Her presence was there, but faint.

"She's alive," he muttered thankfully. He looked up to see his friends standing near him, concern etched on their faces. "She's alive," he told them, knowing what they were waiting to hear.

"Maybe we shouldn't move her, Vincent, until we can get a stretcher," Kanin suggested, as he placed a comforting hand on Vincent's shoulder.

Vincent shook his head. "No time. I must get her to Father, quickly," he told his friend. He gasped as he slid his arm under her, and tenderly, without effort, lifted her into his arms. One tear slid down his cheek. as he gently touched his mouth to hers.

"Hold on, Catherine," he whispered into her ear. "Hold on."

He could barely touch her through the bond. 'So weak,' he thought, as he walked past his friends to get to the Hospital Chamber.

"Mouse, please, bring Father." His voice broke as he cradled her close to his body. "Hurry, please."

Mouse nodded. "Bring Father, quick. No one's as quick as Mouse," he announced, as he disappeared around the corner.

Vincent was careful not to jostle her, but also knew time was of the essence. '*She's suffered a head injury, and needs medical assistance quickly. She is so still, so pale*', he thought, as he looked at her. His tears fell in earnest as his head began to throb with the pain they both felt.

"Don't leave me, Catherine. I need you," he whispered as he finally arrived at the Hospital Chamber. He gave silent thanks as he saw Father rushing toward them.

"Father, please," he begged. "Help her."

"Dear God, Vincent, what on earth has happened?" Father exclaimed as Vincent gently placed her on one of the hospital cots.

"She was coming to me," he explained, without taking his eyes from Catherine. "She took the short cut. The rocks---"

He was unable to continue. He knelt by the cot, holding her hand in both of his, whispering words of comfort to her, willing her to come back to him.

Mary soon joined them, and together she and Father began working feverishly on Catherine. Mary, cleaning her wound, while Father checked her heartbeat and blood pressure. Vincent was fixed by Catherine's side, his eyes - and heart - never leaving her.

"Vincent, I'll send for Peter. He should know what's happened to Catherine," Father said softly. "We could use his help."

Father saw no reaction from his son. Catherine lay very still, very pale, and Vincent's tears continued to fall. He couldn't bear to see these two best loved people so hurt. Catherine's blood pressure was normal, and her heartbeat was regular, however, Father was extremely worried about the cut and bump on her head, which was now turning deep purple. He secretly prayed Peter would arrive soon.

Vincent took a cool cloth and began to wipe her brow. *How could this happen? He asked himself. Why did she take a chance and use the more hazardous route to his chamber? What was so important that she risked her safety to reach him sooner? She knew the danger - why did she take the risk?*

As his mind reeled with the unanswered questions, Catherine began to stir. Vincent felt his heart stop as she began to open her eyes. He saw her grimace from the pain, and he leaned in closer.

"Catherine." His voice was a faint whisper, willing her to look at him. What he didn't expect was her look of terror. "No!" she cried, shocking Vincent with her strange behavior. "No, please don't...."

Wide-eyed, Vincent gaped with the realization that Catherine's memory was gone, fleeing the chamber to slump against the wall.

In that instant, all had come to an abrupt understanding of Catherine's irrational behavior. Leaving Mary at her side, Father had followed Vincent into the tunnel, seeking to comfort that stricken heart.

"Vincent, please, she's upset and very frightened right now." He drew his arms around his son in fervent sympathy. "Don't worry, we'll get her back for you - for all of us." Quickly, he retraced his steps and Vincent, left alone, fell to his knees, weeping.

"Oh Catherine, I've lost you."

CHAPTER TWO

Two hours later, Doctor Peter Alcott entered the Hospital Chamber. Finding Father and Mary sitting at Catherine's side. *Where is Vincent?* he thought to himself, as he approached his friends.

"Ah, Peter, thank God you're here," Father exclaimed, as he left Catherine sleeping in Mary's trusted care.

"I came as soon as I got your message. What happened to her, Jacob?" Peter was worried as he stared at the woman he had brought into the world.

Father ushered Peter from the chamber and touched his arm. "Peter, we need to talk. I shall tell you everything over some tea."

Peter was puzzled. "Jacob, where's Vincent?"

Father shook his head sadly. "He took off over an hour ago. He hasn't returned."

"Tell me everything."

Father sat behind his desk, and took a deep breath as Peter poured them a cup of tea.

"There isn't much to tell, actually," he began. "It seems Catherine was in some sort of hurry to get to Vincent, and took an alternate hazardous path." At Peter's questioning look he added, "A short cut." He took a sip of the hot brew and continued. "There was a rock slide, and unfortunately, Catherine was unable to escape it."

He sighed deeply as Peter stared at him, surmising what has happened next. "And I assume Vincent wasn't able to get to her in time."

Father nodded. "That's not all of it, Peter," he said sadly. "When Catherine awoke, Vincent naturally, was at her side. Peter, she didn't recognize Vincent," Father explained.

"Oh my God," Peter muttered, as Father's words sank in. "She has amnesia. Jacob, what are we going to do?"

Father shook his head, his heart breaking for his son, and for Catherine. "Peter, you know that Catherine was planning on moving Below in the next few months. They were so happy... so happy," his words trailed off as he saw Peter's expression change.

"What is it, Peter?"

Peter swallowed hard as he realized why Catherine had been in such a hurry to get Below... to reach Vincent.

"Tell me, Peter."

"Tell you what, Father?"

Two pairs of eyes went to the chamber entrance to find Vincent, who was looking utterly devastated. He repeated his question.

"Peter, what is it? Do you know something about Catherine?"

He felt within the bond that she was resting, and was relieved for the moment that she was calm. It didn't change the fact that she was petrified at the sight of him.

"Vincent, you'd better sit down. I have to tell you why Catherine was in such a rush to get to you tonight."

Vincent felt a chill run up his spine as he moved into the chamber. "Peter, Catherine does not know me." His voice broke with the news.

"I know, Vincent. She'll recover, I'm sure, but it's going to take time. I'd like to take her Above and have her tested completely, you know, x-rays, a cat scan. Head injuries can be very serious if they are not given proper care."

Vincent nodded solemnly. "Peter, please...."

Peter approached Vincent and placed a fatherly hand on his shoulder. "Vincent, Cathy came to see me today. She was beaming...."

He saw Vincent was bracing himself for the news. "Vincent, Cathy's pregnant. She's going to have a baby," he waited for the words to sink in. "Your baby, Vincent. She's a little over five weeks pregnant."

Vincent staggered back against the chair, while Peter took his shoulders to support him.

"Pregnant?" he murmured, covering his eyes with his hands. Peter helped him to sit, as Father stared at Peter in utter surprise.

"Catherine? A baby?" The older man looked at Peter, then at his son.

Peter nodded as he knelt at Vincent's side. "I've never seen Catherine so utterly happy," he spoke low to Vincent, trying to soothe him. "I guess she was in a hurry to tell you so she decided to take this shorter route."

Vincent just sat, still as stone, his head thrown back, eyes closed. Through their empathic bond, her emotions were jumbled, even in her sleep. Their connection was weak, and in his mind Vincent could hear her screaming in terror at his appearance. And now, this news. She was pregnant! His hands began to tremble and his mouth was dry. What will happen to us? His mind implored. What will happen?

Father and Peter looked at Vincent's sad visage before them, then looked at each other. "Jacob, I'm going to check on Cathy. Why don't you come along?"

Father nodded and turned to Vincent. "Vincent, come with us."

Solemnly, Vincent shook his head. "No. Not yet."

Not wanting to upset his son any further, Father and Peter exited the chamber, leaving Vincent with his thoughts.... and his pain.

Mary turned as they approached the room. "She's waking up now. She's in a lot of pain, Jacob, and scared, poor child." Mary looked forlornly at the young woman lying in the bed. "Maybe the two of you could calm her. I'll bring her some broth."

"Thank you, Mary."

Catherine looked at the two men before her, one dressed in a suit and tie, the other in strange clothes. She was also in a strange place. But where? The pain in her head intensified.

"What is this place? Where am I? Why can't I remember anything?" The questions poured out of her as she began to panic. The man in the suit placed a warm hand over her own.

"Relax - you're among friends." Peter spoke softly so as not to upset her. "Just lie back and I'll tell you, but you must promise not to try to push yourself, okay?"

Catherine nodded. "My head hurts terribly."

"I know," Peter answered. "You need to be in a hospital, and we're going to move you as soon as you're a little stronger. Now in the meantime, do you recall anything? Your name?"

Catherine shook her head, causing it to ache more. "Nothing is familiar." She thought a moment, then her eyes widened in panic. "My name! I can't remember my name!"

"Shhhhhh," Peter calmed her somewhat. "Your name is Cathy. Cathy Chandler."

Catherine shook her head. "Wh... what happened to me, and what is this place? And who are you?"

Peter chuckled lightly. "One thing at a time, Cathy. You've had an accident and were hit on the head. In my expert opinion, you have a concussion. You're in a safe place."

"Expert opinion? Are you a doctor?"

He nodded. "So is my esteemed friend here."

Father stepped forward and took her hand. "Catherine, you're among friends, and... people who love you," he told her, deep concern filling his voice. "Can you not remember *ANYTHING* of your

life?"

Catherine looked deep into his eyes, trying to recall something, anything, but it was no use. "No," her voice broke. "Nothing."

Father frowned, thinking of Vincent. He managed a small smile. "Very well then, you rest now." He patted her hand in a fatherly manner. "Peter will take you Abo ..., ah, to the hospital later today. Everything will be all right, Catherine. Please try not to worry."

She nodded. "I am very tired..."

"Yes, why don't you relax; Mary will keep you company for a while."

As Mary returned seconds later, Father pointed out to her that Catherine not be allowed to sleep because of her head injury. Mary agreed, then went to sit by Catherine's side.

Outside the Hospital chamber, listening to the lovely sound of her voice as she spoke to Mary, Vincent tried to keep hold of his emotions. He wanted so desperately to go to her, to hold her and comfort her. He needed to tell her all would be well.

But he couldn't. And the thought was tearing him apart.

"Catherine....." he whispered as his pain engulfed him. "Catherine....."

Hours later, Vincent watched from the shadows as Peter, Father and Mary assisted her to the park entrance. She wanted so much to sleep, but Peter told her that once they arrived at the hospital and she could be monitored, she would be allowed to doze.

Vincent's distress seemed to choke him when he thought of all the plans they had made for their future.

Their future. Did they have a future? What would happen if her memory did not return in the days and weeks to come? She didn't remember him. Would she ever come back to him? Just moments before, he had heard Catherine telling Mary that she must have fallen asleep just for a few seconds, because of a nightmare she had about a hideous monster coming toward her. Vincent had heard her crying to Mary, had felt her fear through their bond. It had saddened him even more. Apparently, Catherine thought their encounter had been a nightmare.

He followed them to the park entrance, staying well behind them in the shadows. He allowed himself a small smile as she hugged Father and Mary, thanking them for all their help, then held onto Peter's arm as he led her back to the world Above.

"Know that my heart is with you.... and our child," he murmured as Catherine and Peter disappeared from sight. His eyes filled with tears. How could they have known that the path to their happiness would be fraught with an obstacle as great as the one they faced now?

The next morning she woke up to stark white walls, and clean, antiseptic smells. Her head ached, and she felt a little nauseous. She turned her head slightly to find her hand being held by Peter.

"Good morning," he smiled, squeezing her hand.

His warm greeting made her smile as well. "Morning." She surveyed her surroundings, the action making her head pound. "I'm in the hospital, right?"

His smile widened and he nodded. "St. Vincent's, remember?" When she answered him with a tiny smile he asked her, "How do you feel?"

"My head hurts and I'm nauseous. And I still don't remember anything."

"Well," Peter began, "we might as well start from the beginning. I'm Peter Alcott, and aside from the fact that I'm chief surgeon for this hospital. I've known you literally since the day you were born." He saw Catherine's look of curiosity deepen.

"Cathy, I brought you into the world nearly thirty-three years ago."

Catherine stared at him and tried to remember. She shook her head. It was no use. "I'm sorry, Peter. I don't ..."

He patted her hand tenderly. "Don't worry, Cathy. It'll come back. Right now you need to rest, and I'll help you any way I can."

She sighed deeply. "I want to know everything, I 'need' to know all about ... me. What happens when I get out of here?" She began, "I don't even know where I live. Do I have a job? Family?" Her thoughts began to wander. "Peter, am I married? Do I have children?"

It was the most loaded question Peter ever heard, and he tried to remain passive, but encouraging. He could sense her panic, her distress.

"If you feel up to it after your tests, I'll come back and we'll talk. Cathy, I want you to know that after you leave here, I'm going to take you home and make sure you're never alone."

"I want my memory back, Peter... I want my life back."

He stood and kissed her forehead. "I know, honey. And I promise it will come back. But," he looked at her with mock sternness. "It's imperative that you rest. You're not alone, Cathy." He fleetingly thought of Vincent. "Believe that. There are many people who are your friends, and who love you... very much. And in time, you'll remember them."

Catherine managed a smile. Peter's words seemed to help. She suddenly felt very tired. "You'll come back later?"

He nodded. "Much as I'd like to stay with you all morning, young lady, I do have to go to work. But if you need anything at all, press the button and a nurse will help you. We'll talk later, and tonight we'll have dinner."

"I know this is a stupid question, but what do I like to eat?" Catherine asked.

Peter smiled. "Everything," he laughed.

"Okay, surprise me then."

He touched her arm in farewell, and Catherine watched him leave the room. She turned over on her side, closed her eyes, and feebly attempted to sift through the blank wall in her mind. The effort only tired her more. She still felt nauseous, but not enough to interrupt her exhaustion. Her mind offered no answers to her endless stream of questions, and for now, she let slumber blanket her weary body.... and mind.

True to his word, Peter returned after lunch and found her looking physically improved. But knowing Cathy's inquisitive legal mind, she was virtually filled with questions. And he knew he had to be careful in the way that he answered those questions. Earlier, he had ordered the resident and nurses taking care of Catherine not to tell her that she was pregnant. He would tell her when he felt the time was right, when she was ready to handle the news. But when would that be?

Tonight, after she slept, he'd go Below and speak to Jacob and Vincent, and try to ease their frustration. Peter silently sighed, knowing the road ahead was going to be long - and very difficult for all of them.

Her voice brought him out of his silent reverie.

"Peter, I have so many things to ask....."

So for the better part of two hours, they spoke of family and background. Peter thought that he'd done very well, considering he hedged around certain facts. But then, she asked *'THAT'* question.

"Peter, am I seeing anyone? Why are you the only person that comes to see me? Is there someone special in my life?"

His heart began to pound at that point, but just at that moment, as luck would have it, Jenny Aronson and Joe Maxwell knocked on the door and walked slowly to her bed, both smiling, but looking decidedly uneasy. To Peter, their appearance was a blessing, but he only allowed a few minutes with her, as she was quickly growing tired. Her tests showed a concussion, but other than a dark purple bruise on her forehead and around her eye, she was going to be fine, physically.

He stood in the room while Jenny and Joe slowly told her bits and pieces of her life. Peter said there was time enough in the coming days to visit with her friends.

After leaving her room, Joe and Jenny approached Peter, and as expected, both friends were deeply concerned for Catherine.

"Is she going to be all right?" Joe's concern was obvious.

"I hope so," Peter responded. "She needs rest, but she'll be ready to go home in a couple of days. I'll take care of her. Her memory will come back, it's just going to take time."

"Well, call us if there's anything we can do," Jenny volunteered.

"I have someone taking over for her at work, Dr. Alcott," Joe told him. "Give her all the time she needs."

Minutes later, Catherine's friends left for home, and Peter had his secretary call a local gourmet restaurant to order dinner for him and Cathy. In the meantime, he called down to the hospital florist, requesting a special order for her room. Cathy loved flowers... especially roses.

"Peter, that was delicious," Catherine said later, as Peter took the tray from her lap. "I guess I was kind of hungry."

"You look better, Cathy. I want you to rest now."

"But I thought we could talk some more, Peter. I feel so much stronger and I want to know ..."

He threw up his hands in mock surrender. "Okay, okay. But not tonight," he urged her, not wanting to get into anything more today. "I don't want you to tire yourself; I promise we'll talk more tomorrow, deal?"

Catherine began to protest, but she was weary. "All right, tomorrow," she sighed.

They both turned as they heard the knock at her door. Peter stood to open it, while a nurse carrying a large crystal vase of red roses entered the room.

"They're beautiful," she exclaimed, as Peter took the heavy vase from the nurse to place it on Catherine's bed stand.

"They're your favorite, Cathy, always have been."

Catherine lifted one perfect scarlet bud from the vase and inhaled its beautiful fragrance. "So lovely," she whispered, closing her eyes. Suddenly, a flash of color appeared in her minds' eye, and she jumped, startled.

Peter flew to her side. "Cathy, what is it?"

She shook her head, holding the rose tighter to her breast. "I - I don't know. I think it was a book, or a page in a book," she looked a question at Peter. "What could it mean?"

Peter shook his head. "A flash of something coming back, maybe," he tried to explain. "Please

Cathy, don't force yourself to think about it. It will come back."

"All right, Peter," she acquiesced. "Thank you for everything you've done for me. When can I go home? I want to be somewhere where my own things might help me to remember."

Peter chuckled lightly at her enthusiasm. "Oh Cathy, you always were determined and strong. Sometimes I wish I had your strength."

Instantly, Catherine experienced another flash of a voice telling her, *'You have the strength, Catherine... you do....'*

"I think I remember something, Peter. Someone talking to me, telling me that I have strength." She became anxious as she drew the rose to her nose again. "What could it mean?"

Peter's brow furrowed as he shook his head. Her will was so strong - Peter hoped that she'd start to gain her memory soon. It looked as though she was beginning to have flashes of her life... with Vincent.

CHAPTER THREE

After she fell asleep, still grasping her red rose, Peter made his way to the tunnel world.

It was close to midnight, but he knew he'd find Vincent and Jacob awake, waiting for him.

As he entered Jacob's chamber, they were sitting across from each other, Vincent looking forlorn and distracted, as Jacob set a cup of tea in front of his son.

The moment Vincent saw Peter, he literally jumped from his chair to greet him. Peter noticed his sad eyes, and an eerie, quiet demeanor that seemed to envelop his entire being.

"How is she, Peter? Is she better?" He grabbed tightly onto Peter's hands, as though they were a lifeline.

Peter feigned a smile. "Yes, Vincent, she's much better," he replied, as he approached Jacob and pulled up a chair to sit with his friends.

He continued. "Joe and Jenny came by to see her. No, she didn't recognize them but," he looked at Vincent. "I think she had a flash of memory just before I left her. I think her first recall was of you, Vincent."

Vincent drew in a breath. "Tell me, Peter."

"Well, I had a vase of red roses sent up to her room. Now we all know how much she loves them, and she took one whiff and then told me she saw a book in her mind. Do you know what she meant, Vincent?"

Tears welled in Vincent's eyes, and he nodded slowly. "I would leave a rose with a note on her terrace," he murmured. "Once in a volume of Shakespeares's sonnets." His eyes lifted to look at his father. "She remembered."

Peter patted him on the arm. "So far, that's all she was able to recall. And being the excellent attorney she is, she must have asked me a thousand questions today, and wanted the ansewrs to each one."

Father managed a smile, along with Peter, but Vincent grew worried.

"Vincent, did you hear that? Catherine was able to recall a little."

"Yes, I heard."

"Well, you don't seem very happy about it."

Vincent's head turned abruptly to face Father. "Happy? What happens if she doesn't remember me? What will happen if her memory returns only partially, Father? What will happen in two months when our child begins to stir inside her and she wants to know who the father is? What will we tell her?" He turned to Peter.

"Will you bring her down here to me and let her see that the monster of her nightmares is the father of her child? We can't very well tell her about our child now and risk her recovery, can we?" he questioned, as he turned from both men.

"What she needs now, Vincent, is rest and a chance to heal, and the memories will return." Peter tried to sound optimistic, but knew that Vincent would not be comforted yet.

"What she needs..." Vincent's voice trailed off, "I cannot give her."

He rose from the chair and began to pace feverishly back and forth across the chamber. "What if she suffers again from these dreams of me and becomes so terrified that our child is hurt in some way?" He seemed to be talking to no one but himself as he continued to pace. "What will happen if she does not regain her memory when the child is ready to be born? What if I am not able to be with her during labor because she does not remember me?"

Both doctors stared at each other uneasily, but Father knew that was nothing anyone could do. Catherine must heal herself.

"Peter, when are you bringing her home?" Vincent demanded, as he ceased his incessant pacing.

"If she feels better tomorrow, I can probably sign her out. Why?"

Vincent grabbed his cloak from the back of the chair. "At least if she is at home, I can watch over her at night, and make sure she has all she needs."

"Vincent, you can't reveal yourself, not yet!" Father exclaimed.

"I know that, Father. But I can stay in the shadows of her terrace. I need to see her and be with her, if only from a distance," he said, as he walked from the chamber. "I must."

As he left the room, Peter shook his head. "He's on the edge, Jacob. I just don't know what to do for him."

"You're doing everything you can, Peter, we all know that. Vincent knows that as well. It's just that he's so in love with Catherine, and now... a child on the way and all these complications." He sighed deeply.

"I just want those two kids to be happy, but it seems that nothing has ever come easy for them."

Jacob nodded in agreement. "Oh, Peter, what will we do when her pregnancy can no longer be concealed? What if she hasn't recalled her life with Vincent by that time?" His concern was evident.

Peter frowned, folding his hands on the table before him. "I don't know, Jacob." He shook his head. "I'll cross that bridge when I come to it."

Vincent walked the back alleys for hours, finding himself at the docks, walking along the pier. He searched the bond for her, and found her sleeping fitfully, probably dreaming. Perhaps of a blue-eyed, fanged monster?

He shivered violently, more from the thought of her nightmare, than from the biting cold that tore at his cloak and hood. By the time he reached the park, it was nearly dawn. Automatically, he walked toward the south and to their favorite tree, the giant weeping willow where they so playfully and intensely shared their love just weeks before. Wearily, he leaned against the thick trunk of the now

bare tree, closing his eyes, silently recalling the magical January night when they made love on this very spot. He managed a tiny smile, still hearing her sweet voice reciting Blake in his ear.

