

# LOVERS FOUND

*by Pauline Marshall*

"Father."

"Yes, Kipper. What is it?" Turning in his chair, he lifted his head from the book he was reading and removed his glasses.

The boy jumped the last two steps into the chamber and came towards the desk where Father was working.

"A message from Above for you," and he took a note out from under his heavy woollen jumper.

"Thank you, Kipper."

The boy left Father to turn his attention to the note. Opening it he frowned, and became a little concerned when he saw it was from his friend, Peter. Pulling a candle nearer, and putting his glasses back on, he started to read....

*'Jacob, it's important I see you, and it must be alone. Please meet me at my surgery at eight o'clock tonight. I wouldn't ask if it weren't important and a matter of great urgency. Peter'*

He was still frowning when he read the letter through for the second time. It disturbed him; the urgency it implied, but he knew his friend would never risk him, or ask him to go Above without having a very good reason. Drumming his fingers on the desk, and then rubbing his beard, he rose from the chair and collected his walking stick. Slowly, he headed towards Vincent's chamber. As he expected, it was empty, and probably would be for some time yet. Most evenings, since Catherine's death, were spent Above, looking for his son and the evil man who took the two most precious things in his life from him.

As his mind took over his thoughts, he inhaled a deep breath and closed his eyes. Night after night Vincent went out, sometimes he would return with a gunshot wound, or broken and bruised bones, but still he would return Above. Never giving up, holding on to all his dreams and hopes.

He had help now, from Diana, an investigator from the DA's office. She had been, and still was he thought, working on Cathy's case with the new DA Joe Maxwell. Cathy's old boss and dear friend. However, he was unaware that in her attempts to solve the case, she had discovered Vincent and was so touched by his love for Cathy, and his determination to find his son, she had joined forces with him. What would happen if Maxwell ever found out, was not worth thinking about, but for the moment his attentions were spread over a wide case load and he didn't notice if Diana covered anything up. She could not jeopardize their mission in any way. One day she would complete the case, but till then her efforts were all with Vincent.

Father released a sigh, and sat down in the nearest chair with such a thump you would have thought he had a ton weight on his shoulders. He spoke to the walls, "Vincent, how much longer must you suffer such hardship and pain?"

For months his son had been out searching, trying to recover what was his. The memory of Catherine dying in his arms, because their bond was not working and he could not find her, was implanted in his mind and caused him a great deal of suffering. Father winced at the sight he could see in his own mind, and reflected that he had not been able to comfort Vincent as completely as he would have liked. Now the determination to continue was a worry not only to him, but to most of the people Below, and they were concerned for his well-being.

Getting up to stop himself from stiffening up, he walked around the chamber before sitting down at the chair by the desk. His mind soon fell back into the precious thoughts, and he tried to fathom if Peter's note could be in some way connected to these events.

Since that night a lot of people had disappeared, or died, and they all seemed to be linked, in some way to both Cathy's death and the severe accident that Maxwell had had before she went missing.

Elliot Burch was another that had suffered, and lost, to this invisible man. There just didn't seem to be anything or anyone that could stop him from doing exactly what he wanted.

"Who was this man?"

It was hard to explain the chain of events that had happened so far, and the thoughts of what might be to come, made Father say a silent prayer for his son.

Shifting to his good side, Father's thoughts went to something Vincent had said to him recently. Mistakes had been made, and had helped their search in such a way that they felt they were getting closer to their goal.

If this was true, it could account for the recent improvements in Vincent's health, and the extra energy he seemed to have.

He had also mentioned bouts of emotions, and feelings, so strong at times and like the bond he and Cathy had had, it was causing him only more confusion. Her presence was real, as if he could touch her and she was there willing him to go on.

"Father, are you all right?"

He jerked his head up, not realizing he had been in such deep thought, and saw Vincent entering the chamber.

He came and knelt in front of Father, and put his hand over his. Looking up into the face of this elderly man, whom he loved so much, he could see a change in him. He also knew it was caused by the worry and suffering he alone had created over the last few months.

"What troubles you so, Father?"

"I received this today, from Peter." He handed Vincent the note to read.

Vincent rose slowly, then turning to Father, he gave back the note. Letting out a long sigh, he came closer. "I know you think you should go, but do you have any idea what this is all about?" He waved his hand in the direction of the note in Father's hand.

"No! I don't, and yes! I must go. It has to be of great importance, or he would never ask me to risk going Above."

"I don't like it, Father! But you are right, of course. He wouldn't have sent for you unless he felt it was necessary." Vincent lifted his hands and placed them on Father's upper arms, and taking a deep breath, said, "I am sorry, but I won't be able to come with you!"

