

Forbidden Voices – Crystal

by Judith Nolan

I did not have a name, or a separate identity from my myriad of similar fellows who lay with me, there in that lightless place, deep in the bowels of the earth. We had lain there since time began, and we should lie there together until the end of the world, whenever that comes to be. We made no sound, and nothing penetrated our stygian darkness. Our existence was no more and no less, than that. It was enough.

But then, a miracle happened. Light filled our chamber, where we lay unmoving. I wondered at that light and the two-legged creature who carried it. I had never known such illumination, and suddenly my fellows and I came to life. We sparkled and gleamed, throwing colours we had never seen before, and reflecting that light in a million different ways. We battled with each other to appear the best and the brightest.

I think I managed to out-shine my fellows simply because of an almost invisible difference in my make-up that broke the light in ways my fellows could not emulate. For the first time in my existence, I felt a stab of pride in being different.

None of us knew why the two-legged creature had come to our cavern, deep in the earth. We had no voice to ask. We lay as we always had, mute and unresponsive. The creature bent over us, his eyes searching for something, though none of us knew what. But I hoped my difference had made some kind of mark.

The creature's free hand moved and lifted over me, and my bed of identical fellows. We all ask the same mute question. What does he look for, and why? His hand descends, long nails carefully making his selection... and he picked me!

Why? How? Did he truly see in me that slight difference he did not see in any of my fellows?

He raised me, held me in the light and I gave him my all, the best display of my colours and facets. He smiled at me, seeming satisfied with his selection. His great hand closed around me and I was consigned to darkness, once more. But this was a different kind of darkness, shot through with colours and sounds I had never known. I was placed with great care into the concealment of his cloak.

I was carried from the place I had lived for uncounted millennia. I did not look back, how could I? I was simply a crystal, one of the uncounted millions.

I was taken to another two-legged creature, who hopped and chirped with a strange kind of excitement when he saw me. My new master held me out with pride, showing off my colours and my shine.

The odd fellow was commanded to clothe me in gold wire and place me upon a golden chain. My single eye was to be a tiny stone of garnet.

Dressed in this finery, I was once more concealed within the pocket of my master's cloak. I was carried far and high. I felt the air become cooler and less dense. I waited, with the eternal patience learned in my cavern far below.

In a single movement, I was swept from my concealment, my chain looped around my master's long fingers. He dangled me in the light, once more. But this was a different light, this was the illumination of many candles.

I winked and turned, glorying in the beauty of my many colours. Another two-legged creature came close to admire me. There was love in the words spoken between them, and admiration for me.

A story was told of my beginnings, my origins deep within the earth. I preened and twirled, secure in the knowledge I was loved. Then, in a single movement, my chain was placed around the neck of the new creature. My master had relinquished ownership of me.

I had no say in the matter. I decided to make the best of it. I nestled into my new home, my new world. I had a mistress now, and not a master. But, as before, I was warm, and I was loved.

My new mistress was named Catherine. And my name became Crystal...

I lie in the darkness once more. In another cavern, deep below the earth. I have no voice to complain, nor the ability to move. So, I must lie here, waiting for the chance of rediscovery, or the end of infinity, whichever comes first.

I had grown used to the light and the love of my new life. I was carried everywhere and saw many wonders. I know I am only a crystal, and I should not, and cannot, care about my ultimate fate. But once you have known the glory of the light Above, it is incredibly difficult to fall back into the darkness.

My chain was broken, and I was torn from the neck of my mistress in a moment of love. That same moment was redemption for my erstwhile master, who lay as one dead until my mistress came to the cavern to revive him.

Once lost, I was inadvertently covered in sand and left behind when the lanterns went away, and darkness enclosed me once more. I cannot understand how my mistress could have so easily forgotten me. But she did not return for me.

Therefore, I lie here, unmoving and unrecovered. Would my mistress soon put a hand to

her chest and discover my absence. Will she remember me? I could not say, I could not hope, I could only wait.

And then, suddenly there is light in my cavern, and a voice. My master's voice! But he sounds so angry, so overwhelmed with rage! He screams as he moves over me and around me, never seeing me! He battles with something, or someone, I cannot see. If I could cry out I would, but I am mute.

Suddenly, there is a fraught silence. Even to me, the lack of sound is almost deafening. My master's long-fingered hand sweeps through the sand, and I am gathered into his broad palm. I feel again the warmth of ownership.

He stares down at me, astonished. I lay there in the light, flashing my best colours in a desperate attempt to be held as I had been before, with love. I want to ask, where is my mistress? Why is it not she who found me? But I have no voice, only my colours.

My master gazes at me, seemingly in awe of my recovery. Suddenly, his head lifts, as if he is seeing something beyond me. He growls, low and deep, and I fear being lost anew. In desperation, I flash my brightest and best lights. Do not leave me here, alone, in the darkness!

Suddenly, my master's hand closes tight around me. A vision within an even brighter light than mine fills the cavern entrance. My master's attention was drawn from me, and I am pushed into my master's pocket. That is where I still lie, waiting to be rediscovered once more...

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