Our child was conceived here, he thought. This he knew to be true. "Our child," he whispered as he looked up to the dawning sky, tinged with pink and grey. Never in his life had he felt so helpless. Once she had told him she didn't have his strength. But he knew. He knew from the bottom of his heart and through their bond, that she did. If he was going to survive this sadness, he had to have faith in her courage, and in the woman she had become. The woman he loved.

As he began to walk back toward the drainage tunnel, he knew he would have to trust her to remember what they were to each other... in their love. The proof of their love would bring her back.

Their child would bring her back.

Hours later, Catherine was awakened by a strange dream. As she sat up, she tried to recall the vision before it vanished. A pair of beautiful blue eyes gazed lovingly at her, and she was holding not only a red rose, but a white one as well. A voice whispered '*...while thy branches mix with mine....*' It was the most beautiful voice she had ever heard. It was sensual, and gentle, and loving.....

But then she saw his face, or what she thought was his face. Cleft lip, flat feline nose, fangs? Claws? It wasn't a human face. She'd seen that face when she first awakened from the accident. It had seemed so real. What did it mean? Who or what was he?

Her heart was pumping when she woke up, and she was nauseous. She was happy to see Peter in the doorway of her room, wearing his best fatherly smile.

"Cathy, are you okay? You look like you saw a ghost."

She shook her head. "No, I'm all right. Just having strange dreams about roses and a creature with fangs and claws, and the most beautiful blue eyes I've ever seen."

Peter tried not to show any emotion at her words. "Well, I've got good news." He entered the room and walked to her side. "Ready to go home today?"

Catherine tried to show some interest. "Home." She took a deep breath, and pushed errant strands of her hair away from her face. "Will it feel like home when I get there, Peter?"

"Anything has to be better than this place," he said, trying to lighten the mood. "I brought you some clean clothes from your apartment. Why don't you shower? I'll come back for you in about an hour."

"Sure, Peter. Thanks."

"I'll get you settled in your place, and then we'll talk some more if you want."

She nodded. "Being home will probably help a lot." After Peter left, she added to herself. "I hope it will."

She slid from the bed and walked to the bathroom to take a hot refreshing shower. For the first time in three days, she felt optimistic about her recovery, but she couldn't stop thinking about the strange dreams that kept invading her thoughts.

Later that day, Peter led her through her apartment. Catherine very slowly roamed through the rooms at least three times before she removed her coat. It's a lovely place, she thought. Lots of books, scones on the walls, a beautiful hand-made quilt that covered her bed. And a breathtaking view of the city from the terrace.

"I can't explain it, Peter, but I feel as though I belong here, yet I don't remember it. Is that possible?"

Peter took off his coat and draped it over the couch. "That's definitely a good sign. Why don't I make us some tea, while you get re-acquainted with the place?"

She managed a small smile, then went into the bedroom and opened her closets. A faint scent of paraffin and sandalwood softly surrounded her.

That's strange, she thought. *There are no candles in here*. She pulled out a black off-the-shoulder dress and inhaled its scent. There it was again; paraffin.

"Candle wax?" she said aloud. And something else that she couldn't quite place. She lifted a winter-white woolen coat out and inhaled the scent on that as well. It was an odd fragrance, one she couldn't name at once. But it was definitely there. It was a musky, masculine scent.

Definitely male.

A feeling of lightheadedness gripped her when a voice in the back of her mind spoke. '*....Can I lead you through the dark?....*'

She shook her head and stared at the coat again. "That voice again," she murmured to herself. "I'll have to ask Peter about it."

"Cathy, tea's ready."

"Be right there." She placed the coat and dress back in her closet and turned to the bed. She sat on the edge and drew her hand across the beautiful coverlet. "Give it time," she told herself.

Peter was waiting for her in the dining room, ready to serve. "Do you remember anything else?" He asked, handing her a cup of tea.

"Just now in the bedroom," she replied, taking her tea. "A tiny flash, but I can't place it."

They were both quiet for a while, but as Catherine sipped her tea, she couldn't quite get the scent of candles and musk out of her mind.

That night, Peter insisted on sleeping on her couch and, secretly, Catherine was thankful not to be alone. She discovered the most beautiful lingerie in her closet, and after showering and drying her hair, was grateful to climb into her very comfortable bed,

But soon her peaceful slumber turned into a frightening nightmare as visions of the same fanged, clawed, cat-like monster once more invaded her dreams.

She cried out, until Peter came in to comfort her. Only when she was once again settled and calm did he attempt to go back to sleep.

Below, Vincent felt her distress and began to cry, as he clutched his heart in pain and loneliness. "Oh Catherine..." he sobbed. "Catherine..."

Catherine woke up to the enticing smell of brewing coffee. She had only a slight headache, but was still suffering from that annoying nausea. She went into the bathroom and looked in the mirror, staring at her reflection with a frown. Her bruise was still purple, but now it was surrounded by an ugly yellow ring. The swelling in her eye had also gone down, but was a little painful. She leaned into the mirror.

"Who are you, Cathy Chandler? When are you going to remember who you are? When do I get my life back?" She sighed. "I guess I'll have to rely on myself to find the answers, right, Chandler?"

She half-expected to find that strange musky scent on her robe that hung behind the door.

Yes, it was there. "Strange scent, but I like it."

As the days passed, Catherine gradually grew stronger, and other than the yellowish discoloration on her forehead and the almost ever-present slight nausea, she was determined to focus her mind on regaining her memory.

Joe and Jenny visited her again, and she was proud to say that she was picking up tiny sparks of memory of her friendship with Jenny, and her working relationship with Joe. They were only minute fragments but, she was happy to say, it was better than nothing.

Peter had been an angel, stopping by almost every day, relating events from her life. His talks had helped, and she now recognized her parents, thanks to the many photo albums she found in the apartment.

*'Who are you?
I loved you once, just moments past
But now my sky is overcast
Your face so dear, is veiled from me
You're here I know, Why can't I see

I walk your steps, I dream your dream
I hold you close each night, it seems
I breathe your breath, I sense your touch
I need your love. So very much

I feel a life within me grow
A child, our child, that too I know
Yet though I search, I've lost my way
Come back to me, my love. To Stay.'*

He had successfully put off telling her about the past couple of years, but she was now growing more inquisitive. He also noticed her face was becoming a little fuller, and she was starting to put on weight. The only reason she hadn't noticed, he surmised, was the fact that she was so involved with thoughts of her parents. It would only be a matter of time before she began to wonder why she was gaining weight.

Vincent was suffering, mostly in silence, spending most of his time either alone somewhere Below, or hiding in the shadows of her terrace, nearly freezing to death. He paid no heed to Father's warnings that he would soon make himself ill. Peter understood, however, the need for Vincent to be near. He seemed to be willing her to remember something of their life together.

Then one day, almost two weeks after the accident, small pieces of Catherine's fractured mind began to fall into place.

Finding herself alone on an early March day, she decided to clean out her bookshelves. She hadn't felt much like reading since the accident, for it always hurt her eyes and head to do so. But today she was in the mood to skim her shelves, dust them out and at the same time, find something that might spark her interest... and maybe her memory.

She pulled her hair back with a rubber band, threw on her worn jeans and tee-shirt, grabbed a dust rag, and set out to work.

It wasn't long before she was becoming interested in almost every book she took down to dust. Volumes that included works by Dickinson, Bronte, Coleridge and Keats were handled with reverence and placed aside.

It was after she'd pulled down more than a dozen other treasures that included Oscar Wilde, Tennyson, Rossetti and Kipling, that she felt a strange sensation wash over her.

The next book she found in her hand was a beautiful hard-covered copy of Shakespeare's Sonnets. Her hands shook and her head began to ache as she opened the fly leaf. It was inscribed in a beautiful flowing hand that read; ***'With love's light wings did I o'er perch these walls, for stony limits cannot hold love out.'***

It was signed, ***'Vincent.'***

Catherine dropped the book to the floor. Her heart began to pound furiously. It was then that she saw the rose that had dropped out of the book. Opening the book to the page from where the flower had fallen, she began to read the twenty-ninth sonnet silently to herself.

She twirled the once bright red rose, now faded and wilted with age, between two fingers.

"Vincent," she whispered. "Who are you, Vincent? Are you from my past? What were we to each other?" She swallowed hard and stared at the rose. "Where are you?"

She made a mental note to ask Peter why he never mentioned Vincent. If he had been an important part of her life, why wasn't he here with her now, helping her?

That night, Catherine was again haunted by loviing blue eyes and roses... red roses. But that animal face invaded her slumber and she awoke, crying....

Meanwhile, Below, Vincent sat by the bank of the Mirror Pool, sharing her tears... and her pain.

"Peter, I'm still having the dreams about roses and a strange creature with the face of a cat," she told him a few days later. "The same face that I saw right before I woke up from the accident." She searched Peter's face. "What could it mean?"

Peter sighed and gave her a warm smile. "What else did you see?"

She shook her head. "That's all I saw in the dream, but a couple days ago, I was cleaning out the bookshelves, and I found this book... It was a book of Shakespeare's Sonnets with a man's name inscribed in it." Before Peter could react Catherine told him the name.

"It was signed *'Vincent.'* Do you know who he is, Peter?"

Peter took a deep breath, let out a nervous laugh, then shook his head. "Afraid not, Cathy. But I'm sure he was one of your many beaus."

Catherine bit her lip and frowned. "Well then, I guess I'll just have to find out for myself who he is, won't I?"

She didn't see Peter's expression of relief as she rose from the sofa. He touched her hand as he rose and looked at his watch. "You're doing great so far, Cathy. I have an appointment, but I'll see you on the weekend."

Later, as he drove through rush hour traffic, Peter recalled Cathy's question about Vincent, and he had no doubt that it was only a matter of time before she found who *'Vincent'* was. His only wish was that he'd be able to help both of them when she did.

CHAPTER FOUR

One morning, Catherine was eating breakfast when another strange incident flashed through her mind. She was reading the newspaper, and came upon an interesting article that caught her

attention. The Central Park carousel was being restored and Catherine read the article three times, yet couldn't fathom the reason.

She picked up the phone, called Peter, and asked him if he'd take her to the park on his next day off. He was only too happy to oblige; they'd go on Saturday.

Later, when he saw Vincent, Peter informed him of Catherine's request, hoping that the trip to the park would produce a much hoped for image of her life with him.

Vincent waited just inside the drainage tunnel on Saturday, hoping for a glimpse of her. He was rewarded when, just after noon, she passed with Peter on their way to the carousel. Vincent's heart lurched as he watched her walk and converse with Peter. She looked so lovely, and Vincent swallowed hard, missing her terribly and realizing she didn't yet recall the entrance to his world. Sadly, he watched until they were out of sight, then turned and walked back to the world Below.

"I don't know why I had to come here, Peter. I just had to see the carousel. Do you think it means anything?"

He shrugged. "Maybe. Why don't you climb up and give it a try."

She touched some of the beautifully carved horses, closed her eyes, and tried to think - but nothing happened. Absently, she climbed into the saddle of one stately white steed and again closed her eyes and tried to concentrate.

A brief image streaked her mind, and Catherine willed the scene to become clearer. She was speaking - no, arguing with a dark-haired man.

"... I don't want Vincent to be hurt...."

A man's voice answered her. "... Why does it always come down to Vincent, and how I'm going to hurt him?...."

"...Like at the carousel that night when you almost got him killed?....."

".....What do you know about the carousel?....."

Catherine shook her head. She felt Peter's comforting hand on her arm. "Cathy, you okay?"

She managed a tiny, confused smile. "I remember something, Peter. But I don't know what it means," she explained.

"Can you tell me what it was about?"

When he helped her down from the brightly-painted horse, she faced him and said one word. "Vincent."

Peter forced himself to look her in the eye. "What else?"

She rubbed her temples and shook her head. "It's all jumbled now, Peter. Something about the carousel and someone getting hurt, or... I don't know." She took a deep breath and realized she was exhausted. "Will you take me home? I don't feel well."

Peter wrapped her in a fatherly embrace. "Sure. I think you've done enough for today."

She was brushing her teeth that night when she looked up into the mirror and saw the slightly raised scar beside her left ear, then traced it with her index finger.

"Who are you, Cathy Chandler?" she whispered. "Where is your life? Will you ever find it? Will things ever be the way they were before?"

Settling herself beneath her quilt, Catherine closed her eyes and, just before she fell asleep, heard that voice again, telling her that she was safe. Somehow, the words soothed her, and she quickly

fell into a deep and dreamless sleep.

Later that week, Peter was visiting with Jacob and Vincent, updating them on Catherine's progress. Vincent continued to be inconsolable. He felt her frustration through their bond, which distressed him even more, because he was helpless to go to her, to guide her back to all that went before. Back to him, and to all they were to each other.

He'd been going to her terrace almost every night, watching over her as she prepared for bed. He closed his eyes and remembered watching her just the other evening, as she sat at her vanity brushing her hair. She had looked so lovely, dressed in a light blue satin nightgown that took his breath away. He'd felt like a voyeur, watching her as she slipped under the cover, wishing he was sharing her bed once more, touching her, kissing her. It had been so long since they'd made love....

"Vincent, are you listening?" Father unknowingly interrupted his son's very sensual daydream.

"I'm sorry, did you say something?"

Peter forced a smile. "I'm not going to be able to stay with Cathy tonight, but I left her a number where I can be reached. I know it's been slow going, Vincent," he touched the younger man's arm. "But you must be patient."

Vincent almost jumped from his chair. "Patience is almost impossible," he snapped, storming from the chamber. "And time is something we do not have."

"I've never seen him so frustrated, so utterly helpless," Father lamented, as Peter prepared to leave as well.

"I can't blame him, Jacob. Before too long, Cathy is going to find out one way or another that she's pregnant. Maybe we should begin to discuss a way to bring Vincent into her life. She keeps having the same dream. I can't mention Vincent's existence at this time. She thinks I know nothing about him."

"Peter, you did it for her own good."

"At this point, Jacob," Peter replied almost regretfully, "I don't know. I just don't know."

Catherine was restless. She couldn't seem to get comfortable in bed, and began tossing and turning. Her nausea had been particularly annoying the past few days, and tonight she could barely keep her food down at all. Now her queasiness caused her to sit up and turn on the bedside lamp. Maybe I'm catching the flu, she thought, rising from the bed and slipping into her robe.

Suddenly, her nausea got the best of her. She raced to the bathroom, and was ill.

Below, Vincent felt her discomfort, and knowing that Peter would not be with her tonight, grabbed his cloak and rushed to her balcony. He knew it would take all his will power to keep from going into her apartment if she were indeed ill. But he wasn't going to leave her alone.

She returned to bed and finally fell asleep, but was again awakened by her recurring dream, only this time, her visions included a jumbled mix of roses and books, candles and the carousel.

Unknown to her, Vincent stood in the shadows of her terrace, watching her as she tried to sleep. His heart seemed to tear in two as a single tear slid down his cheek. For the first time since meeting Catherine, he felt absolutely, irrevocably alone.

Over the next two weeks, Catherine's nausea grew worse. It seemed to her that she was endlessly running to the bathroom, and the only thing that seemed to help were crackers and herbal tea. Peter took several vacation days and stayed with her, feeding her crackers and trying to make her

relax. All the stress from trying to remember was taking a toll on her body, as well as her mind.

If he wasn't so worried about her, he could almost think that the morning sickness was a blessing in disguise, only because she wouldn't feel like talking. Usually the first trimester of pregnancy was the worst, but with Cathy and her most unusual pregnancy, he had no way of knowing if she would continue this illness for the duration of her term. If the morning sickness went on much longer, he'd have no choice but to tell her she was pregnant, whether or not she remembered Vincent.

Peter wanted her to stay in bed for a few days, and Catherine, surprisingly, did not argue with him. She read a lot, and enjoyed the late winter sunlight from her balcony. For some reason, she felt like reading Dickens, decided against '*A Christmas Carol*,' and finally opted for '*Great Expectations*.'

She was thoroughly enjoying each and every page and after a while grew drowsy and began to fall asleep. Through a mist of roses and carousels, she began to smell paraffin and sandalwood. And then she heard the beautiful voice.

"....Don't be afraid.... please don't be afraid... no one will hurt you.... tell me your name.... Catherine...."

And then she felt a spoon touch her lips. "....it's all true...."

She felt the hand that fed her the soup, for she could not see. Her eyes were covered. It was a fur-covered hand. With claws.

Catherine forced herself to awaken. "What was that?" she gasped, recalling her dream. Quickly, she drew herself across her bed to grab a pen and paper. She wrote down all she could recall. The roses, the carousels, candlewax, the musky male scent of sandalwood, a fur-covered hand with claws.

"What does it all mean?" She picked up the Dickens book again. From somewhere inside a voice comforted her. "....We could finish '*Great Expectations*'. Do you remember how it ends?...."

She rubbed her temples. "Who are you? What are you trying to tell me? Are you someone I care about? Why aren't you here with me? Answer me, please?"

She began to cry in earnest, covering her face in her hands, pouring forth all her pent up frustration. *Was the voice in her dream and the man who gave her the book of sonnets one and the same? Why were her visions invaded by a voice, beautiful eyes and clawed, fur-covered hands, but no face? Was she finally losing what was left of her mind? Would she ever be able to make all the missing pieces of the puzzle that was her life fit into place?*

If the answers to these questions didn't come to her soon, Catherine feared she'd slip away from reality and be forever trapped in a suffocating web of confusion.

Vincent decided to spend the night on her terrace once again. He watched her as she took some broth and crackers from Peter, then closed his eyes and reached inside his soul as he felt her emotions. He realized that in the last few days their bond had been growing stronger. It was encouraging, but still not enough. He missed her so deeply. To see her and yet not touch her and love her was almost unbearable to him. He missed the way she read to him; the way she laughed; the way she touched him as they made love. Gazing lovingly at her now, he longed to whisper words of love and assurance to her, to tell her that all would be well. He yearned to touch her body where their child grew. To know that they had created a child together, yet not to be able to talk to her about it, was physically draining him. She was his life.

He needed her, "Come back to me, Catherine...." he whispered brokenly. "Come back to me soon."

Catherine was finally able to convince Peter that he needed a temporary break. "I feel so guilty," she told him. "I feel as though I've taken your life away - go take a walk or do something," she said,

practically pushing him out the door.

After he left, she decided to do some exploring, while Vincent watched her in stony silence. Walking to a small chest near her bed, she pulled the handle to open it, but it wouldn't budge.

"That's strange. What would be so important that I would want it locked up?" Curiosity began to wash over her. "There must be a key here somewhere," she said aloud, as she skimmed her hand under the chest. Nothing. She drew her hand further under the chest and felt a cool metal object. "Yes," she proclaimed triumphantly, pulling the small metal key out from under the chest. Her hands began to shake as she opened the chest to reveal a beautiful, leather-bound journal.

"It's about time," she thought. "Now maybe I can solve some of these riddles."

Reverently, she brought the book to the bed, and placed it on her lap, thoughtfully opening the diary to the flyleaf.

Vincent watched silently from his place in the shadows, his mouth dry, his hands trembling, his heart crying out. What would be her reaction to the entries she would find? Would she become ill again? How many pages would she read? Would the words rekindle some of the beautiful moments they'd shared?

Her excitement pushed aside her nausea as she propped several pillows behind her head. Her heart accelerated as she began to read the first page, dated nearly four years before'

'...Thank God we were able to save their lives... I told him that it wasn't courage - it was love.....'

Another passage was just as cryptic. *'....He said our time together was always limited, in minutes and seconds. I told him that we'd have to learn to measure our life in another way. He agreed.....'*

Catherine turned the page. *'....I told him that what we have is all that matters. It's worth everything. Our love is worth everything. He is my life. Without him, there is nothing.....'*

As Catherine read the last words, Vincent felt his knees buckle under him. He began to weep when he recalled all the precious moments they had shared. But the most heartbreaking part of all was that as he looked at her, he realized from her expression that she didn't recall anything of their life together.

Meanwhile, hands trembling, head pounding, Catherine read on. Each page mentioned 'him' and 'he' but so far, nowhere was his name mentioned.

Another page, another mysterious entry. *'....He's been such a comfort to me these past days, since Dad died. He heard me crying one night, and came to me. He held me in his arms all night, soothing me, just being there for me.... I told him I wanted to stay with him in his world..... He told me that he didn't want me to go back to my world. But when I did return home, he understood; he always does.... Before we parted, I kissed him, and thanked him for all he'd done for me. I love him so much.... I hope someday we can be together.... truly together.....'*

The next page said much the same thing; *'....He came to me tonight, while I was on the balcony planting my new rose bush. I explained to him that it was a special plant, and he smiled. I cut my finger on a thorn, and he kissed the bruise away, warming me in a way I've never known. I thought for sure that he was going to kiss me, but the doorbell rang and interrupted our moment. I know that he can feel what I feel through our bond, that I want him as much as he wants me....'*

Catherine was so overwhelmed at the contents of this most private journal, she decided to talk to Peter before she went any further.

She was exhausted and queasy, so she placed the diary back in the chest and locked it once more. She showered and went to bed, completely unaware that she was being watched over by the very man that she read of in her journal.

Peter knew the moment she opened the door to him that she had discovered... something. It was written all over her face, that intense determined look which possessed her whenever she was in the midst of collecting information.

"Cathy, how do you feel today?"

"Besides being nauseous, you mean?" she said seriously. "We have to talk. I found something."

Peter took her hand. "Cathy, are you starting to remember.... your life?"

Catherine shook her head. "No, nothing yet. But I found something that may help me to remember."

They sat on the sofa, and Catherine faced him and began to tell him about the journal.

After Peter left, Catherine walked through her bedroom, heading for the double doors of her terrace. Stepping to the railing, she looked out at the breathtaking view of the city, and felt a delicious warmth flood her body. Thinking about her journal, and the secretive way in which it was written and subsequently locked away, she gave way to her thoughts.

"Are you out there?" she called quietly. "What does it all mean? What do you mean to me?" Then an instant of recall shot through her.

'....How remarkable you are, remembering such a dark moment, with dancing light... I wanted to give you something from my world... something to carry with you... a keepsake... every day since that night I'm reminded of what a gift life is.....'

Without thinking, Catherine's hand flew to her neck. "A keepsake?" She closed her eyes and tried to remember. She heard her own voice reply, "Vincent, it's beautiful... I'll cherish it....."