He dropped his hands and turned to sit in the nearest chair. As he did he closed his eyes, leaned his head on the back, and rubbed his forehead.

"Tonight we go to a converted warehouse where we hope to find this Gabriel. Then perhaps, at last, we can end this sadness and suffering, and get on with living our own lives!"

Vincent let his mind scan the events of the previous months, and noted the changes that had come about. The memories of events since Catherine's death, always tugged at his insides and left him with a heavy pain.

He remembered all the people who had given themselves to helping him. Helpers from Above, Diana, who was still working with him, and Elliot!

His one regret was the death of Elliot. It wasn't long since Catherine's death that he had gone to see him. He

had searched his soul before going to him and asking him for his help. Elliot had loved Catherine too, and with this and the facts about their child, he was sure he would help. Desperation had driven him to make this move, and with some effort he had persuaded him.

As it turned out, Elliot did more for him than was expected, but in the end he still lost. He had died protecting Catherine's memory, and Vincent, so he could carry on the search for his son.

He took in another deep breath and remembered it had not been the first time this man had saved his life. When he had only known Catherine for a short time, he and Father had been caught in a landslide Below, and it was his equipment that had been used to rescue them. Without it, they would have died!

He was a very complex man, but at the end he had proven his worth, and given his all for the memory of the woman he had loved. It was sad, he thought, that now I won't be able to repay my debt to this man.

Father moved towards him and brought him out of his thoughts. Laying his hand on Vincent's shoulder, he asked, "Do you think your son will be in this warehouse too? There is no danger that he will be harmed in any way by this man?"

Vincent returned the gesture by placing his own hand over his, and giving it a squeeze. Then turning to look up at him, he smiled. "Father, if all goes well tonight I shall return home, with my son!"

The older man returned the smile, even though he felt so worried about the future of his own son. He turned to leave and Vincent rose from his chair.

"Don't worry. I'll be fine. I did think, however, you should know where I was going to be tonight."

The two men hugged each other, holding on just that bit longer than normal.

"Take great care, Father."

"I will, and you also, Vincent, go with caution and care."

With that they went their own ways. Father to his own chamber to ready himself for his visit Above, and Vincent to prepare for his own evening. Before leaving he sat at his desk, and with loving hands held the journals Catherine had given him. Many hours had been spent filling the pages, but just as many were spent empty, as he was unable to carry on, for reasons that still tore him apart. Moving quickly, he started to write, time was against him. Before long he had completed his task, and with a great urgency he headed for the tunnels' entrance and his meeting with Diana. He was excited and more full of hope this night, then he had been since he had started his long search.

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Slowly getting up from his revolving chair, Peter let out a sigh of relief. His working day was at last over, and he could concentrate on his meeting with Jacob tonight. This had been a bad day, and his mind was in turmoil over what was to come.

How in God's name was he going to explain to Jacob what he knew, and the events that had happened to now force him to confide in his friend?

The last few months had been such a strain on him, he only wished he could have had this meeting before now. Even when he was asked why he had not made Cathy's funeral, the reply that he had been away at a conference seemed to satisfy, but the truth of the matter was he had been called to a special case!

Drinking another cup of coffee, he returned to his seat and rested his head in his hands, in a vain hope of relaxing. Special case? He shook his head and remembered the day, that same day he was summoned, by a group of special security men, a group he had never heard of before, to come and take care of an overdose victim, and a witness who was so important to them, she had been declared dead and buried!

He had been surprised, and confused when they came for him. He had no explanation, and was taken,

blindfolded the first time, to see her and nearly fainted when he discovered that the victim was no other than Cathy Chandler! He couldn't believe it, here she was, alive, and seemed healthy but for being in a coma. This could be fatal, and then again might not. She was strong and he was to look after her, keep her alive and help her out of the coma state, if he could.

Keeping the secret had become a painful burden, and he could not go on. He felt it was time to tell his story, and there was only one person he could turn to in this; Jacob. He would understand the situation, and all its implications.

Getting up again, he smiled when he thought of Cathy. She had been through so much over those last three years, and yet once again her strength and great love, had kept her alive. She was showing signs of improvement and was quite restless on some days. This he decided, was a good sign and with luck could mean she was breaking away from the coma.

He did worry though, as once or twice recently, she had whispered Vincent's name, and he had managed to conceal this, but if he wasn't there, what then? If Smith was around and picked it up, there would be questions. Smith wanted to be the head man, and so far there had been no problems in that area, but he was good at his job and if he noticed her talking, there could be trouble. No, he couldn't let that happen, so getting her Below to the tunnels was a matter of priority, and the sooner the better for everyone. She would be truly safe there, and if Jacob agreed to his plan, it would be all over and done with tonight!

