

## *A Christmas Drink* (S3/4)

By Mel



"Something smells good," Vincent said entering the loft. He paused to remove his cloak, wet from the fresh December snow, and hung it on the coatrack Diana had set just inside the door from the roof. He did wonder how many other people would climb to the roof to come say "hi" besides him.

A fond smile came to him, as he then made his way to the open kitchen. It struck him again, as he watched Diana move about the kitchen with him in mind, how comfortable they were sharing space with each other, either Below or in the loft. When had it switched, he wondered, from Diana's loft to just *the* loft? A place for just the two of them.

Moving further inside, Vincent's nose twitched, sniffing the air. The usual scent of black coffee had changed into something more....spicy? His sensitive nose picked out cinnamon and nutmeg.

"What are you cooking?"

"Wassail. My dad made it all the time when we were kids." Diana turned, chuckling at Vincent's confusion. "It was just for the adults. Kids had just plain apple cider."

"No, it's not that, but what is wassail?"

"It's basically cider with liquor, different spices...." Diana raised an eyebrow, surprise and disbelief shining in her blue/green eyes. "Wait, are you're telling me that I'm making something William hasn't?"

"Not that I recall."

"Hm, well maybe I know what to get him for Christmas now."

"I have yet to see William turn down a new recipe."

"Or liquor, if I remember," Diana smiled.

"That's true. So did you finish a case, or this something special?" Vincent asked, as he moved over to the island counter.

Diana smiled to herself. He knew her too well. Typically, she now mostly only allowed herself celebratory drinks after a case was completed, or at family gatherings. In the beginning of her career though, it had been a social thing; a way to say she could keep up with *the big boys*. Though if it had helped her reputation with her colleagues at 210 or the other areas of police work, it was hard to judge.

"No, I finished my last case a week ago. I have the holidays off unless something comes up." She crossed her fingers.

Vincent nodded, sniffing the air again. "On a happier note, may I try some?"

Diana poured two cups, beginning to sing. "Here we come a wassailing among the leaves so green."

"Here we come a wassailing so fair to be seen," Vincent joined in.

"Love and joy come to you..." The two harmonized before Diana trailed off.

Her eyes lowered to the warm mug in her hands. *Relax, Bennett, it's just a part of the song. Nothing wrong there.*

Still the word, *love*, caught in her throat. It had been five years since Diana been asked to solve the murder of the beautiful Catherine Chandler, which had morphed into finding her kidnapped child. Five years since she had found Vincent and been introduced into his world.

And there was love between them; a type of love that came from respect and years of friendship and she did wish Vincent all the joy the world had to offer... but the word itself had never really been spoken between them without discussing Catherine as well. Why had she even started to sing?

Her eyes lowered to the cup of wassail in her hands. The warm, cozy drink suddenly felt cold in her hands. What she wouldn't give to blame the rum; except she had only had one glass and had never been a lightweight.

The sound of Vincent taking a sip stirred her from her thoughts, as she tentatively looked back at him.

"Hm... this is very good, Diana," Vincent said offering her a smile. "I think Willaim will enjoy it too."

"If Father lets him," Diana said. The patriarch of the tunnel community below the streets of NYC was known for his fondness for tea over anything else.

"While Father will have to learn to change," Vincent said.

Diana hid a smile as she took another sip. *Pot meet Kettle on not liking things changing.* It was rare that Vincent tried much outside of his comfort zone. *At least this is going better than the coffee. Poor guy almost spit it out.*

"Is this some Bennett family secret?" Vincent asked.

"Not at all," Diana laughed, grateful to be able to slip back into their normal banter, as they moved over to living room area. "My grandfather found a recipe he enjoyed, and it just became a family tradition. I thought I had lost it, but then Susan found it in an old box of stuff."

"I see. Well, thank Susan for me," Vincent said, toasting her sister, as he sat in his normal seat on the couch and took another sip. "This is quite good."

"You can thank her yourself. I think she and Alex are coming to Winterfest this year."

"I'm glad to hear that. They have both become wonderful Helpers. We are all grateful to them. How are they doing?"

Over the next few hours, the two friends caught up on each other's lives over the last few months, since Diana had taken on a new case. While she didn't go into the more horrific details, she found it easy and a welcome change from her family, to be able to discuss her work with Vincent. With him there was no judgement or half hidden looks of disgust when certain subjects were discussed. It was such a freeing connection to have. And she loved Vincent telling her all about young Jacob's adventures as he grew up. It was difficult to believe that five years had passed since she and Vincent had rescued little Jake from the clutches of the madman Gabrial.

*That's the love he yearns for and deserves,* Diana mused, taking another sip; stifling a giggle as Vincent told her another amusing story of his son.

As the conversation fell into a natural, comforting silence, Vincent settled into the couch. He breathed in the small scent of his third cup of wassail.

"Hm... I never gave much thought to the lyrics." At Diana's confused look, he began to sing, "Here we come wassailing among the leaves so green ..." He paused for moment, but Diana didn't take up the song.

"Here we come a wassailing so fair to be seen. Love and joy come to you and a Merry Christmas too," he continued, finishing the verse she had left unsung.

Diana forced a smile and looked up at him. "Well now you'll have a new song to teach, Jake. Though I might save the actual drink for a few years."

Vincent smiled, setting his cup down on the table. "Yes."

"Speaking of music how is Rolley doing?"

"He is well, thank you. He's set to start teaching the children next month."

Diana nodded.

"Diana," Vincent began, soberingly. "I do wish you all the love and joy this coming year has to offer."

Diana tucked her knees underneath her while her fingers nimbly pulled her hair back into a messy ponytail, as she tried for a nonchalant demeanor, even as her heart began to race.

"Yeah, thank you. I wish you the same."

Vincent's eyes lowered for a moment.

*Great, look what you did now, Bennett,* Diana chided herself.

As if reading her mind, she saw Vincent look up at her. His soulful blue eyes seeming to beg something of her. While her own powers of empathy were quite strong, it was at times like this where there was some mystic Bond between the two of them. She could almost laugh at herself. Her job was literally to get into the minds of the worst, most vile criminals imaginable, but she could never quite break the code that was Vincent.

"What is it?" Diana asked after a few moments.

"Diana," Vincent began slowly. "I... I won't deny that I miss Catherine each day-"

"I wouldn't expect you to ever forget her. I don't want you..." Her words trailed off as he rose and moved to sit next to her on the couch.

"But I'm also starting to find joy again," Vincent said. "In my son... Catherine's child and her last gift to me... and you. Your friendship has been a blessing since I've known you. Since you risked your life to save myself and my son..."

Diana's heart ached for him. Tentatively, she reached out and took his hand.

Vincent's lips lifted into a soft smile. "I... I don't like to make promises I can't keep... but I would be lying if I said I wasn't beginning to think about the future."

Silence stretched for a few precious moments, as they stared into each other's eyes.

Diana slowly took her glass and raised it. Most of the time she was direct and blunt in her responses, but now (maybe a drunken part of her) wanted to give him something else. She began to sing.

"Here we come wassailing... among the leaves so green."

Vincent reached back and brought his drink up to meet hers. "Here we come a wassailing so fair to be seen."

The two harmonized once more. "Love and joy come to you and a Merry Christmas too."

Diana's glass clinked against his mug. "And a happy New Year."

Vincent smiled. "And a happy New Year."

END