Her eyes flew open. "I have to find it," she exclaimed, though she didn't know what she was looking for as she turned and ran back into the bedroom. She went to the locked chest and grabbed her diary. Flipping once more through the pages, she silently prayed that she would find the entry that would explain her strange behavior.

Finally, she thought she found what she'd been looking for, and read the passage out loud. She was unaware that Vincent had arrived on her terrace, just as she went back into the bedroom. Since the balcony doors were left slightly ajar, he was able to hear her read from the diary.

".... April 12th - What a perfect night! The first anniversary of the night V. found me. I lit all the candles on the terrace, and then he came to me. He looked so beautiful, dressed in his white linen shirt. I love him so much, so very much. He gave me the most beautiful and magical gift. It's a crystal pendant that he said came from the deepest place in his world. I'm so happy. It was a night I shall never forget, ever...."

Catherine's tears fell to the page as she read the passage over and over.

"But I did forget, I did," she wept, as she hugged the book to her breast. "Oh God, Vincent, I want to remember. I want to."

In the next second, not knowing Vincent was watching her and silently weeping as well, she turned back to the wooden chest, looking for.....

"Looking for what?" she asked herself. Closing her eyes and concentrating hard on her objective, she lifted the false bottom of the oaken chest and there it was, wrapped in a piece of lined that she knew would have his scent.

Her crystal. Surrounded by the scent of sandalwood.

Her tears fell anew as she draped the precious gift from him around her neck. "I'll remember," she brokenly whispered, as she lifted the crystal to her lips and gently kissed it. "And I'll remember you,

Vincent.....I promise."

Vincent slowly slid back into the shadows as he watched her embrace her crystal. His hand found the small suede pouch that hung around his neck, and he embraced it in kind. For the first time in more than three weeks, he was hopeful.

'I know you will, Catherine,' he silently mouthed the words.

Then, without a sound, he lowered himself over the side of her building, and made his way back to his secret world. He was hopeful that tonight she had taken the first step in her journey back to him.

When the nausea wasn't distracting her, Catherine continued to read her journal. Lately, she found herself growing more tired as well. She pushed aside her discomfort as her eyes found another interesting entry.....

'.....We went to a concert in the park tonight. The orchestra played his favorite music, The Grieg Piano Concerto....'

Catherine placed the journal on her bed, went to the living room, and searched for the album. Somehow, she sensed the piece of music was among her collection. It was.

Placing it on the stereo, she sat on the couch, her crystal nestled between her breasts, and closed her eyes as the haunting melody filled the room.... and her heart.

Less than an hour later, she lay sound asleep on the love seat, and never heard Vincent enter her apartment to turn off the stereo. He turned to face her, his heart aching to touch her. His tears fell silently as he saw her crystal around her neck, and wished he could put her back into bed. No, he wished he could bring her to his bed, to his chamber, Below, where she belonged.

Her dreams were filled with that voice, the carousel horse, the blue eyes, gentle fur-covered hands, all floating in a mist of pages from a book. Bits of dialogue drifted through her visions....

'....You carry our light....'

'....How beautifully you read....'

'.....You are a woman of both worlds, that is who you are....'

'....Whatever happens, whatever comes, know that I love you....'

Strangely, it was the most peaceful night's sleep she had in weeks.

The next evening she found herself again playing the Grieg Piano Concerto. It seemed to soothe her. She went through more of her albums, and found another piece of music that attracted her attention - Schubert's Unfinished Symphony. She played it as well, and closed her eyes. As the haunting notes encircled the room, Catherine closed her eyes and willed herself to relax. Within seconds an image of herself appeared, standing in the midst of a thunderstorm, enjoying the rain and the lightning. Then she heard *'THAT'* voice again.

'....I think it was....'

This time she saw a mouth smiling up at her as she danced in the rain. She felt free, watching him as he watched her, and Catherine felt a tiny spark of arousal touch her. The mouth that smiled was shaped strangely. It was unique, but it was beautiful.

She didn't read her journal this night. She needed to absorb all she'd read up to this point. Yet several words kept trickling into her brain as she sat quietly listening to the music, words that were repeated in her diary; bond, link, connection - she knew deep inside that these words meant more

than just bring in love. There was something deeper than that between them, but what?

Vincent felt her frustration and knew if he was going to help her at all, she would need a gentle push. It would only be a matter of time before she discovered her pregnancy, and no matter what Peter or Father said, the life of Catherine and their child hung in the balance. He would help her no matter how or what.

"Let's go out," Peter suggested the next day. It was March, an unusually warm day, and Catherine was only too happy to get out of the house. Her mind needed a much deserved break as well. She and Peter decided the day was too beautiful to waste, so they wound up going to dinner and for a walk in the park. When he left her at her apartment, she kissed him on the cheek, locked her door, and threw her bag and coat over the love seat.

Walking into her bedroom, she was suddenly surrounded by the scent of sandalwood. She turned on the lamp with a trembling hand, then gasped as her eyes were drawn to her bed. There was something on her pillow.

A red rose covering a small note.

She froze to the spot, but not from fright. Finally, a piece of her puzzle was in place. She forced her feet forward, and with shaking hands, lifted the scarlet bloom and the thin sheet of ivory paper. Written on it, in perfect script, were three words.

'I'm with you....V.....'

Hugging the paper and rose to her breast, she deeply inhaled the heady fragrance of the flower. She looked around the room - no one was there. *Why didn't he wait for me?*

Rushing to her journal, she saw several passages that started *He knows what I'm feeling; he can sense when I'm sad, or frightened, or angry.... or lonely.*

"But how can that be?" she said when reality returned. Again she read his note. "Maybe he does know. Nothing is impossible, I guess," she mused. Excitement coursed through her at this new possibility. But there were still things she had to know. She was getting close, she could sense it, feel it, in every part of her body.

"Soon," she whispered, as she touched the rose to her heart. "Soon."

As Peter read Vincent's note, a rush of guilt flowed through him. He knew that he would be betraying them both if he kept her in the dark any longer. And the lost look in her eyes was breaking his heart. But what alternative did he have? No matter what, he couldn't risk her peace of mind nor could he risk the life of their baby. He realized Vincent's grief was eating at him. Then there was the question of time. As time passed, her pregnancy would be more evident, and Catherine was no fool.

He was caught in the middle, trying to protect the lives of two people he loved very much. What was he to do? He didn't like lying to Catherine all these weeks, and he certainly couldn't bear to see Vincent growing more and more despondent with each passing day. Her voice brought him out of his reverie.

"Peter, did you hear me? What do you think about the note?"

He knew it was only a matter of time before Vincent would try to help her. He didn't know what to

say, what to do. "Cathy, I...."

At that moment, her phone rang. "I don't believe this," she angrily stated, as she picked up the receiver.

Peter swallowed hard and looked up, silently giving thanks for the interruption. Then he saw her frown.

"Peter, it's the hospital. There's an emergency and they need you right away."

Peter grabbed his coat, forgetting for a moment Cathy's predicament. "Sorry, honey. We'll talk later."

"Vincent, what on earth prompted you to send Catherine that note?" Father admonished his son as though he were an errant teenager. "Aren't you aware of the implications of such an act? What were you thinking?"

Peter looked on as Vincent met his father's stern gaze. "Yes, Father, I knew exactly what I was thinking, and yes, I do know the implications of my actions. She's starting to remember."

Peter attempted to play mediator. "Jacob, she already knows that Vincent exists and the note now confirms it. Is it really fair of us to keep them apart any longer?"

Father frowned at his friend. "Really, Peter, I thought we agreed to let Catherine heal slowly...."

He was quickly interrupted by Vincent. "Father, she is pregnant!" he exclaimed, as his fist hit the table with a loud thump. "If she is to progress at all, I must help her any way I can. She is my life, and she needs to know the truth!"

Peter sighed. "Jacob, we all know what a determined woman Cathy is, and she's going to learn the truth soon enough, with or without our help."

"Yes, but Peter," Father interjected. "What will seeing Vincent do to her, to her child?" Then he murmured under his breath, "To my grandchild?"

"I think soon that will be all out of our control, Father," Vincent replied sadly. "Soon she will realize that her body is changing, and I want to be with her when she discovers those changes. I'm part of those changes. I'm going to help her remember, and we are going to face her pregnancy together, that I vow with all my heart."

He stormed from the chamber, leaving Peter and Father with the conviction that every word he said was true.

That night, Catherine dreamed of Central Park. She felt herself drifting toward a drainage tunnel in the west end, indescribably pulled toward a hooded, faceless figure who stood at its entrance. The feelings rushing through her were warm and she felt safe.

Before she could reach that strong, tall presence who stood waiting for her, Catherine woke up, very disappointed and very inquisitive.

Getting out of bed and experiencing slight nausea, she went again to her journal. She began to read the next section.

'...I met him in the park again, tonight. It had been so long since I'd seen him, and I missed him terribly. I brought him a gift, and I could tell he was pleased. It was a first edition of Tennyson's 'Idylls of the King.' V. always did remind me of Lancelot, and I told him that Lancelot was the greatest knight of all. He held me close after that, and I savored his warmth and his love for me. Oh, how beautifully he reads. The park was so magical tonight; it's our secret place....'

Suddenly, Catherine felt drawn to the park. She dressed hurriedly, grabbed a heavy coat, and flew from her apartment. She didn't know what she'd find, she only knew she had to walk through the place she'd traveled in her journal. And her dreams.

Vincent sprang from his bed, feeling her anxiety, but also sensing that the distance between them was lessening. She was coming to the park, he realized, and quickly dressed, grabbed his cloak, and rushed to the secret entrance in the park. His heart hammering in anticipation of seeing her.

As she made her way across the park, she could see the circular opening of a drainage tunnel before her. What would she find there? Would he be there? She quietly admonished herself for the thought. Of course he wouldn't be there. What would anyone be doing out at this ungodly hour, in the middle of Central Park, near a sewer tunnel? Better yet, what was she doing in the middle of Central Park at this ungodly hour?

She sensed that this place meant something in her life, but couldn't quite grasp its meaning. She began to feel ill, and wanted to go home. Her legs felt weak, her head began to hurt, and the thought of being alone here began to frighten her. Little did she know that she was being protected by Vincent as he stood in the shadows.

Vincent's eyes never left her as she made her way back across the park. Quietly, he longed for her touch, her warmth, and her presence. She was so close, he thought, as he hung his head in sadness... so close... yet so far away. He knew he'd have to take further action before it was too late.

Reaching her apartment, Catherine grabbed a few crackers, made herself a cup of chamomile tea, and went back to her journal, which was now the only connection to her forgotten life. Besides Vincent. But he wasn't here now. Another passage caused her heart to ache;

'...I know he feels my desire, I know he wants me as I want him, but I don't know how long I can keep my feelings in check. I love him so much and I fear if we don't do something soon, I'll go crazy....'

Then another entry;

'....He kissed me tonight and... it was unlike anything I've ever experienced. I want to love him with every fiber of my being, with everything that I am. I want to prove to him how very beautiful he is, and how deserving he is of my love....'

As Catherine turned the pages, she felt like a voyeur in her own life. The section that followed gave her gooseflesh. Silently she began to cry as she read on.....

'....At last, I belong to him, totally, with all my heart and soul... and body. I've never felt so safe, so loved... and so fulfilled. I know it was his first time, but we loved as though our bodies were made for each other. He is the most gentle, considerate, giving man I've ever known, and I still shudder from the memory of his warm body as it entered my own. His kisses were sweet, yet fevered and passionate, his beautiful hands gave me all his love. His sensual voice makes my heart race and my blood boil....'

Catherine could read no more. Her body was wracked with uncontrollable sobs. How could I not remember the most beautiful moment in my life? Why isn't he with me now? What was I to him? Where is he?"

"I can't take much more of this," she cried aloud, hugging the journal to her breast. "I just can't."

Moments later she was asleep, traces of her tears still staining her face, as Vincent watched in grief from the terrace. His own tears fell freely as well, and without a sound he entered her

apartment, and gently pulled the journal from her hands.

He tenderly covered her with the guilt then, slowly, quickly, he lowered his head to hers and kissed her gently on the cheek.

He could never imagine the sensation of being this close to her after so long would almost send him reeling. The warmth of her skin, the womanly scent of her, overwhelmed his senses. Reluctantly, he pulled himself away from her, then dared to read the passage in her journal that has so upset her. He brought his hand up to cover his face as his own memory was rekindled of the night they had first made love in his chamber, many months before.....

.....Their need engulfed them and Vincent knew there was no turning back. Her body was beckoning, inviting him to love her, and he responded as his own passion grew harder and hotter. He wrapped his arms around her, pulling her softness closer to his own, kissing her with all the desire he felt. Her flesh touched his, and he groaned low in his throat, tenderly lowering her to the bed.

Their clothes became an unneeded burden, then her hand found and caressed the fullness of his erection, causing him to throw back his head, moaning her name over and over, inflaming them both with an endless hunger that needed to be satisfied.

Her fingers were warm as they touched his face, his hair; then their eyes met, bodies joined, lips parted to give each other pleasure. Catherine took his hands and began kissing his fingers until he could endure no more of her seductive teasing.

Tenderly parting her thighs with his own, his breathing grew labored and deep as he gently impaled her, long and hard. Moving within her velvet flesh, he could hear her murmur his name over and over, urging him with her voice - and her body - to take all she had to give.

Their primal movements grew rhythmic, as old as time itself. Vincent moaned as Catherine's legs rose to capture his hips, causing him to thrust further into her velvety sheath. He kissed her again and again, her lips now hot and swollen from his touch. Their movements quickened as they entered a realm of fulfillment that was theirs alone.....

Vincent's recollection of that night was so vivid, his body tensed at the thought of their joining in the act of love. He gazed lovingly at her as she slept, longing to kiss her again. But he did not.

Instead, he turned off her lamp, placed her diary on her nightstand, and left the apartment, knowing if he looked back, he'd never be able to leave again.

Catherine awoke the next morning, fully intending to go back to the park. She turned to her nightstand and frowned. She didn't recall turning off the lamp and covering herself but, she thought, *I guess I did*. Again turning to the page in her journal that told her that she and Vincent had been lovers, she asked herself, where was he? Maybe the park would give her some answers, if only the damned nausea and headaches would stop bothering her. The recurring dream of his eyes and voice still plagued her; and those hands. Why did they appear to her as claws? They weren't human.... but they were.

She would find out tonight.... she had to.

She didn't tell Peter she was going out to the park. He'd probably think she was losing her mind. In a way, Catherine felt as though she was going a little crazy. All the pieces of her fragmented mind needed to fit together, and she knew deep inside her that the answer to that puzzle was Vincent.

There was something about the way she wrote about him in her diary. Why did she never write his full name? She only knew his name was Vincent because of the inscription in her book of sonnets.

Vincent, by now, was visibly exhausted. The past few weeks had not only drained him emotionally, but Catherine's frustration had pained him as well. Seeing her last night and not being able to comfort her, only left him with an aching emptiness. Somehow, he knew she would come to him soon. He had to help her remember, before she found out that she was pregnant. And that fact would probably have been the last entry she would have written in her journal before the accident. He could feel her nearness. But tonight he would not leave her to walk home alone. He would help her. He had to, no matter where it would lead.

It was late, but she didn't feel frightened. For some reason, she didn't feel alone. Her senses grew sharper as she approached the drainage tunnel.

Her mouth was dry and her hands trembled, but she knew he was near. Her instincts were all she had to go on now.

She looked all around her. No one was there. Or maybe there was someone.....

"Are you there?" she called out. If anyone saw her they'd think she was crazy.

He stood hidden in the shadows of the tall thicket, but didn't approach her. Again he heard her call out.

"Please," her voice broke. "Answer me."

He did. "I'm here."

It was the voice in her dreams. Where was he? Why didn't he face her? What did he look like? What did he know about her accident? And if he did know about the accident, why hadn't he come to her before now?

"Are you Vincent?" Her voice was unsteady and nervous.

A long pause, then, "Yes."

She tried to keep from passing out. It was the most beautiful voice she'd ever heard. It was the voice in her dreams. A tiny trickle of excitement went through her.

"Why can't I see you?" She grew desperate. "I have so many questions."

Vincent threw his head back and tried to calm his quivering body. At last, to be able to speak with her. At last.

"Ask them - I will try to answer." And then, "but please, do not come any closer.... not yet."

Catherine knew she should be cautious but her heart told her to trust him. And she did.

"Why are you a secret?" she began, but didn't give him a chance to answer. "How do I know you?" And then, "Where did you come from? What did we mean to each other?"

She knew the answer to the last question from her journal, but needed to hear him confirm all that she'd asked. She was met with silence instead.

She sighed deeply. "Vincent, you must help me," she cried softly. "I don't remember my life... I don't remember you... I want to remember."

He felt her panic through their connection. She shouldn't upset herself or the child. "Catherine, please don't struggle. The answers will come... I promise."

For some reason, she believed him. His voice was like a soothing balm that washed through her soul. She took a deep breath. "I've been keeping a journal for the past four years," she told him.

"Yes, I know."

"In it, I wrote about a bond, a link we share. This is true, isn't it?"

".....Yes....."

"How is this possible?"

"I don't know, Catherine. But it is true," he explained softly.

Catherine knew or sensed the answers to her next questions, but somehow felt compelled to hear his response to them.

"Are we important to each other?"

"Yes."

She closed her eyes and trembled as she asked her next question. "What was I to you, Vincent?"

His voice broke. "Everything."

She took a deep breath and felt the tears start to fall. "Are we.... are we in love?"

A long pause, then....."Yes....."

"I'm sorry," she said. "I know how all this must hurt you. But why can't I see you?"

"No... not yet. I must go now."

"Wait!" She took a step forward. "Don't leave. I have so much to ask you."

"I'll meet you again."

"When?"

"Tomorrow evening."

Catherine grew excited, but was still puzzled by his mysterious appearance. "I'll be here."

"Good... until tomorrow." And he was gone.

"You're going to see her tonight, aren't you?"

Father's question was stern, and direct. Vincent moved to retrieve his cloak. "Yes."

"Vincent, she doesn't remember you. Why do you insist on pushing her?"

Vincent stopped suddenly and brought his gaze to his father. "She *'DOES'* know about us, Father. She's been reading her journal. She needs my help."

Father sighed. "Maybe it would be a better choice, Vincent, if you would leave her be for now, just until ..."

"I do not need a lecture, Father, on the perils of my relationship with Catherine," Vincent said pointedly. "I think it's too late at this point in time, don't you agree?" He lowered his head, then raised it again, softening his voice. "Father, she's going to have a child... our child. I must do all I can to aid her in recovery. I am helpless to do anything else."

He then walked to his father, gently kissed him on the head, and quietly left the chamber.

Father solemnly sat at his desk, drawing a weary hand through his hair, and silently praying that a miracle would allow Catherine to recover her memory before the situation worsened.

Catherine nervously toyed with the chain around her neck, then touched her crystal as she strode across the park to meet him. Her head was swimming with so many questions that had no answers. She also thought herself crazy to be meeting a man with whom she was in love, but

couldn't remember. The only logical conclusion she reached about his appearance, was that he must be deformed in some way, and didn't want her to be frightened.

That's silly! she thought to herself. If she was in love with him, his looks meant nothing to her. But he seemed to hold himself back from her for some reason. And there was something else gnawing at her brain, something that was different about herself, but what?

More questions with no answers. But she knew after tonight she'd learn something, something that would make all the difference. Something that would open the door to her mind. Vincent was the key to that door. She would keep after him until he unlocked all that was hiding inside her, and she would have her life back.

She hoped.

He was waiting for her in the shadows, a hood pulled heavily over his head. All Catherine could see was his outline in the dark, his powerful form. She was unable, however, to see either his profile or his hands. Somehow, it didn't matter. She stopped within twenty yards of him, and smiled.

Her smile touched his heart, and he tried to calm his trembling body. She was here to talk with him. He would help her, slowly, gently.

"You came back," she whispered.

She didn't see him nod. "Tell me what you remember, Catherine."

She took a deep breath. "Little things, fragments of my life." She spoke low, but her voice was nervous and frustrated. "As I've told you, I've been keeping a journal, it seems, for some time."

"Yes."

She looked back and took in her surroundings. "This place, it seems....."

".....Familiar?"

She nodded. "Uh-huh. Can you tell me about this place?"

Vincent sighed. "You had an accident here, four years ago..." He didn't know if he should continue.

"Please, tell me."

"You were attacked, mistakenly, and thrown from a van, not thirty feet from here... and....."

"Yes, and...." she urged him to go on.

"And, I found you... bleeding and broken on the grass. I brought you to my home, and for ten days, my father and I, we.... we watched over you, cared for you and I... grew to love you, Catherine. It was April twelfth, four years ago."

Catherine closed her eyes as he spoke. A vision of her bandaged head floated into her mind, and unconsciously, she lifted her hand to the raised scar beside her left ear.

"You said not to be afraid, that I was safe, and that no one would hurt me."

Vincent thought he would weep. "Yes... you remember, Catherine...." He couldn't trust his voice to go on, so he just uttered. "Good....."

She smiled. "You saved my life, Vincent. Thank you."

This confrontation was more difficult than he could ever have imagined. They had come so far since that April night.

"Tell me more about your memories," he managed.

"Oh, your voice and your eyes." Her voice was hypnotizing him with its lilting tone. "And you gave me this." She touched her crystal, lovingly, and brought her gaze back to him. "I'll treasure it," she said, not realizing she had repeated what she told him on their first anniversary.

Her closeness was driving Vincent to distraction. With much trepidation, however, he knew that she had miles to go, before she would even scratch the surface of her memory. Maybe Father was right, maybe this was too much for her now. Maybe she should simply keep reading the journal. He didn't want her out here night after night, hoping that she'd recall tiny pieces of the past. Yes, she remembered this place, but there were still years of their time together that she did not recall. It could not all be reclaimed by spending several nights in the cold wintry park. There had to be a better way.

"Vincent, you're so quiet. Can't we talk some more?"

The hope in her tone broke his heart. "It's growing late, Catherine. You need your rest, and it's cold out here in the park."

"Well, we can go to my apartment. It's....."

"No!" he told her, purposefully. "It's - that's not possible yet. Please, Catherine. Go home, read your journal. Maybe some of your questions will be answered in its pages."

Catherine had the feeling he was hedging. "Vincent, what does the carousel mean to us?"

Her question caught him off guard. Still, he wanted to answer her. "I would play there as a child."

"Vincent, why are you a secret, and why did I keep this secret?"

He sighed. "Because of a promise you made."

"A promise," she repeated softly. Again she touched her crystal. "A promise. Vincent, did I - did I ever give you a gift?"

He touched the treasured pouch that lay against his heart. "Yes. You gave me your mother's porcelain rose. I wear it around my neck in a ..."

"... Pouch that I made, out of suede!" she exclaimed excitedly. "I remember sewing it myself. Is that right, Vincent?"

"Yes, Catherine. I treasure your gift to me as well."

For several long moments, all was silent. Vincent was tired and wanted her to go home, to rest. They had spoken enough for one night. There would be other times.

"I must go," he breathed.

"Why, Vincent? I thought we could talk for a while longer."

He hesitated, then took a deep breath. "I will come to you tomorrow. After dark."

"All right," she hesitantly agreed.

"Until tomorrow....," Vincent whispered. "Be well, Catherine. Be well."

She closed her eyes, savoring his voice, then turned and went home.

She tried to remember the promise Vincent had mentioned, but to no avail. She was restless, and decided that sleep would not come easily. Rising from her bed, she turned to her journal once more.

All the entries she'd read in the past weeks had helped somewhat, but she decided to flip forward to more recent passages, and stopped at the entry that was the first for 1992, and began to read;

'.... It's New Year's Day, cool and snowing, and I don't think I've ever been so happy. We've finally discussed the possibility of my moving Below. It's going to happen, not right away, but V has... asked for a commitment, one I've waited to give him for a long time.

'We enjoyed a quiet dinner in his chamber, talking about our dreams for the future. Then we went to the park, and it began to snow. We walked to the giant weeping willow in the south end, hand in hand. The park was empty, it was late, and Vincent did something he's never done before. He made love to me right under that tree! He's never been so openly passionate before, but tonight he was different... playful. He began quoting my favorite Blake poem, 'Love and Harmony Combine' as we made love. It was magical and so exciting....'

Catherine sighed deeply as she again felt like an invader into her own life. What Vincent must be going through! His pain must be overwhelming, knowing what they were to each other... and she didn't even remember them making love!

All of a sudden, words drifted through her mind ...-

"....And around our souls entwine....." She recited out loud, and knew at once it was the Blake poem.

She closed her eyes; her head began to hurt. *'I can remember, I can,'* she cried silently, rubbing her temples. Then she was overcome by a rush of nausea so severe, she barely made it to the bathroom to be ill.

Crawling into bed a short while later, Catherine closed the journal and fell into a deep dreamless sleep. The last thing she remembered as she closed her eyes was Vincent reciting the sensual poem of love to her.

Catherine opened the journal with shaking hands. She found it very strange to be apprehensive about reading any entry that took place after New Year's Day. Why? What would she find?

All the January passages mostly spoke of Vincent and his family, her work and her happiness about moving Below.

"Below?" she said aloud. "Where is Below?" She was feeling uncomfortable and decided to read on, knowing that Vincent would be here soon.

February 14th, she and Vincent took a quiet walk and he gave her a book of Blake's poetry. It was a truly romantic evening.

She felt a rush of excitement, turning the next page, but a wave of nausea interrupted it. Her head began to hurt again, and she closed her eyes against the pain. Suddenly, the Blake poem came back to her again, and she recalled walking in the park in the snow with him. But still, he was faceless. Why was she so nauseous? No matter, she had to read on. The date was February 22nd, and Catherine stared at the page four times before the words sank in ...

'....I just came from Peter's office with the most wonderful, miraculous news.....I'm pregnant! Can't wait to tell V. Imagine, in less than eight months, I'm going to have his baby!....'

'A baby... a baby...' The words echoed in her ears, exploded through her brain. *'....A baby... Vincent's baby....'*

"Oh my God," she cried. "No wonder I'm so nauseous! I'm pregnant!" Then, looking at the date in her journal and forcing her mind to focus on the here and now, she cried out again. "I'm almost three months along!"

The strain took its toll, and in an explosion of fragmented images appeared like a kaleidoscope before her eyes... pieces of life.... her scar... blue eyes.... candles... clawed hands... a cloak... a

leonine face... cleft lip... crystals... a raccoon.... caves... books.....

What did it all mean? What would happen to her? Was Vincent the answer to it all? He had to be, for he was the father of her child. He was still faceless, but it didn't matter. She was having a baby. She clutched at her head as her nausea overwhelmed her. Then, slowly, she swirled into darkness.

She hadn't realized she'd passed out until she heard Peter's soothing voice. "Cathy, are you all right?" His voice was filled with concern.

Catherine slowly opened her eyes, focusing on her bedroom, then on Peter, and finally, the realization of what she had read in her journal shocked her anew. She sat up and glared at Peter.

"How could you, Peter?" she cried softly. "Why didn't you tell me I was pregnant?"

Peter shook his head sadly. "Please try to understand, Cathy. I did it for your own sake."

She touched her temple, attempting to clear the insistent pounding in her brain. "It's Vincent's, isn't it? He's the father of my baby?"

Peter straightened, then frowned and nodded. "Yes, Cathy, he is."

"You knew about him all along, didn't you?"

Vincent watched them silently from the shadows, his heart breaking with every word Catherine spoke.

"Peter, I want to know, who is he? Who is Vincent?"

".....I am....."

Both heads turned sharply to the voice and then to the tall cloaked, hooded figure who slowly moved from the shadows of the terrace to her bedside. Gathering every ounce of courage he ever possessed, Vincent slowly pushed back the hood, revealing his unique countenance to her, and silently praying that through their bond, he would feel no fear from her.

He was wrong.

At her first sight of him, Catherine cowered and moved closer to Peter. Her voice matched her terror. "Y ... you're Vincent?" she whimpered.

As tears gathered at the corners of his eyes, Vincent slowly nodded. He could feel her fear and apprehension, as well as the absence of any recollection of him. The thought lanced his heart, as though he'd been run through by a sword.

As the seconds passed, Catherine's terror waned. She allowed herself to look at him more objectively, and found she wasn't too frightened, only in awe that a being such as Vincent could exist... did exist. Peter sat on the bed, next to her, holding her hand and comforting her. She began to cry.

"How is this possible? I mean," her voice wavered, and she sobbed. "I'm sorry. I don't remember." She shook her head, and Vincent's hopes sank. He thought last night was a step in the right direction, but now he realized, with great sorrow, that she had a long road towards her recovery. Feeling totally and utterly dejected, and without saying another word, he turned from them and walked toward the balcony with painful, stilted steps. He would intrude on her life no more tonight.

He wasn't gone more than a moment when Catherine turned to Peter. "Is that it? He didn't tell me anything. Peter, what happens now? Where does he live? My baby.... what if my baby isn't ..."

"... Normal?" Peter finished her thought. "Cathy, I don't know what will happen. We've never been able to do tests on Vincent. You two knew this when you decided to live together."

"That's right," Catherine said. "I read in my journal that we were making plans to live together. Where does he live, Peter? I kept reading the word '*Below*.' You have to tell me, Peter, because I'm not going to stop bothering you until you do. Where the hell is '*Below*'?"

Peter knew that putting her off would do no good at this point. He sighed deeply, then proceeded to tell her about the secret world of tunnels and caverns where Vincent lived. Catherine listened in silence, awestruck by his words, yet knowing it was the truth. All those puzzling entries from her journal now made sense.

"So I had this accident down there, where Vincent lives, where he's kept safe from..."

"... Outsiders," Peter finished for her.

"And the older man who helped me, he's Vincent's father?"

"Yes." Peter took her hand in his. "Don't you see now, Cathy? I couldn't tell you about the world Below until you were stronger. It's the only place on this earth Vincent is safe. I wanted to keep you both safe. But I see now that was a mistake. I hope you'll find it in your heart to forgive me someday." He squeezed her hand and attempted a smile.

She took a deep breath and looked at him, while her mind attempted to sort out this fantastic story. "So, let me see if I have this straight. Vincent rescued me four years ago, carried me to his '*world*' and he and his father took care of me." She sighed, then went on.

"I stayed with him for ten days, and in that time this '*bond*' formed between us, and we became closer over time. He's saved my life countless times, and we fell in love and was planning to live together in his world. And now," she looked at him, tears sliding down her cheeks, as she touched her stomach. "I'm going to have his child. Peter, I can't possibly have the baby in a hospital, can I?"

Peter shook his head. "No, you can't. You'd have to deliver the baby Below."

Catherine's brows creased. "Below... Vincent's world. Where is that, Peter? Is it somewhere in the park?"

He managed a smile. "Yes, it is. And now that you know, it's time for you to rest." She began to protest and he stopped her. "We talk more tomorrow."

"Peter, I'm having this man's child. I have to find out sooner or later, and I still have so many questions. My head hurts again," she groaned, rubbing her palms against her temples for relief. None came.

"You will, I promise you," he told her. "Now, go to sleep and I'll see you tomorrow."

Moments after Peter's departure, Catherine fell into a restless fitful sleep, visions of Vincent filling her dreams.

Vincent was desolate. He ventured to the lower tunnels the next morning before dawn, and sought work - heavy, dirty labor to keep his mind off the previous night's happenings. Not allowing himself a spare second to think about how she looked when she saw him, he closed his eyes against the image of her terrified, beautiful face, the face he loved above all else. The mother of his child.

She didn't remember him. She might never remember him.

He gasped for air as the vision kept repeating itself over and over in his mind, and knew sooner or later she'd have to be brought Below whether she remembered him or not, because the one certainty in all of this madness was the fact that she would have to give birth Below in his world. And there, Vincent mused, he would keep them safe.

The ringing of her phone the next morning woke Catherine. it was Peter.

"Sorry to wake you, honey. I was just called out of town unexpectedly on an emergency. Might not be back for a week. Do you want me to call Jenny and ask her to stay with you while I'm gone?"

"No, Peter. I'll be all right," she answered drowsily as she fought off her nausea. "I'll call Joe or Jenny if I need anything." *Or I can go exploring in the park,* she thought silently.

After Peter gave her the phone number where she could reach him, Cathy turned to her nightstand, where her box of crackers stood and absentmindedly crunched on one to squelch her nausea. Peter might not be around to answer her questions for a while, but maybe she could find out more about Vincent and his home through her journal. She would depend on her own entries to guide her to his home, wherever that may be.

Catherine was too uncomfortable to do any exploring in the next couple of days. She wondered where Vincent was, and what he was doing. Was he thinking of her? Would he visit her again? Not likely, she thought, after the way she acted when he came to her bedroom.

"And just how did he get up here, anyway?" she asked herself one morning, as she was drinking a cup of tea. The ringing of the phone interrupted her thoughts. It was Jenny.

"I had the strangest dream about you last night, Cath."

"Well, tell me, Jen."

"Let me see. You were walking through grass, then suddenly you were surrounded by walls. You know, not only on either side of you, but above you too, like a cave. Then, I heard water dripping, maybe a waterfall, but then you were in a cave again, but the walls were filled with pictures of paintings. That's about it. Does it make any sense to you?"

Catherine thought about Vincent's world, but couldn't tell Jen about his secret home beneath the city. "No, but thanks, Jen. It'll come back someday - I hope!"

Catherine awoke only to see that it was three am. She had been dreaming of Vincent and caves, of books and candles. She also had an inexplicable sense of knowing what he was feeling and thinking, as if they were the same person.

"That bond he spoke of," she murmured as she rose from the bed. She heard his voice in her mind. *'.....I feel the things you do, sometimes, almost as if we are one...'* And then another image. *'....Wherever you go, wherever I am, I'm with you.....'*

Catherine's mouth was dry as she recalled his words. "We do have a special link." She said the words aloud to bring clarity to them.

She sat on the edge of her bed for a while, then realized her stomach had begun to cramp. It didn't feel right. Instinctively, she rubbed her stomach, but the pain lingered. *I have to call Peter,* she thought, then realized he was out of town. *I can't go to the hospital. I can't risk it.*

She had to find Vincent. Tonight. Now.

Quickly pulling on a sweatsuit and a woolen jacket, she hoped that she was doing the right thing. Her cramps were constant, but no worse. Still, she couldn't remain home and do nothing.

"If we do have some sort of connection, he's going to have to find me."

Knowing her thoughts were a bit unusual, not to mention irrational, she grabbed her keys and made her way to the elevator and to Central Park, hoping she wouldn't be mugged or murdered before she found him.

Or he found her.

Vincent literally jumped upright in bed as he felt her determination, her pain, and her nearness. His heart was thumping so loud and fast, he was certain it would explode before he reached her. Something had happened. She had remembered him, that was it! She was coming back to him!

When he saw her coming closer to the drainage tunnel entrance, his heart sank as he realized she was unsure about her direction. But then, why was she here?

It was then that he felt a cramp and he realized it was her pain. The baby! Something was wrong!

When Catherine saw his cloaked profile at the entrance of the tunnel, she ran to him, her face filled with fear, but not fear of him. He could sense her fear was for their child.

She stood before him. "I knew you'd come."

"How, Catherine?"

She looked away, then back at him, disbelief in her eyes. "We 'DO' share some sort of connection." It was a statement, not a question.

He nodded. "Something's wrong."

"Yes. I'm in pain," she said. Then, "Vincent, I loved you once... I need your help now."

Vincent held back his tears. She didn't remember him, but she was here. He held out his hand, fearlessly guiding her.

"Come...," he bade her.

Catherine hesitated only a moment, then took his hand, and he turned, leading her to his world. A world that he wanted only to share with her. A world where she would have their child - apart from New York City.

A world she did not remember.

"So this is where you live." Catherine felt as if she'd entered another world. A world that seemed as fantastic to her as Vincent did.

For a moment Vincent allowed himself to look at her, and savor her closeness. She was holding his hand, and Vincent wished she'd never let go. Even though she didn't yet remember him, it was enough for now just to be able to look after her.

"The pain is no worse."

It wasn't a question, Catherine realized. He knew what she was feeling, and couldn't quite understand this '*bond*' they shared, but knew that it existed.

She nodded. "It's just a cramp, but I'm...."

"My father is a doctor. Don't worry, Catherine. We'll take care of you."

Catherine was grateful for his attention. Allowing a gaze at him, she asked herself a hundred questions about this most unique creature. How did he get this way? Was he born like this? How did they fall in love? But there was one question to which she already knew the answer. He was human, or else she couldn't have conceived his child. But what would happen if their child looked exactly like him? Catherine knew she'd never be able to take the child to her world, but if need be, would protect her baby with her life. And she knew, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that she could

count on Vincent to help her.

Vincent led her through the passageways and finally came upon Father's chamber. He could feel her apprehension, and tried to ease her anxiety.

"Please, try not to worry," he gently pleaded.

She nodded, then saw an older man enter the chamber, leaning on a cane and limping slightly. He smiled on seeing her, and Catherine deduced that this was Vincent's *'father.'*

A flash of recognition came over her. "You helped me when I had the accident."

He nodded and took her hand. "Catherine, how wonderful it is to see you." He tenderly kissed her brow. "Are you well, my dear?"

Instinctively, Catherine's hand lowered to her stomach. "No. I've been having cramps for about an hour now. I guess you know that I'm pregnant."

Outwardly, Father showed no trace of the panic he felt at her words. He strove to comfort her.

"Um, yes, my dear, we know. Why don't you allow Vincent to get you settled in a guest chamber, where you can change into some comfortable clothes, and I can take a look at you, hmmm?"

"All right," Catherine replied with a small degree of reluctance. Although she knew these people could be trusted, she felt so out of place; but she needed their help, and right now would do anything to safeguard her pregnancy. Allowing her eyes to skim the large book-laden chamber, she inhaled the scents of candlewax, musty books and sandalwood.

"Come, I'll show you where you can rest. You need to get off your feet, Catherine," Vincent gently told her.

"Yes, you go with Vincent, and I'll be along shortly," Father concurred.

Before leaving the chamber, Catherine looked at Father with a grateful expression. "Thank you" was all she could manage before she allowed Vincent to lead her out of the chamber.

An hour later, Father covered Catherine with a heavy quilt, gave her a reassuring smile, sat on the edge of the bed, and held her hand.

"Am I okay? Please, tell me." She was very concerned. "My baby?"

Vincent entered the chamber, approached the bed, and smiled tenderly at her. "Yes, Father. How is she?"

Father cleared his throat, but directed his gaze at Catherine with a stern look. "I want to discuss this with Peter when he returns from his emergency, but for now, the only thing I can tell you is that the stress from your loss of memory is placing a strain on the pregnancy."

He looked at Vincent. "I would really like Catherine to stay with us until Peter returns, if that's all right with Catherine, of course."

Vincent held his breath as his gaze shifted to Catherine. How he hoped she would stay here, where he could watch over her and be with her. But the decision was hers to make.

"I could go to your apartment and get all the things you'll need until you go back Above," he told her hopefully. "During your stay with us, I promise that you will not be disturbed, and we can talk about the entries in your journal."

Catherine needed to think; she was exhausted, yet still trying to absorb her surroundings. Candles everywhere, a comfortable warm bed, the rhythmic rumblings of the subway Above, and the distant tapping of the pipes that Vincent had told her earlier were his world's way of communication. What

an amazing place this was! She almost felt as though this was a dream. A world below the streets of New York! Unbelievable!

She looked over at Vincent, then at Father, and nodded. "All right, I'll stay. I'm very tired. Do you mind if I sleep a little?"

"Of course not, my dear, we'll leave you. Later, when you awaken, Vincent will bring you some tea and soup. You rest now, and if you need anything at all, call out and someone will come to help."

Catherine watched as Father turned from the chamber, leaving her with Vincent. She felt a little apprehensive about being alone with him, and wasn't quite used to his appearance yet.

Vincent almost flinched at her anxiety, but remained still. "Catherine, please consider this place your home. If you need me, I'll be close by." He was afraid to say anything intimate to her, afraid he'd frighten her.

She looked at him and managed a trembling smile. "Thank you, Vincent."

Vincent nodded, and allowed himself to gaze at her. He missed her so deeply. She was here, that was true, but she wasn't, not really. He turned from her then, and slowly, painfully, left her. His only consolation was the fact that while she remained in his care, he would be able to help her. He'd get her back. He had to, before their child was born.

He entered his chamber with a heavy heart, then lit a candle on his table. Settling down in his chair, he pulled his journal toward him, opened it to a new page, then picked up his pen and began to write;

'.....She came to me tonight, needed my help, and I brought her here. The strain on her body is causing complications with the pregnancy. I don't know what will happen now. She still has no recollection of me, but I am relieved that she knows of the child and that while she is here I can watch over her, and keep her safe. It warms my heart to be so close to her. I've missed her so. She grows more beautiful each day, as her body blooms with our child. Father says she should be all right, but I must make sure she has everything she needs. I must go to her now. I feel through our bond that she is sleeping peacefully. Even though she remembers very little, I am overwhelmed by her courage and strength as I brought her to this strange place. She is truly a rare and special woman, and I grow more in love with her with each passing day. I will do everything in my power to guide her through her pregnancy with ease, and to ensure a safe delivery for her and our child. I will watch over her through the night. I don't want her to awaken during the night - alone. She must never be alone again.....'

Silently, Vincent placed his pen in his journal, closed the book, and left the chamber to sit by her side while she slept.

Vincent entered her chamber long after she'd fallen asleep, settled himself on one of the chairs in the corner, and watched her sleep. He'd begun to see the ever so slight changes in her body. Being the naturally observant creature he was, he noticed that her face was a bit fuller, and her normally small waist was thicker as well. Tears began to brim in his eyes as he felt his heart swell with love for her and the tiny being that had been created from their love - the being that she now nourished in her body.

Their child. He repeated the words in his mind over and over through the night as he watched over her and still the wonder of it overwhelmed him. Never did he think, in all his life, that he would be capable of finding his love of a lifetime. Never had he imagined, in his wildest dreams, being capable of fathering a child. But then again that was before the miracle of Catherine.

Catherine. He allowed his tears to fall as he looked upon her beautiful face, so serene in slumber.

She had brought so much to his life; had given him hope - and love. Catherine was the light in his world of darkness. *Oh, Catherine*, he thought, *don't despair, I'll bring you back to me.* "I love you," he whispered. "Always."

Vincent allowed his mind to drift back to many of the wonderful moments they'd shared. Their first Halloween, walking the city streets, hand in hand, so happy and free.... and in love. He thought of the time they'd helped Tony Ramos find his family again; had aided Lin and Henry in finding the happiness they deserved; helped Laura find a life Above with Jerry. Catherine had touched so many lives in their few short years together. He drew a deep breath as his memories continued.

When he and Father were trapped in the Maze cave-in, it was Catherine's courage and determination that saved them. He remembered Sophie and Misha, and the way she fearlessly opposed Elliot Burch, and won. But when Elliot himself was in trouble, Catherine risked her own life to help him. When Devin could have been exposed as a fraud, she promised not to have him arrested, because she knew the pain it would bring Father, and himself.

The lone candle sputtered its last light on her nightstand, so Vincent rose to light a fresh one. Sensing her calmness through the bond, Vincent settled himself back in the cahir. He silently recalled the time his boyhood friend Mitch Denton almost killed her, then shuddered at that repugnant image. Even now, the thought that he'd almost lost her sent daggers of pain through his heart.

Vincent tried to lighten his somber thoughts by thinking of an incident that had brought each of them great joy. And it had all begun with Tennyson.

He was never one to deny the possibility of miracles.... or magic. But the appearance of the elusive Kristopher Gentian was an enigma at best. He recalled not being able to sense Kristopher's presence, or the fact that the rumpled free spirit with the Mets cap had known Vincent's name before they'd even met. He allowed himself a wan smile as he thought of the magnificent painting that had been presented to Catherine and himself. The fact that the painting was dry when Vincent had touched it was, even to this day, something that was beyond the realm of reality, but Vincent was forever a believer in.....magic. The painting still hung in Vincent's chamber, and was the first thing he woke up to each morning and the last thing he saw before he closed his eyes each night.

As the hours passed, Vincent took solace in his memories, holding them close to his heart. He never left Catherine's side, and only closed his eyes occasionally to rest. When she was stronger, he was determined to help her by re-acquainting her with his world - the world she had been about to embrace when her accident occurred.

Maybe if they traveled the way together, it would bring her back.

Opening her eyes, she slowly became accustomed to the strange surroundings. Taking a deep breath, she inhaled the scent of candlewax, while her eyes picked up the sounds of tapping and the rumblings of a distant subway. Catherine felt surprisingly rested and turned her head, gasping lightly. There, on a chair near her bedside, was her own guardian angel. Vincent had been silently watching her, with a look that could only be described as full of devotion.

"Good morning," he said, his voice low and soothing.

"Good morning. How long have you been here?" she asked.

He stood slowly, and cautiously approached her. "A while," he answered.

Catherine shook her head. "You've been here all night, haven't you?"

He lowered his head, then raised it to meet her eyes. "Yes. I hope you don't mind."

She sat up and pushed some errant hairs from her face, then looked at him, not knowing what to

say except. "No, I don't mind."

Vincent could feel the tension in the air between them, and through their bond, could sense her apprehension. "You're feeling better."

It wasn't a question, Catherine mused. He could feel her emotions. "I still don't know how you do that," she confessed sheepishly.

Vincent wanted to explain all that their emotions involved, but now was not the time. "It will come back in time, Catherine. I promise you."

Their gazes locked for a moment, and his legs grew weak. He swallowed hard, then sighed, breaking the spell. "I'll bring you some tea, and something to eat," he told her as he walked toward the chamber opening.

Catherine wanted to say something to him. "Vincent," she called to him. He turned to face her and she paused. "I do feel a little better, thank you."

"Good."

She watched him as he left the chamber, and was left alone with her thoughts. Looking around her, she surveyed the warmth of the room and wondered if she was in the midst of a fairy tale, seeing herself as the lost princess trying to find her way home. Father seemed to be nice enough, but she couldn't keep her mind off Vincent.

Vincent. Here was this mystical, mysterious, unique creature who lived beneath the city, wore the most intriguing medieval clothing, possessed a voice and language that was absolutely fascinating and sensual, yet she had no recollection of him, except what she'd read in her journal! He'd rescued her four years before, cared for her for ten days, and in that time an unexplainable *'bond'* had formed between them.

How could this be? Why was this happening to her? Her confusion was beginning to upset her. How big was this place? How many people lived down here? Where did they get their food? Their clothes? And where on earth did all these candles come from? It was enough to boggle the mind. "Yeah, and is my mind boggled right now!"

By the time Vincent returned with tea and rolls, she was utterly miserable. Her unhappiness engulfed her and therefore affected him as deeply. The irony of it all was that Vincent felt a deeper intimacy with her now than ever before.

Catherine spent most of the day resting and was later visited by a young girl who introduced herself as Samantha. She brought Catherine a light lunch, yet didn't want to disturb her, explaining that Vincent had firmly requested Catherine not tire herself.

The first few days that Catherine remained Below were the most difficult for Vincent. It was heartbreaking to see her in a guest chamber, instead of where she belonged, which was with him, in their own chamber.

He'd bring her tea at mid-afternoon, or a book if she requested. Through their bond, he still sensed a myriad of her jumbled emotions, everything from confusion and loneliness to fear and apprehension. How he longed to touch her! But he kept his distance, knowing she was not yet accustomed to his strange appearance. Father kept assuring him that in time she'd remember. Vincent would just shake his head. Would she?

Three days later, Peter returned from the out-of-town emergency and headed straight for the tunnels after returning from Catherine's apartment. She'd left him a note saying that she had to find Vincent, and Peter flew into a panic, hoping first and foremost that she and the baby were all right, and secondly, that Vincent had sensed her need, and had come to her.

He entered Father's chamber to find Vincent pacing, alone. A sixth sense told Peter that Catherine was, indeed, Below.

"Vincent, how is she?" He approached Vincent, placing a comforting hand on the young man's shoulder.

Vincent stopped his pacing and sighed. "Father is in with her now." His voice was sad, devoid of strength. "Peter, is she going to be all right?"

Peter was stunned by Vincent's appearance. He looked thinner and his hands were trembling. "I'll go to her. Where is she?"

"Come... I'll take you," Vincent said, leading Peter to the guest chamber.

After both doctors had spoken with and examined Catherine, they met Vincent in Father's chamber.

"Well?" Vincent looked at the men with a faint glimmer of hope in his tired eyes.

Peter and Father looked at each other, then at Vincent. Father sighed. "Vincent, it seems Catherine is not going to have an easy pregnancy."

At Vincent's pained look, Peter interjected. "Vincent, I'm not going to lie to you. We have problems that cannot be solved down here, but I can't take her above and risk a miscarriage. Add to that the possible complications; a sonogram can't be performed because we don't have that sort of equipment here."

Vincent swallowed hard as his heart hammered in his ears. "What can I do for her, Peter? She must be kept safe and well."

His words cut through Peter and Father. "We know that." He firmly gripped Vincent's shoulders. "And I promise we're going to see her through this. Remember, she's a tough lady, but she's going to need you to be strong as well. When she wakes up, we'll talk to her together. We'll explain to her that the most sensible thing to do under the circumstances is for her to remain here until the baby is born."

Vincent's legs weakened. "Here? But what if she develops complications in the meantime? What will happen if her labor is difficult? What will we give her if she is unable to endure the pain? Father, Peter, what ..."

Peter interrupted him. "Vincent, please calm down. As far as I can tell, the only reason this pregnancy is strained is because of the amnesia. I really think that with complete rest, she will reach full-term in relative safety. I'll get everything she needs from her apartment, and tell Joe and Jenny that she's gone away to recover ... under my supervision, of course."

"I promise to come down every chance I get," Peter continued. "Jacob and I will watch her very closely, and in her last trimester, I'll bring down a monitor, so that we can all hear the baby's heartbeat."

It seemed that Peter's words comforted Vincent to a degree. He exhaled and turned to Father. "I'll make sure she gets her rest and eats well. We'll all help; the children, too. Peter, must she stay in bed for her remaining time, or can she go for short walks?"

Father and Peter looked at each other and shrugged. "As long as she's in no discomfort, and she's up to it, a short stroll every day would do her good," Peter replied. "Maybe you can take her to some of the places the two of you shared. You can tell her about this world, maybe re-introduce her to our family here. It may turn out to be very helpful."

Vincent nodded. "I'll bring her journal. Maybe that, too, will help."

For the first time in weeks, Vincent felt a faint spark of hope creep into his soul. "But first we have to make sure that Catherine agrees to remain here."

"I don't think we'll have too much trouble convincing her of that, Vincent," Peter said. "She knows the risks involved. We mentioned it to her before she fell asleep. She'll stay, Vincent. She'll stay."

Vincent threw his head back and let out a deep jagged sigh. "Good."

Then they discussed a tentative schedule that would benefit Catherine's recovery. Vincent threw himself wholeheartedly into the conversation, volunteering himself for any task that would make Catherine's stay stress-free.

"Now you understand, Vincent, that she must not be pushed to remember. She has to come back on her own, or her pregnancy will suffer. The more she tries to recall, the more strain she'll have to endure, and the child will suffer as well. We want her to have a healthy baby, so let's all work together on this. If she doesn't want to read, or walk or talk, let's leave her be. Amnesia is a very funny thing. The harder she pushes, the less she'll remember."

"I know that, Peter," Vincent replied, not a little agitated. "Do you think I would jeopardize her health in any way?"

Peter shook his head. "No, no, of course not. But I love her, too, and we're dealing with a unique and different pregnancy here, in a place that has virtually no modern equipment to speak of. She must be kept at peace and as optimistic as we can manage. Agreed?"

Vincent nodded, then rose from his chair. "I'm going Above to get her journal." He then approached both men. "Thank you," was all he said, before turning and exiting the chamber.

After Vincent left, Father frowned and looked up at Peter, who was preparing to leave as well. "I shudder when I think of what lies ahead for both of them, Peter. We still have more than six months to endure, but I promise she'll want for nothing. I love them both dearly, and I want to bring a healthy grandchild into the world. They deserve this happiness."

Peter nodded and touched his friend's arm. "Yes, I know, Jacob. We'll see them through this. If anything should happen to that baby....."

He was unable to finish his thought, but Father didn't need to hear it. He was thinking the same thing.

She awakened to the scent of roses. Then she turned to her nightstand and knew why. Beside her candle stood a thin brass vase that held two roses - one white, one red. She smiled and closed her eyes when an image flashed through her mind.

'....I thought a rosebush would catch the morning light....'

And then that voice. *'....Roses.....'*

Catherine opened her eyes and knew that somehow these roses had come from that very special bush. How they were blooming in March she did not know, but knew that they were hers.

She turned at the noise from the entrance to the chamber. It was him. He was tall, and golden, and quiet. And he looked so sad.

"C... come in, Vincent, please," she invited, and sat up as he approached her.

Through their bond he could feel no pain from her, but he asked anyway. "You're well?"

She nodded. "I slept well, yes, and ... no nightmares last night."

He smiled. "Good," he answered, pulling a chair over to her bed. "Samantha is preparing your breakfast. She absolutely refuses to let anyone help her. It seems she's taken complete charge of

your health," he stated lightly. "I hope you don't mind. The children care a great deal for you, Catherine." As I do, he wanted to say, but did not.

"The children? How many live here?" She sounded genuinely interested.

"Many," Vincent responded. "You will meet them soon, when you are up to having visitors. I promise you, Catherine, you will have the best of care while you are here with... us. Anything you want, you have only to ask and I...."

Catherine shook her head. "Vincent, I ... I understand, and I'm very grateful to all of you, but I must admit that I am a little..."

"... Scared?" He finished her statement.

She nodded again. "I'm trying to be strong about this. I'll do my best to have a healthy baby," she faltered, tears brimming her eyes. "Whatever you think, Vincent, I want this baby.... I do."

Vincent swallowed hard. "I know. Don't struggle, Catherine."

He reached out his hand to touch her arm, but pulled it back at the last moment. "I must help Kanin and Cullen with some heavy pipe on the fourth level, but I'll return later. Would that be all right?"

Catherine nodded and realized how difficult this was for him. "Yes, Vincent, I'd like that."

"Until later, then." He rose and turned to leave, but he wanted to look at her one more time before he left. "If you need anything, tell Samantha and she'll know how to contact me at once."

"I will," was all she could manage as she watched him leave. She felt alone, empty after he left.

And then she suddenly realized that she would miss him while he was gone.

*How could my heart forget?
How could I forget those eyes of blue that shine
With love when looking at me?
How could I forget that voice when hearing it
Dispels all fears and doubts?
How could I forget the comfort and security
Of your embrace when you hold me
Close to you?
How could my heart forget this love we have that
Warms my very soul?
Never Vincent, could my heart ever forget that I
will love you through all eternity.*

CHAPTER FIVE

When Samatha arrived, less than five minutes later, Catherine asked at least a hundred questions, ranging from where the bathing facilities were, to requesting a quick lesson about how to call for help on the pipes if need be. Samantha was very impressed with Catherine's interest and was only too happy to advise.

Peter would be by later to talk to her about a daily light walking schedule, and Catherine looked forward to meeting some of the children. She felt a slight cramping during the day, but Father came by and told her it was just her uterus expanding due to the pregnancy. Catherine ate and suffered

only slight nausea that day. Getting used to this place was going to take time, but she knew she was among friends.

Vincent visited her after lunch. Catherine was happy to see him, finding in him an aura of mystery and gentleness. Although he was different and unique, she thought he was quite attractive, and Catherine noticed he was carrying something. She looked a question at him.

"I thought you might like to have this," he said quietly, handing her her journal.

She presented him with a smile that melted his heart. "Yes, I missed it. Thank you."

He bowed his head slightly. "If you like, we can read certain passages that you might want to discuss. I want to help.

She nodded. "Can we start tonight, Vincent? I have so many questions. When can I start to walk a little, and meet some of your family?"

Vincent interrupted gently. "Catherine, we will do all those things, but not all at once. You're going to be here for," he paused lightly, "....a while." He rose and sighed deeply. She looked so beautiful today, he thought. Her hair was shining like silk, and he longed to draw his fingers through it. Her face was fuller and beaming.

He swallowed a sob. "Tomorrow, if you are feeling up to it, we can take a short walk to the Mirror Pool. Would you like that?"

Catherine smiled again. "Yes, very much."

He nodded, not trusting his voice to speak, feeling overwhelmed at her enthusiasm to meet his family and reacquaint herself with his world. Even through her sickness, Vincent felt strength and courage emanating from her.

"Samantha has been taking good care of you."

She chuckled softly. "She's a sweet girl, Vincent. I'm very grateful to her - to all of you."

Vincent allowed his eyes to travel the length of her. She was wearing a lovely blue nightgown and robe and secretly he longed to hold her, but knew he could not.

Instead, he remarked that Father would be along soon to check on her, and then he left the chamber, leaned up against the outer tunnel wall and steadied himself, allowing his tears to fall. To see and talk to her, yet not be able to touch her was becoming unbearable, but he would have to get used to it, until she remembered him again.

If she remembered him again.

Catherine's dreams that night were again jumbled fragments, scenes from her life. She could hear Vincent's voice, see his beautiful eyes - this time she was telling him that she wasn't afraid, while hearing water in the background. Was she in some part of the tunnels? She was sitting very close to Vincent, telling him that her heart was with him, always.....

'....Do you think we will ever be together? Truly together?....'

'....Only if, and when, we can face the fears, and move through them....'

She saw the sadness in his eyes when he told her. *'We are something that has never been, and our journey is one none have ever taken. We must go with courage, and we must go with care.....'*

Catherine woke up, heart racing, blood rushing through her veins, realizing that at one time Vincent had been filled with fear about their relationship, and their differences. It seemed she had been the strong one, the one unafraid, willing to have a physical relationship with him.

She had desired him, despite his differences, in every way.

Catherine covered her face in her hands and forced herself to relax, laying back on her pillow, eyes closed.

She slid her hand down to her slightly rounded stomach and whispered softly, "Yes, I guess we are something that has never been. And our journey will be a difficult one, but I promise you, we're going to make it."

Settling on her side, she tenderly touched the place where her child grew. She fell into a peaceful, deep slumber, unaware that Vincent was standing at the entrance to the chamber, listening to her vow of protection to their child.

In the days that followed, Catherine tired more easily, yet her cramps were lessening, and her headaches were all but gone. Usually in the afternoons, Samantha would bring one of the children to visit. She came to know Zach, Eric and Kipper, who were all very sweet and attentive, yet Catherine had to admit she possessed a special fondness for a young orphan named Geoffrey. She listened intently as the youth told her the story of the time she had spent in the tunnels after her father died. Shyly, he asked if he could visit her again, and Catherine agreed most wholeheartedly, informing all the children they could visit whenever they wished.

One day, Vincent paused by her chamber, watching her, drinking in her beauty. She looked much younger than her thirty-odd years, and Vincent's heart swelled with love. He noticed that her dress was large and roomy enough to accommodate her advancing pregnancy, but she was still the most beautiful creature he'd ever seen.

Her smile touched him, and through the bond he sensed her pleasure at seeing him. His first concern, of course, was her health.

"And what did William give you to feast on today?" His tone was almost playful.

Instinctively, she placed both hands on her ever-widening stomach. "Vegetable stew," she crooned. "It was delicious. But if William keeps feeding me like this," she giggled. "I'm going to be as big as a house before the baby comes."

Their eyes met and held for a short moment, before Catherine pulled her gaze away. Vincent strove to break the tension.

"You're eating for two now," he explained lightly. "William takes care of us all, but I must admit, he has a special place in his heart for you, Catherine.... as we all do."

Catherine looked away, her smile fading. "I know." She swallowed the lump in her throat as she looked up at Vincent again. "Vincent, I know all of you... care, and I'm doing my best to remember. I've even begun to have dreams and images of my life, but there's so much to recall and I...."

Suddenly, the dam broke and she began to cry in earnest. Vincent, who had vowed not to touch her lest he frighten her, flew to her side and gathered her in his arms. She threw her arms around him, surprising him with her strength.

"Catherine, Catherine, please don't do this," he begged in a choked voice. "You've been doing so much better these past weeks. It will come back," he soothed, as he allowed himself to bury his face in the glory of her hair, inhaling her scent. She felt so wonderful in his arms, so soft, so warm. He wanted to kiss her, but he held back.

"Please don't cry," he whispered. "Please, I can't bear your sorrow."

Lifting her head until their faces were but inches apart, she studied him with her eyes. He was beautiful and kind and gentle. She truly understood why she had fallen in love with him.

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean to hurt you."

He forced himself away from her lips, from her body. "Why don't we begin with the journal. Maybe I can help fill in the missing parts. Would you like that?"

She managed a half-smile, and sniffed back her tears. "Yes, I would," she murmured. "When can we go to see the waterfalls?"

Vincent looked surprised. "The Chamber of the Falls? Catherine, you remembered?"

"Well, not exactly. I heard it in a dream. We spoke there about.... about you and me and our.... relationship... I think it happened after my father died. Is that right?"

Vincent sighed with relief that a tiny piece was found. "Yes," he said proudly. "That's right."

"Okay, since I seem to be on the right track, why don't we start at the beginning," she offered, grabbing for her journal.

Vincent nodded in agreement. Reluctantly, he started to rise from the bed to sit on the chair, when Catherine stopped him. "No, please, sit with me," she patted the bed next to her. "Here."

His hands began to shake and his aching heart told him of the danger of her closeness, but his mind and soul needed to be close to her.

They sat side by side on the bed, propped up by many pillows. Vincent thought this was heaven, just being near her, and as she read the first entry, he savored her lovely voice. Together, they began the journey back to her lost life.... together.

"Where were we?" Catherine asked one evening after dinner, as they were taking a leisurely walk.

He stopped and looked at her. "We are near a very special place in our world, a place where our lives are immortalized."

Vincent's cryptic statement spurred her curiosity. "And just where is this '*very special place*'?"

"Just around the next corner," he said, guiding her gently as the lantern he held lit their way.

When they entered the cavern, Catherine was struck at once by the smoothness of the walls. They weren't jagged or rocky; this tunnel was different. As they walked several yards further, she realized that these walls were being used as a canvas, for impressed upon them, in beautifully colored renditions, were paintings depicting the people and occurrences of Vincent's world.

Vincent watched her face brighten with pleasure at the sights on either side of them. "These are appropriately called the '*Painted Tunnels*,' Catherine," he informed her, as he held the lantern high enough for her to view the artwork. "I like to think of them as a museum of sorts, because the lady who created all this, has managed to put the history of our world into pictures. We were planning to visit here with the children... before your accident."

Catherine nodded as they approached a rendition of a very young Vincent snuggled in Father's arms. She stared at the wall for long seconds, then closed her eyes against the vision that came crashing back to her. Vincent's voice was telling her, '*... she paints our stories on these walls... makes us realize we are all a part of one great city...*'

"Catherine," he was calling to her, trying to get her attention. She turned to him as the vision faded from her mind's eye. She touched her fingers to her temple. "I think I remembered something, Vincent. We've been here before," she stated.

He nodded. "We've been here before, together."

"And the lady who paints these tunnels," Catherine's brow creased as she struggled for memory, "Her name.... is Elizabeth....."

"Did I hear someone mention my name?" A voice from down the tunnel reached them.

"Yes, you did, Elizabeth," Vincent called softly. "We didn't mean to disturb you. I just wanted to show Catherine....."

"Well, it's good to see you again, child." She approached them and patted Catherine's cheek affectionately, then repeated the gesture with Vincent. "Are you feeling better?" she asked Catherine, concern etching her voice.

"Yes much," Catherine answered with honesty.

"Well then, children, enjoy the walls." She touched Catherine's abdomen tenderly. "Soon, I'll have a new story to paint." She let out a tiny chuckle.

Catherine met Vincent's gaze and they both looked back at Elizabeth. "That would be wonderful; we'd be honored," Catherine told her.

"I'm tired of painting buildings and adults. I'm aching to paint beautiful, fat babies. What do you think?"

Both Catherine and Vincent agreed wholeheartedly.

"We'll leave you to your work now, Elizabeth," Vincent said moments later, as they finished their tour of the enchanting cavern. "Catherine needs to rest."

"That's a good idea, Vincent. You must promise that after your baby is born, you'll come and tell me, so that I may do a good job."

"Don't worry, Elizabeth. I won't forget."

On their way back to the hub of the community, Catherine sighed.

"What are you thinking?" Vincent asked softly.

Catherine shrugged. "Oh, I was just thinking about one of Shakespeare's sonnets." At Vincent's questioning gaze, she answered him. "The twenty-ninth one."

"Why, Catherine?"

"I don't know. I guess maybe it says a lot about us, about how different our lives are from other people," her voice grew wistful when his eyes came to rest on her. As they walked on, he allowed her to voice her thoughts. Maybe she needed to talk about her aloneness just now.

"There are many parts of that sonnet that are very sad." She looked at him briefly. "Like the lines that say, '*....When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes, I all alone beweepe my outcast state, and trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries. And look upon myself and curse my fate...*' "

"Do you curse your fate, Catherine?" His voice was uneven.

She shook her head as another puzzle piece fell into place, then stopped walking and took his hand. "If this is my fate, I accept it gratefully," she said, smiling up at him, telling him with her heart that whatever happened, they would face their future together, whether or not she regained her memory.

He breathed a sigh of relief. "That sonnet possesses a hopeful passage as well," he noted as they walked on, their hands still entwined.

She knew the passage he spoke of, but decided to tease him. "And what part is that?"

He shook his head, knowing he was being teased. "Ah, you have lost your memory, Catherine." Then in a voice that flowed from him like warm honey, he recited the rest; "*...Haply, I think on thee, and then my state like to the lark at break of day arising from sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate'...."*

He swallowed, looked at Catherine, then recited the rest-----

"... 'For thy sweet love remeb' red such wealth brings, that then I scorn to change my state with kings'..."

They faced each other, and Catherine watched as Vincent brought his shaking hand to her rounded stomach. She smiled up at him, but they did not speak, they just stood together for a time, then turned to walk the rest of the way back in silence.

CHAPTER SIX

Night after night they sat, side by side, Catherine reading, Vincent trying to fill in the blank spaces of her life. And night after night while she slept, pieces, sometimes too small to make sense, came back.

They would talk, sometimes for hours on end, about the tunnels and Father and the children and, of course, of their bond and their life before the accident.

Vincent would listen to her seemingly endless queries, and tried his best to answer her. At times, a spark would ignite in her mind; other times, nothing. The process was frustrating at best.

He loved talking to her, being with her while they walked, but most of all, he loved what pregnancy was doing to her body. She literally glowed with the proof of what their love had created. Vincent was constantly overwhelmed by the fact that she carried their child within her. Each time he gave credence to his thoughts, he would shake his head in silent wonder. Did she know what a miracle she was to him and to his life?

One afternoon when she was reading an entry from her journal, she had to call out to him three times to get his attention. He'd been so enmeshed in his thoughts of their child, he hadn't heard her call to him. Needless to say, he was quite embarrassed.

Catherine looked forward to his visits, and couldn't imagine not having him there for her. He was kind and considerate, intelligent and as unselfish. More and more, she began to feel comfortable with him, and couldn't think of a life without him. Whatever else happened, he was the father of her child.

It was a lazy afternoon that Catherine wanted to speak of her father. She'd read entries concerning his stroke and subsequent death, but wanted to hear Vincent's side of it.

"I made a promise to your father in the hospital, Catherine."

"Tell me what you said."

Vincent sighed and looked at her. "I told him that I would protect you, watch over you and love you until my last breath."

She placed her hand over his tenderly, causing him to catch his breath. "And you're keeping your promise to him. Thank you, Vincent."

Her touch burned him, and Vincent knew he had to distance himself from her. He didn't want to frighten her. His voice broke. "You'll always have me to protect you, Catherine. Always."

He left her after that, going to his chamber to steady his racing heart. Her nearness was intoxicating, her scent was driving him mad. It had been months since they'd touched, and their close proximity was pushing Vincent over the edge, but he didn't dare come any closer.

"Where are we going today?" She smiled as he took her arm.

"Where would you like to go?" He was in a playful mood.

She had only to think for a second. "I want to go to your favorite place."

"You're teasing me, Catherine."

She giggled. "Yes, I know. I feel so good today. I'll just let you take me wherever you want to go."

He nodded. "Good. Then we'll go to the Chamber of the Falls."

And they did. Vincent made sure they took a slow pace, for he knew if it was up to her, she'd have visited the whole tunnel world. Even though she was feeling better, she was still having a difficult pregnancy and he was determined not to have her tire herself.

She gasped when she caught her first sight of the magnificent chamber. Vincent led her slowly to the spot where they had spent many wonderful hours. They sat side by side, facing the falls, then spent several silent minutes just savoring the splendor of the cascading waters.

"This place is magical, Vincent." Catherine was thrilled by the beauty and the wonder of it all. She closed her eyes and took a deep breath, feeling happy that Vincent was beside her. Then an image came to her. Vincent felt it.

"Catherine?"

She opened her eyes. "I truly am a woman of both worlds." She met his gaze, her look telling him another piece of the puzzle was in place.

He nodded. "Yes," was all he could manage.

"I'm glad our child will be born here." Her voice was almost a whisper in this most exquisite place.

He looked a question at her.

"Our child will be so fortunate to be part of a world that has so much splendor within it."

"And what of you, Catherine?"

Now it was her turn to question him with her eyes.

"What if our child cannot be part of both worlds? What will you do then?"

She saw that he was worried about what her answer would be, and knew that he was holding his breath as he awaited her reply.

Catherine sighed deeply, then pushed some errant strands of hair from her face.

"Vincent," she touched his arm comfortingly. "Please understand that no matter what happens," she moved her hand to his chin, turning him toward her. "I'm in love with this baby," she stated brokenly. "This child is part of both of us, and if he or she cannot live in my world, I couldn't ask for a better home for our child. Please, you must believe me."

He felt her honesty through their bond, and he nodded. "I do."

"Good," she smiled. "I'd love to stay here all day but," she smiled playfully. "I'm hungry."

Vincent smiled in agreement. "We should be getting back. You need your rest."

"Can we visit a different place tomorrow?"

"If you wish and if you're up to it. I promise."

Catherine gave the chamber a long last look. "I can see why this is your favorite place, Vincent. It's enchanting."

He walked by her side, revelling in her presence and her warmth. "Yes," he concurred. *Enchanting, as you are*, he silently thought.

Later, he returned to his chamber, attempting to steady his pounding heart. He found her closeness more intoxicating as the days went on, and their togetherness was pushing Vincent over the edge.

He began to pace, then stopped, looking up to see the beloved portrait that Kristopher Gentian had given them. He allowed himself to stare at the two lovers before him, then approached the lovely work of art and reverently lifted it from the wall.

Carrying it to the corner, he placed it behind the tall armoire, hiding it from his own eyes, knowing he couldn't bear to face it day after day, while Catherine slept in another chamber. When she comes back to me, I'll place it back where it belongs, he thought sullenly. But for the time being, the thought of gazing upon it as he lay in his bed alone each night was too much for him to bear.

In the weeks that followed, Catherine gained weight steadily and joked to Vincent and Father that she was sure she was going to give birth to an entire baseball team. There wasn't an hour in the day when she wasn't hungry, which made William the happiest man Below, and was only too happy to oblige her appetite, yet at Peter's urging, everything he prepared for Catherine was healthy and nutritious. Different kinds of vegetables were steamed for her, and since meat was a rarity in the tunnels anyway, she ate little of it.

Occasionally, she would bribe one of the children to smuggle a Big Mac in to her, complete with French Fries and a Chocolate Shake. She was sure that Vincent knew of her little indiscretions, for Vincent knew everything, but if he did, he never let on. Secretly, he just shook his head, smiled, and mused that she deserved a treat once in a while.

Catherine dreamed every night, sometimes in confusing images, other times having frightening visions of falling rock, and still other times she heard Vincent's roars of terror, as if he was trying to get to her but couldn't.

She became tired more often as her fifth month began, and knew she was huge for this stage of pregnancy, but Peter just told her to rest at least twice during the day, and made sure she was stocked with an endless supply of vitamins.

Catherine was genuinely happy to discover from Vincent that he would be free all day, and that they were going to pay a visit to the tunnel world's most unusual denizen, besides himself, of course.

Describing Narcissa was like trying to explain a sunset. Catherine found her to be mysterious and a loner, but also a magical and enigmatic sorceress. Her chamber held a myriad of candles and shells, colored stones, and books with strange titles. Vincent felt right at home with the turbaned old woman, and he smiled when she touched Catherine's hands.

"Ah, Catherine, there is much life within you, a very bright light," she announced with confidence.

Catherine found herself liking the mysterious woman, even if she did speak in rather strange tones. She touched her stomach and smiled back at Narcissa.

"Yes," she agreed, casting Vincent an affectionate glance. "A very bright light."

Their visit with Narcissa was brief, but they promised to come again after the birth of their child.

The Mirror Pool was magic in itself. Vincent took her there one clear May evening, when the stars were clearly visible in the darkness of the water. Catherine gasped as the spectacular sky show was presented to her in the still waters.

"How fortunate you are, Vincent, to live in such a world," she exclaimed as they watched the stars

blink and sparkle like diamonds.

He dared to meet her gaze. "A world which you will someday be a part of once more," he whispered.

"WE will be part of....." She lovingly cradled her ever-enlarging stomach.

Vincent took a deep breath. "Yes."

Suddenly, Catherine gasped, as her eyes dropped to her stomach.

Vincent literally jumped. "Catherine, what is it?"

She thought he would faint, so she made an effort to assure him all was well.

"Vincent," her eyes sparkled like the stars that shone in the Mirror Pool. "I----I just felt the baby move."

Vincent's eyes brimmed with unshed tears, and his heart ached. His eyes naturally lowered to Catherine's rounded stomach, but he dared not touch her. "Catherine, what ... what does it feel like?"

His breathless voice broke her heart. Didn't he realize that he was part of this child's life even now, even if she didn't recall pieces of *'HER'* life? Slowly, deliberately, she reached over to grasp his hand. As she moved it to rest on her stomach, Vincent's hand began to tremble, and tears clouded his eyes.

This personal gesture was more than he could ever have asked of her. Catherine placed her hand over his and together, quietly, they waited. Then, a slight flutter moved through her body. The exquisite feeling drew a choked sob from Vincent, and a relieved sigh from Catherine. Their eyes met and locked, both of them realizing that this was the first time they had touched in a while.

"There it is again, Vincent." She moved his hand over slightly. "Feel it?"

Vincent was entranced, concentrating on the movement of his child. "Yes," he murmured.

Catherine's joy filled his soul at the quickening of their unborn child under his hand. "Catherine," his voice was filled with wonder. "It feels so strong. Does it hurt?"

Catherine moved to comfort him. "No, Vincent. It actually feels ... beautiful. Imagine, to be carrying new life. It's..."

"... Beautiful," he finished, knowing her thoughts.

They sat very close, sharing a moment that Vincent would carry in his heart forever. Her scent and warmth were dangerously enticing, and he wanted nothing more than to stay here with her all night, but knew it was time to go back.

When he left her at the guest chamber that night, he knew it would be impossible to sleep, so he wandered the lower tunnels for hours. He walked and walked, everywhere and nowhere, moving through the shadows. Since she'd come Below, he had no reason to go Above anymore, for all that he loved and cherished were here now....Below.

It was a week later when the insistent kicking of her very active child woke Catherine. Slipping into her robe, she left the chamber, intent on walking for a while, but a flash of memory directed her to what she sensed was Vincent's chamber. The scent of sandalwood was overpowering and she smiled, feeling close to him. She called his name but he wasn't there.

She almost turned and left, but chose to stay, and walked around, absorbing his odd array of treasures. She walked to his armoire and noticed the edge of something protruding out from behind the piece of furniture.

Knowing she should mind her own business, her curiosity got the better of her, and she pulled out what appeared to be a life-size painting. She gasped when her eyes rested upon the figures in the portrait.

It took her breath away.

Holding it at arms' length, Catherine studied the picture from top to bottom, and couldn't quite seem to keep her eyes from Vincent. It was obvious from the look on his unique face that he was very protective of her, and from the look of their embrace, it was a very intimate pose. It warmed Catherine inside; she couldn't pull her gaze away from the figures in the portrait.

It was then that Catherine realized that she had been falling in love with him for quite a while now. Last week, when they had shared the first quickenings of their child, simply confirmed the fact. She looked forward to his visits; she loved being with him. When he was gone, she was miserable, and missed him terribly. Her body warmed in response when he smiled at her or spoke to her.

Catherine closed her eyes to the vision intruding in her mind. She was in his chamber at another time, her body standing close to his as they gazed at this painting together.

'... I guess he used the sketch of me to copy from, but he must have painted you from memory.....'

'.... Kristopher painted only in oils....'

'..... Oils take months to dry, sometimes years.....The painting----'

'.... Don't say it. I have to hold onto some of my certainties....'

Catherine remembered the night in her mind, then began to recite something out loud. "And overhead floats the bluebird, dreaming of beautiful and impossible things... of things that are beautiful... of things that are lovely and never happen... of things that are not ..."

"... And should be," Vincent finished for her.

He was standing at the entrance to his chamber, looking at her, his gaze warm and loving.

"I remember this painting, Vincent. Why did you hide it?"

Vincent entered the chamber, holding back a sob as he watched her sit on his bed. "It hurts to look upon it while you're....."

"Not here?" she asked.

He nodded sadly.

She stood before him. "Please hang it up, Vincent," she pleaded softly. "Please."

He drew a deep sigh. "When you come back, Catherine. When you come back."

She touched his arm. "I didn't mean to intrude on your privacy, Vincent. I couldn't sleep." She managed a small smile. "It seems our little quarterback doesn't want me to rest."

His look of sympathy touched her. "I'm sorry, Catherine. What can I do?"

"Would you read to me until I fall asleep?"

He took her hand and led her from the chamber to her own. "Of course. What shall I read?"

"How about '*Great Expectations*'?"

He stopped and looked at her, wishing to ease the tension between them. "Do you remember how it ends?"

She smiled widely. "Yes, I do. But, please, read it again."

The sound of her even breathing told Vincent that she had fallen asleep beside him. Quietly, he eased himself off the bed and opted to sit in a nearby chair to watch her.

He felt as though they'd made a breakthrough of late. She had touched him and together they had experienced the stirrings of their child. Even now, as he gazed at her ever-changing body, he was overwhelmed by the feelings within him.

As time passed, her pregnancy had enhanced her beauty, if that was possible. Tonight, they'd sat side by side, while he savored her closeness, his body responding instinctively. Vincent closed his eyes, thinking back to Autumn when they had shared an intimacy so deep, his memories of the night in her apartment still had the power to arouse him.....

.....They'd been holding each other close, lying before her fireplace, whispering words of endearment to each other. The crackling of the flames and the music Catherine had been playing in the background warmed both of them, and they naturally, easily, came together for a kiss that stopped time.

Now for the first time, he longed to know her, all of her. His fingers and lips followed an inevitable path down her throat to her breasts, stirred to further exploration by her enticing moans of pleasure. Her flesh was smooth, her body inviting to his searching hands, and he felt himself grow hard with little urging. Shifting his weight as she lay beneath him, his hands moved down under her buttocks to pull her yet closer. Spurred on by his low growl, she tugged at the fastenings of his trousers, her mouth meeting his in one endless, searing kiss. Tongues entwined, warm and willing, wet and wanting, she gasped, her body frantic, desperate to feel him against her without the burden of clothes.

"Vincent... please....." she begged.

He needed no other words to tell him of her uncontrollable need, for it was now his, as well. Within seconds both lay naked and warm in each other's arms. Blood pounded through his veins, his breath coming faster as he realized what was really happening, right here, right now. This was no longer a dream, nor an impossible longing. He too needed her, needed to possess her, body and soul.

Her arms encircled his neck even closer, trailing kisses along his eyes and nose and meeting, finally his waiting lips. The moment was now as her legs parted and he groaned ecstatically as his first long thrust carried him deeply within. Her flesh blanketed him as he pressed forward carefully, savoring every unbelievable sensation. The motion of his powerful rhythmic movements carried them higher, until a sudden spark of white hot anticipation engulfed him suddenly, until he tasted its rapture. He followed Catherine and they both teetered on the brink of joy. Fragmented, they flew together, their bodies now one, their cries breaking the night's stillness as his seed settled within her. Never again would either be separate and apart. They belonged to each other now, truly.

Vincent watched her as she slept. Searching his heart through their empathic link, he felt only her serenity. Locking her fingers and resting them on his chest, he sighed deeply, hoping that he too might find the peace to endure this uncertain future.

In the weeks that followed, Catherine ate and steadily gained weight. Under the watchful eye of Vincent and almost everyone else Below, however, she seldom ate anything that was unhealthy.

One evening she jokingly announced, "I feel as though I'm eating for five!" She'd meant it as a joke, but when she turned to Vincent, she saw that he hadn't found anything humorous in her remark.

"Vincent, I was kidding," she said, touching his arm. "If you got to a point where you couldn't see your feet anymore, wouldn't you feel it's better to joke about it than worry about it?"

"I'm sorry," he answered. "But when you said '*eating for five*' I had the strangest feeling." He shrugged, then finally did manage a tiny smile. "Don't worry yourself. I'm sure it's nothing."

After that incident, Catherine did forget his strange behavior, but Vincent did not. As her pregnancy progressed, his senses seemed to sharpen, especially when she was near. He finally came to the conclusion that Catherine's changing body and hormones were wrecking havoc with the bond. That must be it, he thought.

By this time, she was again familiar with almost everyone in Vincent's tunnel family, but still only remembered bits and pieces of his underground world. Still, not a day passed when at least four or five children came to visit to see what they could do for her. If only people Above could live like this, a singular communal society that worked so well together, the world would truly be a better place to live. She felt such a sense of belonging down here, she often wondered why it had taken her so long to make the decision to move Below before the accident.

Vincent brought her to many special places in this secret world, but there were so many, she hadn't had the time to visit all of them yet. Vincent insisted, on many occasions, that some of these places were just too far for her to walk, but she'd taken it upon herself to ask Peter just how far she could go. He named three locations. Vincent smiled. These places were his favorites.

The first was the Whispering Gallery, so they set out one afternoon after lunch. It wasn't a long walk, but they proceeded slowly because of Catherine's size and because she was beginning to walk somewhat awkwardly. She joked that any day she'd start to '*quack*' because she waddled so much. Vincent shook his head and gave her a rare smile. To him, she was radiant, even if she was huge and did waddle.

As they approached the bridge that led to the center of the Abyss, Catherine grew a bit apprehensive, not trusting her size and her unsteadiness to walk across the very narrow bridge. Vincent felt her apprehension, and reached out to her, leading her along.

"You can do it. Give me your hand."

Another piece to her puzzle slipped into place, remembering the first time she'd heard those words. She smiled and bravely took his hand.

"You told me that a long time ago," she reminded him.

He sighed with relief at her recollection. "Yes. Even then your courage astonished me."

They stood in the center of the bridge, and waited until the wind shifted, bringing with it voices from Above, disjointed and fragmented. It made Catherine smile.

"What a wonderful site, Vincent. It's like sharing little pieces of different lives from many places.

It was a long time before she admitted that she was growing tired, but when she did, Vincent guided her across the bridge and back to the guest chamber.

"Where will you take me tomorrow?"

Vincent drew back a bit. "Don't you think you should rest?"

She shook her head. "Where was the other place Peter said I could go?" she teased. "Ah, I remember now. The Great Hall."

Vincent nodded. "It's quite a long way down, Catherine. I think it would be too much for you and....."

Catherine strove for a compromise. "I promise if you take me to the Great Hall tomorrow, I won't bother you anymore."

He inhaled deeply. "Catherine, you are not a bother," he explained, his voice low and tender.

"You're supposed to rest."

She nodded sheepishly. "I know. Just take me there and then I'll stay put, I promise."

He knew that he'd lost this argument, but at the same time, loved the fact that she felt comfortable enough with him to tease. It warmed him. "All right. Tomorrow, we'll go to the Great Hall, but only if you feel well enough."

And they did. Catherine found the Chamber of the Winds to be a most mysterious and wondrous place, but it was the beautiful castle-like atmosphere of the drafty, medieval-like Great Hall that made her stare in wonder.

They each held a lantern, but the hall was so huge and cavernous, they were unable to see and to end. Catherine couldn't begin to imagine the depth and width of so big a chamber.

Vincent led her to the tapestries that hung on the high walls, and she found herself enchanted by their beauty and elegance.

"Vincent, where did they come from?"

Another picture was drawn in her mind, seeing herself and Vincent standing in this very spot, lit with thousands of candles, the sounds of laughter and friendship surrounding her. Vincent noticed that she was concentrating on the lovely fabric, and leaned forward to help her with her memory.

"Do you remember what I told you that night, Catherine?"

She smiled up at him as tears filled her eyes. "Yes. You told me that they were enchanted, and that when you were young, you used to imagine they were magic windows and you could escape inside them." She sighed. "But when you reached out, it was only cloth. Yes, Vincent. I remember."

He nodded, tears filling his eyes as well. "I'm glad."

Leading her back down to the center of the hall, they raised their lanterns to see ahead of them. Catherine closed her eyes, then opened them again as something else came to mind. She placed her hand on his arm, staying him.

"Catherine? What is it?"

She hesitated a long moment, then the hint of a shy smile curled the corner of her lips. Her voice was low, but her words branded him as though she had shouted.

"Do you dance?"

He swallowed but was unable to answer, his eyes never leaving hers.

"Do you hear it, Vincent?"

He wanted to play the little game with her, so he straightened and looked around him. "Only the quiet, and the wind outside, crying to get in."

The words came to her as naturally as the first time she'd spoken them. "You can hear it if you try. ... the music."

A lone tear slid down his cheek; he nodded. "Yes," his voice broke as he faced her, daring to lover his head to hers. "I hear it. Catherine, that question you asked me earlier?"

Vincent inhaled sharply, gazing warmly at her. "I remember."

He was overwhelmed by the need to touch her, but he controlled it. Slowly, they lowered their lanterns to the cold, stone floor, and almost as if they'd rehearsed it, she moved into his arms and instinctively placed her hand in his while his arm tenderly caressed her waist. The feelings she evoked in him were indescribable. He knew what they both needed at this moment as their feet moved in tiny, slow steps, beginning the dance. What they were doing wasn't really waltzing, however. Because of Catherine's size and her need not to do anything overly strenuous, their motions were merely a gentle swaying of bodies. Holding her in his arms, cradling her warm body

against his, felt like a dream which he hoped would go on forever. Through the bond, her emotions were so strong and overpowering, he began to tremble slightly.

After several moments, their eyes met, the glow of the lanterns illuminating their faces, making them appear almost ethereal. Catherine's hand tightened around his, and Vincent felt her breath on his cheek. And then he heard her whispered plea.

"Vincent....."

He didn't hesitate. Wanting only to be close to her, he lowered his mouth to hers, and with the most tender of movements, pressed his lips to hers.

It was a kiss that intensified a long moment before they broke apart, neither able, or wanting, to speak. It was a time that gave Catherine a hint of the strength of his love for her.

And it was a kiss that told Vincent, without words, that she was falling in love with him all over again.

Silently, they lifted their lanterns against the darkness of the Great Hall, clasped hands as they smiled at each other, then made their way back to the hub of the community.

Their relationship changed markedly after their embrace in the Great Hall and for that, Vincent was grateful. Catherine kept her promise and stayed mostly in the main chambers, going to the dining hall to eat, or to Father's chamber to hear the children read or play their instruments. Once in a while, she'd go to the kitchen and charm William out of his famous oatmeal raisin cookies. He grumbled and griped that he'd soon have nothing left for dessert, but inside, he was happy to see that she and Vincent were enjoying each others' company. He even joked that soon she'd have to start wearing his clothes, for she was blossoming more and more.

It was on one of her more uncomfortable days that she was feeling deeply depressed. As she sat on the edge of her bed, Vincent felt her distress and came to her, as a sense of depression washed over her.

"What is it? What troubles you so?"

She wiped her eyes with the back of her hand. "Oh, Vincent, nothing fits. I'm as big as a house. I can't sleep. All I do is eat all day. My shoes don't even fit and I can hardly walk, my feet are so swollen." She choked back a sob. "I'm ugly, and I still have eight weeks to go."

The sounds of her weeping were breaking his heart. He took her hand in both of his, and gently stroked her fingers, while he soothed her with his words.

"To begin with," he told her. "Mary and Samantha are on their way here as we speak. They've made new clothes for you that will fit just fine. Your feet are swollen because of your weight. You're eating to nourish our child as well as yourself, and Peter says that it is normal to have insomnia."

He lifted his hand to gently touch her hair. "And you are 'NOT' ugly," he insisted firmly. "You are the most beautiful woman in all the world." He put his hand under her chin and turned her to face him, his voice low and sincere. "You carry the proof of our love within you. To me, no greater beauty exists."

She managed a trembling smile through her tears, and placed her hand over his. "You always make me feel better," she said quietly. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to complain. I just ..."

Suddenly, a wave of pain engulfed her and she doubled over in Vincent's arms. "Oh my God!" she cried.

Vincent's eyes widened as he, too, felt her pain through the bond. It pierced him like a sword.

"Catherine, is it....."

She could barely speak. "It's n-not time yet, Vincent." She looked at him with pain-filled eyes. "I'm only in my seventh month ..."

"Don't speak," he comforted her. "We must find Father. I think Peter is still here....."

He couldn't imagine how he said the words, for he couldn't have left her side no matter what. But luck was on their side, for at that very moment, Peter and Father entered the chamber and were struck by the scene of Catherine clutching her stomach and Vincent's eyes widened in horror.

"Help her," Vincent pleaded.

Vincent never saw the two men move faster. They immediately moved Vincent out of their way and began to administer to Catherine, asking her questions, and consequently soothing her fears. They realized that if Catherine were to deliver now, the chances of the baby surviving were slim. Vincent slumped against the wall, watching them in total helplessness as they examined her.

"Vincent, go and fetch Mary, will you?" Father called out. "And tell her to bring my bag. Vincent, please, hurry."

"Father....."

Seeing his son's look of helplessness, Father quickly added, "She's all right, Vincent. But please, you must hurry."

Vincent moved swiftly, trying to keep his wits about him. Through their connection, all he could feel was her fear for their child. He closed his eyes and silently prayed all would be well. She'd been through so much in the past months. Could it all be for nothing? Would she lose their child after all? He knew he could not bear it if their child did not survive, and shuddered to think what the loss would do to Catherine.

How long had he been pacing outside her chamber? An hour? Two? Or was it only minutes? Seconds?

It didn't matter now because he heard the voices of Peter and Father as they approached him with slow, weary steps. Vincent was afraid to breathe, afraid to move, as his heart pounded fiercely in his chest.

"How is she?"

Peter placed a comforting hand on his shoulder, and to Vincent's utter surprise, saw him smile. "She's one tough lady, Vincent. She's going to be all right."

Vincent was confused. "But Peter, she was in pain. I felt it. Father....." He turned to Jacob.

"Vincent, it's not as simple as Peter just stated. She 'IS' going to be all right, but she is bleeding....."

Vincent sighed heavily, holding back his tears. "Our child.... is it....?"

"She's not in labor, Vincent," Peter assured him. "But she must stay in bed for the remainder of the pregnancy. No more journal reading for now, no more forays to the Mirror Pool or the Chamber of the Falls. She's to stay off her feet until the child is born, understand?"

Vincent was hardly paying attention to his father. All he could think of was their child, hanging by a tenuous thread, and Catherine.

Catherine. Through their empathic link he could feel her courage, her strength. "I'll take care of her," he said unnecessarily to the two men who watched him enter her chamber.

He found her propped up against several pillows, eyes closed, but not sleeping. She'd heard him enter, and held out her arms to him.

Vincent sat on the edge of the bed and sighed deeply when she smiled at him. "I'm all right," she tried to reassure him. "Really."

"Catherine, if anything had happened to you, I....."

He was unable to complete his thoughts, for he practically fell into her waiting arms, unable to control the sobs that tore through him, as she stroked his hair and silently consoled him. She then allowed her own tears to fall, and they cried in each other's arms for a long time.

As they comforted each other, Father and Peter walked slowly back to Jacob's chamber, allowing them time alone to cry together for their child, who had survived this latest ordeal.

Hours later, Vincent sat and watched her sleep, as he had done for months now, exhausted, yet refusing to rest. Peter had explained to both of them that the next few weeks would be crucial for the survival of their child. What was most important now was to keep Catherine free from stress. Vincent was filled with concern as he listened to Peter's instructions, his fear for Catherine's well-being clearly written on his face.

"Peter, tell me what I'm supposed to do." Catherine was determined to do anything to ensure her child's safe delivery. "How do I get around if I can't walk?"

Peter affectionately squeezed her hand, then shrugged lightly. "When you need to go anywhere," he looked up at Vincent with a crooked smile. "Vincent will just have to carry you."

With Vincent looking on, Catherine held out her hand to him. "Sounds good to me." She needed him close now. "Vincent, I want to talk to you."

He took her hand and moved closer to her. "What is it, Catherine?"

She drew a deep breath before answering him. "I want to stay with you, in your chamber, until the baby comes."

Vincent looked at her, eyes wide with surprise, never expecting such an announcement, but he was not unhappy.

"I'd be happy to give you my bed, Catherine....."

"No," she interrupted him. "I want to sleep - with you - in your chamber."

He tilted his head in an endearing gesture she had grown to love. "Catherine, are you sure?"

She nodded. "I'm sure. I'll feel so much safer with you beside me, Vincent."

Words were not necessary for his answer. Instead, he rose to his feet, and with the most tender of motions, eased his arms under her, and effortlessly lifted her from the bed. She wrapped her arms around his neck and leaned into him.

"Thank you, Vincent," she whispered.

CHAPTER SEVEN

From that day on, they were together constantly. Each day, Vincent brought her food, carried her to the bathing pool, carried her back to bed, read to her, talked with her, and was deeper in love than he ever thought possible.

They shared everything. Their child was almost tireless, constantly moving, kicking, turning and Catherine shared it all with Vincent. Peter visited almost every day, examining her thoroughly for toxemia, which she managed to avoid due to the good care she was given by everyone Below. Her

weight gain was above average, and even though Peter was unable to perform a sonogram, he harbored his own suspicions about her size. He sometimes wondered why Catherine had never questioned him about her substantial gain in weight, but he surmised that she and Vincent were so worried about her memory and the impending delivery of one baby, they probably never stopped to think of two. No matter, he thought, they'll find out soon enough.

Every night, Vincent felt blessed as she slept in his arms, that is, when she was able to sleep. She was so big now that no matter what she did, she was unable to get comfortable. Most nights she fell asleep sitting up, propped by many pillows and Vincent's supportive arms.

He found her crying softly one evening as she tried to read a book. "Tell me," he lifted her chin with his finger.

She shook her head, dismissing the feeling. "I'm so tired, Vincent, but I'm too fat to sleep."

An idea crept into his mind at that moment. Even though she couldn't walk, Peter said nothing about her being carried, he'd been doing it for quite some time.

"What are you thinking?" she asked.

"I'll return in a moment. Will you be all right?"

Her brows creased. "Well, yes."

He came back in seconds, Geoffrey and Eric close behind him. "Hi, Catherine," the boys called out to her, as she watched Vincent kneel the face the youngsters.

"Hello Eric, hello Geoffrey," she called back, watching as Vincent gave the boys some sort of instructions.

After several minutes the boys nodded, grinned, waved goodbye to Catherine, and hurriedly left the chamber.

"What are you up to?" she smiled suspiciously, as he gathered his cloak and the white woolen cape Mary had crocheted for her.

"Catherine, there is one place in my world that I haven't been able to show you because the way is long and you're not able to walk there. But I can carry you, so will you do me the honor of attending a concert with me?"

He bowed gallantly, and Catherine felt her mood lighten considerably. "I'd love to, Vincent."

Gently, he placed the cape around her shoulders, then did the same with his own. Despite her size, he lifted her as if she were a feather, then carried her to a place in the tunnels that was theirs alone, a place under a large grating in Central Park where they used to sit and enjoy the live concerts.

When they arrived, to Catherine's delight, she saw dozens of lit candles and fluffy pillows awaiting them. Along one corner, four multi-colored quilts lay neatly folded, and nearby, she eyes a basket of fruit and a large thermos of water.

"It seems you thought of everything," she chuckled lightly as he placed her gently on the blankets. "I love it."

"Do you?" He brightened to see her looking so much happier, as he joined her on the quilt and carefully placed his arm around her as she leaned into him.

"Hmmm," she answered, feeling more relaxed than she had in days. "We used to come here."

He nodded as the overture began. "Rest," he instructed gently.

Catherine closed her eyes. "What are they playing tonight? she murmured tiredly.

"Listen," he whispered.

And when she heard it, her spine tingled and her heart stammered. It was haunting, beautiful music, and she allowed her mind to drift until the memory of it returned.

It was Schubert's Unfinished Symphony.

She knew she didn't have to tell Vincent that she remembered it, for he could sense through their bond that another fragment of her life was in place.

Her voice was barely a whisper. "It began to rain," she began.

"Yes," he answered. "With thunder and lightning."

She smiled. "I think it was." She repeated his words of that magical night when she reveled in the pouring rain, a night when her love for him filled his soul.

"It was a wonderful night, Catherine. One I'll never forget."

"And one I'm so glad I remembered," she said quietly, then closed her eyes again.

She was sleeping soundly an hour later, and Vincent smiled down at her. She'd been so exhausted lately, so unable to rest, but now he wouldn't disturb her for many hours. Lovingly, he covered her with a heavy quilt, cradled her toward him in his arms, and felt the insistent strong kick of his child against his side.

He smiled. "Yes, I'll hold you as well." Tenderly he placed his hand on Catherine's stomach, and gradually the baby calmed.

He listened to the entire repertoire that night, holding Catherine, allowing her to rest. He sighed deeply, feeling more content than he'd been in a long time. Her warmth, combined with the music and the candles, filled him with happiness.

Many hours later, he was able to lift her in his arms without disturbing her, and carried her back to their chamber. He removed her cape and shoes, secretly pleased that she hadn't stirred.

Removing his own cloak and boots, he gently eased in bed behind her, encircling his arms around her, then covered them both, and fell into a deep and dreamless sleep.

Late in her eighth month of pregnancy, Vincent and Catherine were sitting on the bed eating breakfast and enjoying some light conversation, when Geoffrey ran into the chamber.

"Vincent, there's a message on the pipes ... You have to come... There's trouble two levels down... A big flood from the heavy rains last night...."

Vincent looked at Catherine, then slid from the bed to kneel in front of Geoffrey, gently grabbing the boy by the shoulders.

"Geoffrey, calm down. Now, tell me slowly, what has happened?"

The youngster took a deep breath. "Cullen and Mouse, they're down in the second level with Kanin and Zach. There was a big mudslide last night from the rainstorm above." He paused to let his words sink in.

"Go on," Vincent urged.

"Well, just a little while ago, we got word from Jamie that some men may be trapped down there, Vincent, you know, where the new chambers are. You've got to come....They could be....."

Vincent was grabbing his cloak before Geoffrey finished. He turned to Catherine, hating to leave her, but she smiled sweetly at him. "I'll be fine. Go."

Vincent turned to Geoffrey. "Please ask Samantha or Rebecca to come and stay with Catherine," he requested, placing a brotherly hand on Geoffrey's shoulder. "Don't forget."

"We'll take care of her, Vincent, don't worry."

Vincent nodded, stole a last look at Catherine, then hurried from the chamber.

Later, she was reading when Eric came to visit. He brought news of the rescue mission.

"What's happening, Eric?"

He came to sit by her on the bed. "Word on the pipes is that two men are hurt, and another is trapped near the scene of the mudslide. Vincent is helping, so is Mouse and Kanin. But Jamie says there's a mess down there and it's real dangerous. But don't worry, Catherine, Vincent will be okay."

Catherine smiled. "I know, Eric. I just miss him, that's all."

At that moment, Kipper came running into the chamber. "Eric, are you in here?" he called as he skidded to a halt seeing his objective. "Oh, sorry Catherine, but I need Eric."

"What's wrong, Kipper?" Catherine's concern was obvious.

"Yeah, what do you want?" Eric seemed disturbed by his friend's interruption.

"We need you to help in the Hospital chamber. They're starting to bring up the injured men," he informed them.

Catherine put her book aside. "How many men are injured, Kipper?"

Kipper shook his head. "Six so far, but I think they're bringing up two more." At Catherine's worried look, he smiled. "Vincent's still down there, cleaning up the mess. He wasn't hurt or anything."

She nodded slowly. "I hope the men are all right," she said to the boy. "Now, the two of you had better go to the Hospital chamber. Father is going to need your help."

The boys looked at each other, then at Catherine. "But we can't leave you, Catherine. Vincent said that we....."

She interrupted them. "I'm all right, really," she assured them. "Besides, I was going to take a nap. By the time I wake up, Vincent will be back, I'm sure. Now you two go on and stop worrying about me."

Eric shook his head. "Okay Catherine, we'll go. But as soon as we get to the Hospital chamber, we'll send someone back to stay with you. Vincent said you shouldn't be alone."

Catherine smiled. "It's a deal. Now you go on. And be careful," she called to them as they raced out to her chamber.

She was suddenly very tired, and absentmindedly began to rub a dull ache in her lower back. A nap would definitely help. She lay back on the bed, covered herself, and was asleep within minutes.

Catherine couldn't have been sleeping very long when the pain in her back woke her. As her hand reached to soothe the ache, she began to feel discomfort in her legs and stomach. Something was wrong.

She was gripped by a wave of nausea, and rose from the bed to walk to the bathroom in the adjoining chamber, becoming ill as soon as she reached it.

Her body began to shake as she sat on the floor, waiting for the nausea to pass. She tried to steady herself, and closed her eyes against the diminishing pain. At the same time, she fought to keep her feelings from Vincent. This wasn't the time to distract him - not while he was in the middle of a crisis. Maybe if she could make it back to her chamber, someone would be there waiting for her. She wasn't due yet; she still had time.

But deep down she knew that the boys probably forgot all about her when they reached the Hospital chamber. She couldn't blame them; there were men who needed their help. Still, she sensed that her baby wasn't going to wait another three weeks to make his or her appearance. And as though on cue, she felt her child deliver a swift kick to Catherine's ribs.

Placing her hands on her stomach, she tried to soothe both of them.

"I guess you're anxious to meet your daddy and me, aren't you?" she smiled. Taking a deep breath to steady herself, she began to get to her feet, only to have a strong cramp assault her, causing her to stumble. She knew she couldn't just go back to bed and hope the pain disappeared. She needed help. Just then, she felt something warm and wet trickle down her legs, and knowing what it was, she could no longer hide her fear from Vincent. Again she sat on the floor, taking deep breaths and gathering all the courage she could muster, for she knew that this was just the beginning.

Two levels down, thigh-high in mud and water, Vincent felt a stab of pain shoot through him. Catherine. She needed him.

It had begun.

Catherine managed to get to her feet, then leaned against the outer tunnel wall. The pain had again subsided. For now.

A flash of memory suddenly bombarded her senses.

'.....Don't be afraid.....please don't be afraid.....'

She remembered those comforting words. She saw herself covered in bandages, her face hurt terribly. And then he spoke to her again.

'....Tell me your name.....'

Catherine began to cry as she clutched her stomach. "Vincent, I'm starting to remember." She closed her eyes as another image was clear as glass. His voice again spoke to her. *'.....if only I could keep you safe always.....'*

Her tears fell as she slid to the tunnel floor, memories flooding her as her labor progressed.

Below, Vincent assured himself that all the injured were on their way to the Hospital chamber, then ran as quickly as his legs could carry him - towards her. He felt her pain, her elation, her fear, her joy. She was in labor.

"Hold on, Catherine," he told himself as he made his way through the string of labyrinths that would lead him up to the next level. He was muddy and wet and physically exhausted, but her condition spurred him on.

She finally made it to her feet as her memories came back to her like old friends. She couldn't decide whether to laugh or cry, for her pain came and went, but pictures of her life rolled through her mind like a movie.

Catherine saw pictures of conversations rushing through her mind like a tidal wave. Still, she made her way out into the corridor, feeling a bit disoriented. Where was she? Why did she come here?"

Taking deep breaths, she continued walking, telling herself that she'd reach someone sooner or later. Where was her chamber? Did she pass it?

Another pain, another memory. She could hear Vincent's beloved voice mumbling through her head.

'.....I know what it is to love you, Catherine.....'

'.....Whatever happens, whatever comes, know that I love you.....'

'.....For a moment, I allowed myself to dream.....'

'.....You are my life.....'

Where was she? This tunnel was dark, and she couldn't think straight. The walls were jagged, and it smelled musty. She looked all around her as the pain in her back intensified, and then it came to her. A chill crept up her spine.

"Oh my God, I remember," she murmured. "Vincent," she cried. Then her voice grew louder and louder. "Vincent!" she yelled.

She remembered where she was.

She was standing in the same tunnel where her accident had occurred.

He heard her through the bond. One more path, one more turn. He was almost there.

He saw her, leaning against the tunnel wall, her hand protectively draped across her stomach.

"Catherine!" he called out as he approached her.

Catherine cried with relief when their eyes met. "I remember," she sobbed as he lifted her in his arms. "Oh Vincent, I remember everything."

His eyes widened in disbelief, then he hugged her gently. "Oh, Catherine. At last."

Vincent turned to take her back to their chamber, his movements swift and sure.

"I'm in labor," she stated brokenly.

"I know."

"I love you."

"I know."

Within seconds, he entered his chamber to find a very disgruntled Father and two embarrassed little boys. Peter had also arrived, standing with Mary near the bed.

"Well, thank God, Vincent. Catherine, where on earth have you been?"

"It doesn't matter, Father," Vincent answered. "We're here now, and Catherine is in need of your help." He smiled down at her as he removed his mud-laden cloak. "It seems as though our child is quite impatient to enter the world."

Hearing this, all eyes turned to Catherine, who was sitting on the bed in obvious discomfort. And like a well-oiled machine, Mary, Father and Peter hovered around Catherine, while Eric and Kipper hurriedly apologized to Vincent for forgetting to tell someone to come and stay with her. Vincent easily forgave the youngsters, giving them each a brotherly hug, and sending them on their way to the Hospital chamber to continue with the rescue mission.

He went to kneel at her side and whispered into her ear.

"Tell me what I can do."

Catherine managed a smile and took a deep breath. "Don't leave me."

He pushed her hair from her face. "Never."

And he didn't. Perching himself on the bed behind her after quickly changing into clean clothes, he

began to guide her through her early labor, comforting her in every way he could. "I'm here, Catherine. I'm here."

CHAPTER EIGHT

Seven hours later, her labor was hard and strong, and Catherine was beginning to tire. Vincent would rub her back until a contraction ended, then place cool cloths on her sweaty brow. Peter checked her again, but she wasn't fully dilated. He silently hoped that Catherine would have the strength to get through this ordeal. If anyone can help her through this, Vincent can, he thought. Meanwhile, Vincent sat behind her, guiding her, soothing her, loving her. He tried to distract her between contractions by reminding her of their life together.

"Do you remember the time you saved my life after Father and I were trapped when the cave-in occurred in the Maze? Do you, Catherine?"

"Yes," she whispered, trying to focus on his voice. "Mouse almost blew us all up." She attempted a weak smile, but then another contraction hit her, burning through her with its intensity.

"Oh my God, Vincent. I have to push," she groaned, clutching tightly at his hands.

"Peter," Vincent called. "It's time."

Peter checked Catherine again and nodded. "Okay Cathy," he smiled. "Let's have a baby."

"Easy for you to say," she answered weakly. As tired and sweaty as she was, she straightened and gathered all the courage she could muster. Turning to Vincent, who was sitting behind her, looking exhausted and dirty, she asked. "Are you ready?"

He nodded and caressed her hands firmly. "Ready."

Another contraction tightened her abdomen and she tensed, Vincent's comforting whispers giving her strength. She followed Peter's instructions and began to bear down.

Vincent watched her efforts, felt her ordeal through the bond, and marveled at her courage. He took a deep breath and allowed her to grasp his hands, amazed at the strength in her fingers as she squeezed his.

Again and again, she pushed and cried, and Vincent whispered words of encouragement and support. Through their connection he shared her pain and her determination. She never ceased to amaze him.

Catherine felt a burning sensation deep inside her, and knew the baby was almost here. She pushed again and again and then, suddenly, Peter told her to stop. She fell back into Vincent's arms as they heard the first plaintive cries of their child.

"It's a girl," Peter announced proudly, as the baby announced her arrival, rather loudly, to the world.

"A daughter," Vincent whispered hoarsely to Catherine in utter delight. "Catherine we have a daughter."

"I want to see her," she told Vincent breathlessly, as he kissed her cheek.

She was exhausted, but felt wonderful. As Mary and Father cleaned their daughter, she smiled up at Vincent. Suddenly, another contraction shot through her, making her wince. Vincent felt her pain as well, and looked at her, sensing something more through their bond.

"Catherine, what is it?"

"I don't know." She looked a question at him.

He closed his eyes, then opened them in utter surprise. "Catherine, there's... there's another child....." he managed to utter. "Peter?"

Peter smiled crookedly. "I suspected twins for the last several weeks, but I couldn't perform any tests." His words were interrupted by another contraction. Almost within seconds, Catherine was pushing vigorously, with silent encouragement from Vincent. In another moment, the other baby was delivered, crying lustily.

"This one's a boy," Peter announced happily, as everyone in the room began to breathe a sigh of relief. All eyes settled on Catherine and Vincent, who were crying and laughing at the same time, holding onto one another and waiting patiently to see their children.

"Catherine," he whispered, gazing at her with so much love. He was unable to say more, as Mary and Father approached them, holding two tiny bundles.

"They're so beautiful," Catherine said as her babies were placed, one in each arm. "Vincent, they look just like you," her voice was filled with emotion.

Vincent's eyes brimmed with tears. True, they did resemble him, but their features weren't as pronounced. Tenderly, he kissed first his daughter, then his son, and as if on cue, both children opened their eyes. Catherine smiled happily as she looked upon her twins.

Her little girl had gold fuzz on her tiny head, but her eyes were clear blue, like Vincent's. Their son, whose hair was darker, possessed green eyes that mirrored Catherine's. She whispered calming words of comfort to them as they scrunched up their tiny faces.

Peter, Father and Mary watched the scene before them and smiled in relief and happiness. "I feel like an intruder," Mary whispered, leading both men out of Vincent's chamber. "Let's leave them for a while. Once the community received the news, those two won't have a moment's peace."

They silently agreed, and quietly left Vincent and Catherine in privacy with their children.

"Vincent, when did you know that there was another baby?" Catherine whispered wearily as they watched their son and daughter sleep.

He looked at the twins, then met Catherine's eyes and sighed. "I don't know. During your pregnancy, I could feel something more than just your usual emotions. With your memory gone, I sensed more confusion and frustration than usual. At times, I felt almost bombarded with a myriad of your feelings. Maybe I was feeling the children as well. I'm not sure."

Catherine was beginning to fall asleep. "It doesn't matter, Vincent. They're here now," she said, as Vincent placed each child beside her on the bed.

"Shhh," he murmured in her ear. "Rest now."

"Vincent, I want to tell you....."

"Later," He pressed a kiss to her brow. "I'll be here when you wake."

He rose from the bed to sit on his chair, watching over his family. So many emotions rolled and rushed through his brain. Now that Catherine and his children were peacefully asleep, he allowed himself to breathe a sigh of relief.

Then he covered his face in his hands, and cried silently for long, thankful moments.

It was late when he heard a noise in the chamber. Father walked up behind him and placed a comforting hand on his son's shoulder.

Both of them stared at the beautiful sight before him. "I've been witness to dozens of births in my

time, Vincent," he whispered, as he looked at the three sleeping figures in the bed. "But until today, I never realized what the word '*miracle*' truly means." Then he leaned forward to see that his son had been weeping.

"Vincent, what's wrong?"

Vincent managed a smile. "I'm so grateful, Father, to have been so blessed." He lovingly grabbed for his father's hand. "I love them so much, and I know that they will be able to go Above," noted half-amazed, half-sad, "but I want them to know that I will always be here for them, to keep them safe, always."

Father shook his head and patted Vincent's hand. "Never have seen such courage in a woman, and not only because she was carrying a most unusual child, or children," he chuckled softly. "But through her entire pregnancy, she had almost no recollection of you or of her life, yet she trusted us, trusted you to guide her through her difficult time. You are truly fortunate, Vincent, to have found such a woman to share your life... and to be the mother of your children."

Vincent turned to look at his father with such an expression of awe and love that his voice broke as he spoke. "Thank you, Father," was all he could manage to say.

Father smiled and turned to go. "I'll leave you to your family now, Vincent. But I warn you that by tomorrow morning, there will be a line outside your chamber waiting to welcome your twins to the world."

"I know," Vincent affirmed. "But Father, may we have some privacy tonight, so that Catherine may rest."

"Of course. In fact, Mary has already taken care of it. Tonight belongs to you and your new family. Goodnight, Vincent."

"Goodnight, Father."

It was much later when Catherine awakened. Looking to her left, she smiled as her children began to waken as well. Turning her head to the right, she saw Vincent asleep in his chair, looking like a child himself. She allowed her thoughts to wander to a time in their lives when they had just passed another crisis and recalled his words;

'.....We've endured much.....'

'.....Yes we have. And I know, in the deepest part of who I am, that whatever happens now, Vincent, we will endure..... we will.....'

Vincent must have felt her love through their bond, for he opened his eyes at that moment to find Catherine gazing lovingly at him.

She lifted her arms to him. "Come lie with me," she gently beckoned.

He rose from the chair and went to her, then tenderly lay beside her as they gazed upon their children.

"They're ours, Vincent, they're really ours," she said, as he encircled her with his arms.

"Yes, they are...." His voice broke with the words. "Catherine, you were so brave today, so strong. You endured so much pain to bring our children into the world." He pressed his lips to her hair.

"Thank you, Catherine," he cried softly. "Thank you."

She half-turned to look at him, her eyes filled with love and happiness. "Vincent, I want to tell you something."

He waited for her to speak, reaching out and gently lifting his daughter into his arms.

"Vincent, I know that the children could live Above, even though they do look like you," she noted proudly. "But this is our home, and we are a family, and I'm never going to leave you again. Nothing has changed. We were in the middle of making plans before I had the accident, and now our plans are complete. I want our children to grow up here in the tunnels. I want them to know that this is their home. When they're old enough to go Above, well, we'll just cross that bridge when we come to it. So," she sighed and smiled at him, "now that that's settled, would you do me a small favor?"

He touched her cheek softly. "Anything."

Her eyes turned to his armoire. "Put our portrait back where it belongs?"

It didn't take him a moment to complete the task. He returned to her side, and helped her sit up when their son began to cry. Since their daughter was still asleep, Vincent tenderly placed her in the hand-carved cradle Cullen had delivered just after the twins were born. He covered her with the brand new flower and heart embroidered quilt Mary had sewn, then returned to the bed and lifted his son, laying him in Catherine's waiting arms.

Unbuttoning her nightgown, Catherine brought the baby to her breast, thumbing up her nipple then placing it in the baby's mouth. She grimaced slightly as the baby pulled, then began to nurse hungrily.

Vincent began to stroke the light fuzz on the baby's head with one finger, as Catherine gazed at him. "I want you to know that without your love and support today, I could never have come through. It's because of what you have given me that made the miracle of our children possible." She lifted her son and kissed his cheek tenderly. "Vincent, remember when you told me long time ago, that I had so much love to give? It was your love, Vincent. Remember when you told me that I had a generous heart? It was your heart. Vincent, with your help, I found my way back. I survived the pregnancy because of your love, and our bond."

She looked back at her son, suckling contentedly, then looked up at Vincent. "I once told you that our bond is the most real thing I've ever known, and it's true, Vincent. Our bond is our strength and our life." Releasing her son from her breast, she turned back to Vincent, who slowly leaned into her and kissed her deeply.

After nursing both children, Vincent put them down in their cradle, then joined Catherine in bed. Wrapping her in his arms and snuggling against her warmth, he fell asleep within moments, happier than he'd ever been in his entire life.

Everyone was astonished at the rapid rate of Catherine's recovery. Within days of the twins' birth, she was up and about, feeding and bathing them, and in general, just enjoying their presence in her life.

Vincent was just as elated as she. The children took up most of their time, but they didn't mind, being as enmeshed as they were in each other and in the babies, that nothing else mattered. Catherine noticed that Vincent smiled often now. His eyes were brighter and warmer than she could ever remember, as were hers.

One afternoon, shortly after their birth, some of the children were invited to visit the twins. Catherine had just finished nursing, and she and Vincent were playing with them on the bed.

It was Samantha who led the rather large group that included Eric, Geoffrey, Zach, Kipper and others. They approached the bed and just stared, apparently in awe of these most unique twins.

But it was Samantha who spoke first. "Father just told us that the Naming Ceremony is set for Sunday afternoon," she said, as she joined Catherine on the bed, and softly touched each baby's hand. "Have you picked names for them yet?"

Vincent and Catherine looked at each other, then at the children, and smiled. "Yes, Samantha, we have," Catherine answered.

"So, aren't you going to tell us what they are?" Zach spoke up.

"Yeah, can't you tell us?" Geoffrey chimed in. "We won't tell anyone, we promise."

Vincent chuckled lightly. "Geoffrey, you know as well as I that everyone will find out – together - Sunday, at the ceremony. Why then, are all of you so intent on finding out what names we have chosen for the children?"

Catherine joined the conversation. "I think I know why." At Vincent's questioning glance, she continued. "I bet all of you have made some sort of wager on the names we chose. Am I right?"

Eric blushed instantly, Zach turned his head toward Samantha, and Geoffrey feigned a cough. "So I am right," Catherine looked at Samantha.

"It's just a silly bet," Samantha answered as she smiled down at the twins. With Vincent and Catherine looking on, she thought it best to explain.

"Well, the winner gets to help William bake cookies for a month!" she exclaimed happily, hoping to get a little help from Vincent and Catherine.

Catherine laughed, lifting her daughter in her arms. "And the loser, what happens to him," she looked at Samantha, "or her?"

"Ah, um," Eric stuttered.

"Yes?" Catherine prompted.

"The loser has to help out in the laundry for a month - especially with the diapers," Zach admitted wearily.

"So," Catherine circled the children, "you thought you'd all come here and try to ah, help suggest names for the twins so that one of you would win the bet?"

The children nodded their heads miserably.

"Well then, I guess the least we can do is hear your suggestions. Don't you think so, Vincent?"

Immediately, the children brightened, as Vincent nodded in agreement.

"Let's start with you, Eric. What names did you choose?"

Eric came forward and proudly announced. "I think '*Rose*' and '*Crys*' are pretty neat names."

Catherine stifled a chuckle. "Okay, Geoffrey, you're next. "What are your choices?"

"I like '*Jacob*' and '*Mary*."

"Zach?"

Zach, who was heavily into the Knights of the Round Table came up, predictably with '*Guinevere*' and '*Arthur*.'

And then it was Samantha's turn. "I think you should name them '*Romeo*' and '*Juliet*' because it's Vincent's favorite play."

Catherine smiled. "Well, I think all these names are lovely, but ... sorry, you'll just have to wait until Sunday to find out what we've chosen."

The twins were finally asleep, and Catherine and Vincent were content just enjoying the silence as long as it lasted. Finally, Catherine heard a low chuckle came from Vincent. "What are you

thinking?"

"Do you think the children will like the names we chose for them?"

"I think they're a little too young to care," she teased.

Vincent smiled and kissed her softly. "I think Samantha and Zach might think our names are not romantic or Shakespearean enough."

Catherine cuddled in his arms and sighed. "The names are perfect," she said, looking up at him.

".....And we welcome the children with names." Father was smiling with delight as he directed his gaze toward the new parents and their twins. "Vincent....."

"Her name," he announced in a clear, steady voice, as he looked down at his sleeping daughter, "Is Arielle."

Father nodded in agreement, then turned toward Catherine, who in turn, gazed lovingly at her son, safely cradled in her arms. Her eyes rose to Vincent, then finally to the man who had brought her into the world, the same man who'd helped her when she thought her life and memory were lost.

"We have named our son... Peter....."

It seemed the most surprised person in the room was Peter Alcott, who had had no idea of their decision, but couldn't help a wide smile of gratitude. He felt honored and proud of Catherine and Vincent, whom he loved as if they were his own.

After the gift giving ceremony, Father at last proclaimed, "William has prepared a sumptuous feast for us, so let the celebration begin."

As the crowd made their way to the dining tables, the children descended on Vincent and Catherine.

"Sorry kids. It looks as if William will have to look elsewhere for kitchen helpers." Catherine tried to look forlorn, but failed miserably.

"Well Samantha, what do you think?" Vincent asked, a hint of humor in his voice.

"Tell us children, do you approve?" Catherine chimed in as her son yawned in complete indifference to the festivities in his honor.

"I guess so," Geoffrey said, "but we've never heard of the name '*Arielle*' before. We know who you named Peter after, but why '*Arielle*'?"

Vincent's stern expression held a hint of mirth. "Remember the assignment I gave all of you several months ago on the meaning of our names?"

The children all nodded. "Well, do you remember what the name '*Peter*' means?"

Zach came forward. "It means '*rock*' or '*strong*', doesn't it, Vincent?"

Vincent nodded. "Arielle's name is in that book as well," he told them teasingly. As expected, within seconds, the small group raced out of the chamber, presumably on their way to solve the mystery of his daughter's name.

Catherine joined Vincent and they remained together, shaking their heads, yet feeling thoroughly entertained.

Catherine had just placed Arielle in her cradle when she heard her name being called softly from the chamber's entrance, and recognized the voice of Samantha as the youth peeked in, hesitating

as she noticed Vincent, relaxed and seated at the table.

"It's okay, Samantha," Catherine whispered.

"Can I see the babies?" she asked sweetly.

"Of course you may," Vincent obliged.

Samantha peered in each of the cradles and smiled. "I think Arielle's name is just perfect for her," she told Catherine and Vincent.

Catherine raised an eyebrow. "Did you find Arielle's name in your book, Samantha?"

She nodded.

"And what did your book say?" Vincent asked softly.

Samatha sighed. "Arielle's name means '*Lioness of God*.' I think it's beautiful," she told them.

Catherine nodded and smiled, hugging the young girl affectionately. "We loved the names all of you suggested, but we wanted to give the twins special names."

"And you did," Samantha replied. "Oh, I'll be here first thing in the morning to help with the twins," she announced proudly. "I can help, can't I?"

"You're not the only one who lost the bet, Samantha, the boys lost too," Catherine pointed out.

"The boys have to help with the lower chambers that were damaged in the mudslide. But I didn't feel as if I lost; I want to help."

Vincent approached and placed his arm around her. "Thank you, Samantha. Catherine and I will be very grateful for your assistance."

"Oh, I almost forgot," she slipped her hand into her jumper pocket. "I brought Peter and Arielle a gift. Hope they like it," she shrugged. She held out her hand and held out two shiny crystals. "The green one is for Peter, and the blue one is for Arielle, because the colors match their eyes."

Catherine took them from her. "Oh Samantha, they're beautiful," she exclaimed as she showed them to Vincent, who agreed. "Thank you. We'll have Mouse make chains for them when they're old enough to wear them. It was very thoughtful of you."

"You're welcome. I'd better go now; see you in the morning. Goodnight, Catherine, Vincent." She kissed each of them. Then she turned toward the cradles and blew a kiss, whispering, "Goodnight, Peter and Arielle. I love you."

"We love you, too, Samantha," Catherine said softly. "Sweet dreams."

After the young girl left, Catherine turned to Vincent. "She's a very special girl. I think the children are very lucky to have so many people love them."

"Yes," Vincent replied, as he led Catherine to the bed. "It's been a long day - a wonderful day," he declared.

Instead of going toward the bed, however, Catherine strolled toward the table in the center of the room. Vincent stood behind her. "Come to bed," he whispered softly.

"I'll be along in a moment." And then at his questioning gaze, she explained happily. "I want to enter this day in my journal. I'd like to write it all down - before I forget."

And she didn't. Opening her journal to a new page, she took the fountain pen Vincent offered, and then made the first entry she's written in almost a year.....

'Friday, September 25th.....

'I don't know where to start. It's been so long since I've written. My memory returned with the birth

of my twins, Arielle and Peter. They, along with Vincent, are the joy of my life. They've given me my life back. Today, we celebrated their Naming Ceremony. My live is Below now, where Vincent and I will raise our children. My heart is filled to overflowing for my family and I feel truly blessed.

'Even though I did suffer a loss of memory, I know one thing to be true. Love is never forgotten. It may be lost for a while, but what is lost, can be found again. I was given the chance to find Vincent again, to love him again. How fortunate I am to have been given another chance. I'll never be lost again.....'

Vincent was watching his children sleeping peacefully when he felt her nearness. He sighed deeply, and through their bond he sensed her happiness. She'd gone Above to see Peter for her eight-week checkup, and Vincent was very relieved to know that she was on her way home.

It was hard to believe that it had been two months since the children were born, never thinking happiness such as this was possible.

The twins were a constant joy to him and Catherine, and every day of their new lives brought along with it something new and wonderful. Their hair was growing in fuller and lighter, but their eyes remained the same as the day they were born, Peter's a deep moss green, and Arielle's a bright sky blue. Even Vincent had to admit that they were the most beautiful children he'd ever seen. Even if they were his own.

As for Catherine, she had recovered in the past weeks, growing stronger in mind and body every day. To Vincent, she was as beautiful to him now as she was when he first found her. As for her memory, it had been completely restored with the birth of their children, and both she and Vincent agreed that it was, indeed, the strength of their love, no matter how deeply hidden, that had brought them back to each other.

Even though they'd been sharing Vincent's bed since the last few weeks of her pregnancy and through the birth of the children, the past months had taken their toll on both of them, as they longed to resume their physical relationship. Peter had explained that because of the strain of the pregnancy on Catherine's body, they would have to wait at least eight weeks. But before Catherine had left to go Above to see Peter today, she'd kissed Vincent deeply and hungrily, whispering that she would be home with good news.

Standing and waiting for her to enter their chamber, he hoped with all his heart that what she'd said was true.

And when she entered the room and looked at him, a seductive smile gracing her full, graceful mouth, he knew.

She slowly approached, raising her arms to wrap around his neck, pressing her body deliberately to his own, causing Vincent to groan with sudden arousal.

"You have good news." It wasn't a question.

Her smile widened. "What do you think?"

"Peter is pleased with your recovery?"

She touched his face gently. "Oh, very. I hope you will be pleased, as well."

He gave a slight nod. "Oh, I will be."

Catherine brought her lips to his ear and whispered, "It's been such a long time."

"I've missed you so," he murmured, his body nearly tortured from her nearness.

"Are the children asleep?" He looked down at the cradle.

"HMMMMM. I just put them down. We have time."

His words stirred her. "Good," she whispered, then looked at him with something akin to hunger in her eyes. "I love you, Vincent."

"And I love you."

With one swift and effortless movement, he lifted her in his arms, then carried her to their bed.

Their eyes met, and Catherine grew warm. It had been nearly a year since they loved, and she felt as if this were her first time.

Vincent was determined to be gentle, but oh, how he wanted her. Standing above her as she lay on the bed, looking down into her passion-filled eyes, he could feel the tension building slowly between them.

Her eyes traveled the length of him, and he hardened in response. He bent to remove her shoes and stockings, watching Catherine's eyes close at the touch of his hand.

Sliding her skirt down and off her body, he followed next with her blouse. He wanted to go slow, to pleasure her, and through their connection, he sensed her growing arousal.

Wearing only her silk camisole, she rose to her knees before him, her face so close to his he could feel her breath on his lips. Vincent's breathing grew heavy with anticipation. Drinking in the sight and scent of each other, she lifted her hands to his shoulders, slipped them inside his shirt, and slid the fabric from him.

Her actions drew a soft groan from him, he needed to get closer to her. Hooking his thumbs under the thin, smooth straps of her camisole, he slowly eased the material down her arms, eliciting a moan of pleasure from her as her breasts were freed from their constraints.

"Touch me," she whispered huskily.

He circled her with his arms, then pressed her slightly closer to his body, as Catherine lifted her head to receive the kiss they'd both been longing for. Their tongues circled and teased, drew in and out, simulating the act of love.

Ending the kiss, Vincent trailed his tongue down her neck and Catherine threw back her head to accommodate him. Slowly he pressed her down into the bed, then heard her soft cry as he broke from her.

"Vincent....."

"I'm here....." he answered silently, straightening to remove the remainder of his clothes. He burned for her, longed for her, his flesh engorged with his insatiable need for her, wanting only to immerse himself in her, to be surrounded by her heat, to make her a part of him, forever.

He lowered himself beside her once more, bringing his lips down to kiss and tenderly caress her swollen breasts. Her sighs of pleasure spurred him to deepen his touch, as he felt her hands lovingly tangle in his hair.

Lifting his head, he took her hand and began kissing her wrist and palm, finally needing to taste her, then licked each of her slender fingers until she cried out in delight. Catherine had never felt so loved, so cherished. She knew he was being especially tender because of her past ordeal and she loved him all the more for it.

She gasped as his head traveled downward to her waist, kissing her slightly rounded stomach, then held her breath as he touched that secret place between her thighs, cresting instantly as his tongued caressed her warm softness.

Vincent reveled in her orgasm, feeling her writhe beneath his touch, hearing her cry his name over

and over. His length throbbed, growing thicker as their mouths met once more, inflaming each other with kisses that sealed their desire.

His erection brushed her thigh, and Vincent knew she was ready to receive him. Her eyelids fluttered and half-closed as his hands roamed the curves of her flesh. He loved watching her body come alive from his touch.

"Look at me," he whispered seductively.

Slowly, she opened her eyes and stared into hungry pools of deep blue, as he moved over her and positioned himself at the portal of her core - she was warm and wet, and burning for him. His heart pumped furiously inside his chest as she opened to him in fiery abandon.

Then slowly, excruciatingly, he entered her with a gentleness that drew a hoarse cry from her throat. She took him, all of him, into herself, and sighed when she heard him moan with wonderful sounds of pleasure. She whispered her need to him, murmuring love words that hardened him as he began to move within her.

Vincent pushed into her, then withdrew almost completely, hearing her breathing grow faster and deeper. Again he buried himself within her, his actions growing rhythmic as his hands moved behind her hips, lifting her into his quickening thrusts. Catherine begged him to unleash his power into her, he could feel his control wither away as her flesh swelled and surrounded the proof of his passion.

Higher and higher they soared as Catherine lifted her hips, wrapping her legs around his waist, so close to him now she could feel the soft hair between his legs mingle with her own.

Their movements grew primal, as old as time itself, their hands explored and teased, caressed and stroked. Harder and harder he drove, kissing her, tasting her, loving her, surrendering himself to their need.

And then his body tensed, and thundered fiercely with his powerful release. That was when Vincent knew he was home. In her arms, in her heart, in her body, was where he belonged.

They lost themselves in exquisite ecstasy, as their souls entwined in triumph.

Meanwhile.....in the lower tunnels.....

Elizabeth was placing the finishing touches on her newest masterpiece. Vincent and Catherine, cradling their newborn twins. When she made sure that their eyes were exactly right, she stepped back to inspect her work. It was good, very good, but something was missing.....

She picked up a razor-thin brush, dipped it in black paint, then began to place words on the bottom of the painting, almost as a postscript.

Two hours later she was done. Smiling, she was quite satisfied as she placed her brush down, crossed her arms against her chest, and read the quote out loud in the quiet chamber.

*".....FOR THY SWEET LOVE REMEMB'RED, SUCH WEALTH BRINGS,
THAT THEN I SCORN TO CHANGE MY STATE, WITH KINGS....."*

*LOST AND FOUND
I was lost in my life with a knowledge
That I would always be alone
I was lost in an emptiness I felt in my
Heart when I heard the laughter of
Lovers walking in the night*

*I thought I had found love only to find it
Was not true, and lost all hope of
Being fulfilled*

*I found you, Catherine, and my world
Exploded in new and wonderful emotions
And possibilities*

*One day I thought you were lost to me
And I lost the meaning of my life*

*When you came back to me, your love was a
Beacon shining through the storm to
Guide you into my embrace once more
Never to part*

*You found your way back to me walking the
True path of love. A love lost and then
Found, made stronger by our bond*