This thought cheered him up a bit, and he looked at his watch to see how much longer it would be before his friend arrived.

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Lying without movement of her body, Cathy's heart and mind were sound and strong. She knew she was far away from normality, and could only guess at what had happened to her, or what was going on around her. The only truth she did know was her feelings, and they were getting stronger. Time had no meaning, but she concentrated her thoughts on Vincent in the hope he would come for her.

There was activity about her every now and then, and Peter was floating in the mists of her mind, so he must be here looking after her. But where? His presence was a vital factor to her, as logic told her, if there was one friend there must be more. But where? She hadn't seen anyone else she knew. And Vincent? Why wasn't he here?

The questions flowed through her over and over, but there were no answers. Vincent's love for her, and his strength, were keeping her alive, and the imprinted picture she had of their son. He was so beautiful, so perfect, if only she could have held him in her arms. Tears were beginning to run down her face again, and she drifted away, away into the mists and the darkness that had been her days and nights for so long.

These spells were, however, getting shorter and further apart, she could sense it, and somehow it felt good. The frustrations of her situation look over sometimes and she would toss and turn, trying in vain to open her eyes or speak. She was unaware that her efforts had been rewarded and Peter had heard her speak Vincent's name.

Today for some reason her feelings were stronger, and there was that pounding in her head that was like a heartbeat. When it came her own heart started to race and all she could do was call for her love. Over and over again she called, but was confused when nothing, or nobody seemed to hear. Finally her efforts had drained her and once more the darkness came for her, and there was no way she could fight back. Turning over she drifted off with Vincent's name creeping from her lips.

She would try again, later!

As she lay, a smile came over her face, the mind was clearing for now she could dream, and dream she did.

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Not far from the tunnels entrance, Vincent met Diana, and they discussed their plans for the night ahead. Halfway through a sentence, Vincent stopped in his tracks. There it was again, the heartbeat, and it was getting stronger every time he felt it. It caused a pain that shot right through him.

Seeing the changed expression on his face, Diana became concerned. "What is it, Vincent? Is there something wrong, are you all right?"

"I'm not sure. It's the same sensation I had the night Catherine died. The feelings that led me to where she was being held. It's weak now, but I feel it getting stronger."

He strode backwards and forwards for a few moments, trying in vain to understand what was happening, and fight back the tears that were building up. Closing his eyes, he threw his head back and fell to the ground, landing on his knees. He felt Diana's hand come to rest on his arm, and turning to face her, he tried to explain his feelings.

"I've been having these recurring emotions and feelings, feelings that were part of the bond that Catherine and I shared. They are so strong, it's as if she were alive and trying to reach out to me."

Diana looked at this man beside her. Over the last few months she had become close to him. As close as anyone could, she guessed, as his only love was with his Catherine and the hope of finding his son. She could see in his eyes the love they had, as whenever he mentioned her, you could see a change in him, and this huge man melted away in her thoughts. What they had was so special, just knowing about it made her feel like an intruder. Let them achieve what they had set out to do, they had been through so much of late, surely it was time that this was over. Her own emotions had been under great strain too, and her feelings for Vincent were strong.

Then there was Joe! She had become close to him since the start of their investigations, and had spent a great deal of time with him. Recently, she was bothered over the things she was holding back from him, and she was feeling just a little bit guilty. Criminal or not, she couldn't tell him yet, but soon she would, and the only thing that troubled her was if their friendship would stand up to it all. She believed it would, and with luck it wasn't going to be too long before she could confide in Joe, once and for all.

They had approached the building and it was getting late, so they found a good spot and settled down to wait. There was a great deal of activity going on, and several cars had come from the basement car park. They took all this movement in, and decided it was to their advantage, as the less people around when they went in, the better.

Diana checked her watch. They should move within the hour, and looking up at Vincent, she could see how restless he was. She spoke quietly as she turned to him. "Vincent, it won't be long now."

He turned to her, with his head at the slight angle he did sometimes, and gave a hint of a smile. "My feelings are very strong tonight. I have this great hope we will be truly rewarded by our efforts."

They both fell into a tense silence, and withdrew into each other's thoughts till it was time for them to go.

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Jacob arrived at Peter's office right on time, and was glad to see his friend waiting for him. They shook hands and Peter took him to the empty waiting room, where they would be more comfortable.

Looking at his friend, he spoke very slowly, and with great care. "Jacob, you must know what I have to say is very important to both of us, and I ask you to be patient with me, and hear what's to be said."

Taking a breath he went on. "You will have many questions, and I promise to answer them all, but please let me have my say first. I have been under a lot of pressure, and unable to tell you anything before now, but the burden has become too great and you are the only person I can trust to tell."

Shifting around the room, he went on. "Apart from myself, there are only a handful of men who have

knowledge of what I know, and they are a special bunch, picked for the job they do."

Stopping to gather himself, he sat down in front of Jacob, on the soft sofa.

Jacob looked at his friend, and could see the worry and tension on his face. His heart went out to him, indeed he was under a great strain and seemed to be having difficulty explaining himself. Sitting down, he quickly smiled at Peter, and getting into a comfortable condition, he spoke for the first time.

"All right, Peter, I'll listen to what you have to say, and I promise not to interrupt, if I can. But you have me worried. What is it that you know, that concerns me also?"

Getting up and going to the coffee machine, he poured them both a cup, and returned to sit in front of Jacob, as he handed him his drink.

"When I have finished, you will know all the implications and reasons, but explaining them is the hard part."

Without any more questions, Peter started to tell his story, and making sure he left nothing out, it was soon over with. He could see Jacob was about to interrupt a couple of times, but somehow managed to hold back. Still, he could see it had had some effect on him, and waited a few moments when he had finished before he spoke.

Jacob got up from his seat and paced the room for a time, until he finally turned and faced his friend, still sitting on the sofa. "Peter, I understand why you couldn't tell me before, and your reasons for not doing so, has put you under great strain. Keeping this from Vincent must have been the hardest thing for you, and caused you much pain. Yes! I agree, we must do something, and quickly for both Catherine and Vincent, not to mention ourselves."

Peter smiled at last, and was pleased that he had made the right choice when he decided to tell his tale.

"Catherine? Is she all right? There is no danger that this move will harm her in any way?"

"Thankfully she is strong, in heart and body, and the coma seems to be lifting. However, I feel she is becoming more aware of what is going on around her, and more alert to her condition, but for her being moved, she is more than fit for the trip."

"If she was to come out of this coma soon, then we both know that her first reactions will be to call for Vincent. This would be dangerous if she were still up here, this is my main worry at the moment."

"Yes, I agree with you, and we must protect them both from any more distress. They have had more than their share since they met!"

Jacob went into deep thought again, then with a shake of his head he spoke. "You know, Peter, Vincent had told me recently, he has been having spasms of very strong emotions, feelings similar to the bond he and Cathy had shared. Do you think it's possible that their connection is so strong, it could cause the restless state in Cathy?"

Peter shrugged his shoulders. "It's possible, we know how strong their link was before, and the love that they share is beyond most people. Yes! I would say that they are in some way getting through to each other."

"Then we must move her tonight, if Vincent gets these feelings too, he will come here looking and won't rest till he finds her! Your plan to get her Below? Will you be safe when they find out she has gone?"

"Jacob, I have been prepared for this. Over the last few weeks, I knew this time would come, so I have hatched a little plan of my own. There are only two guards that come with me to Cathy's room. One outside, and one inside. The problem for them, is they are on duty for long periods of time, so recently, I have got them to take a sleep in the office for the time I am with her and wake them when I am ready to leave. It has become a normal event now and will give us all the time we need."

He had come forward on the sofa, as he spoke, and was clasping his hands so tight, they were turning white.

He felt it was going to be fine now, and was only waiting for Jacob to make a move.

"For the final part, I will give myself a sedative, and the guard, so whoever finds us will think it was done by the people who took her away. With a bit of planning, I will try and get them to think this Gabriel, you told me about, was the one behind it all. The important factor here is to get Cathy safe Below, and back with Vincent! Has there been any word about her son?"

Jacob shook his head. "Vincent is out every night, searching. It's strange though, he was very excited about tonight, it seemed more important than the other times! Where is she being held?"

"It's not far and there are tunnels that can be reached from the basement. There is a lift that we will use. It's in the same office we have the surgery in, so there won't be a problem there. Time is our only enemy now!"

They talked for a short time and made the final touches to their plan. With all the arrangements made, they headed off in different directions, only time would tell if everything was going to work out.

Half an hour later, Peter entered the building where Cathy was, and headed for the guard. He was pleased to see it was Kevin, he always enjoyed his sleep, and nothing would disturb him.

Kevin went with Peter to the room where Cathy was, and he could see straight away that she was troubled and getting restless.

"Looks like I'll be here for a while, Kevin. Why don't you go and put your head down for a bit, and I'll wake you in an hour or so."

"Sure you'll be okay on your own, