

Devin's Treat

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"Love is that condition in which the happiness of another person is essential to your own."

~ Robert A. Heinlein

Catherine knew she should have immediately said a firm no to Devin's request, but Vincent's brother had been so persuasive on the telephone he had quickly worn down her concerns, dealing with each one with ease.

He said all he really needed was her permission to enter her apartment. He would take care of the rest of the arrangements. He had refused to say why.

As a consequence Catherine had spent the afternoon worrying about exactly what he was up to, alone in her apartment. She incurred a frowning look of rebuke from Joe for her distraction as she should have been working on their latest continuance.

She had expected Devin and Charles to leave the city again after arriving from New Zealand to attend Vincent's birthday party, but they didn't appear to be in any hurry to depart the tunnels. Father was making the most of the time with his wandering son, challenging him to endless games of chess, and losing gracefully. *For now...*

Catherine finally arrived at her apartment after a long, stressful day at the office. She badly needed the luxury of kicking off her shoes, grabbing a shower and trying to unwind. Vincent had said he would not be visiting her tonight, so she could even go to bed early. However there seemed little chance of that now.

As soon as she opened the door she could see, hear and smell that Devin had been hard at work for some time. Her usually neat apartment was in a state of disarray, there were strange noises coming from her kitchen, and heavenly scents filled the air. Soft music was playing from her stereo, filling the air with romantic lyrics about love. *Nights in White Satin...* she frowned at the chaos of the living room.

Just exactly what was going on and why?

"Hi there." Devin appeared in the doorway to her small kitchen. "Only room in here for one, I'm afraid." He grinned lopsidedly, indicating her bedroom with the wave of a wooden spoon. "Go on now, and make yourself beautiful. The guest of honour will be arriving as soon as it's dark, and you don't want to be late. A three course dinner for two will begin in half an hour. You had better hurry!"

He pointed with his spoon towards the candlelit balcony, and through the billowing curtains, Catherine could see her outside table had been set and decorated for an alfresco meal. With roses and a bottle of wine chilling, it was a setting as intimate and romantic as any high-end restaurant.

“Dinner?” She echoed blankly. “But, I...” She stood still in the living room, trying to make sense of it all and failing. “Why, Devin?”

“I decided to make it my treat. I told Vincent to keep it a secret. He wasn’t too keen at first, but he came around.” Devin waved the spoon again. “I decided to put all those cooking lessons William gave me to good use.” He laughed ruefully. “I might be a little rusty, but no one has died yet.” He frowned. “No one that I know of, anyway.”

He tilted his head, studying her thoughtfully. “Besides, I thought you two deserved an evening together, after you pulled out all the stops for my little brother’s birthday party.” He compressed his lips. “It should have been me, making it happen for him.”

“It was my pleasure.” Catherine watched him closely, seeing the regret reflected in his dark eyes. “You are making Vincent happy by staying longer than you planned. He cares for you.”

“Father said he won’t let me leave until he finally beats me at chess. That could take a while.” Devin lofted his chin towards her bedroom doors. “Go on now, I have things I need to get back to stirring.”

Catherine approached him. “Thank you, Devin.” She went up on her toes and kissed his cheek. “For everything.”

“You know, sometimes I wish I *had* seen you first...” He took her by the shoulders, turning her around, before giving a gentle nudge to the small of her back, pushing her towards her bedroom. “Together we could have taken the

legal profession by storm.”

“But you were not here on that night to rescue me.” Catherine replied softly, glancing back at him as she moved away

Devin’s smile was wise and rueful. “Yeah, well, that little brother of mine is one heck of a lucky guy. I’ll be sure and tell him so, when he finally gets here...”

THE END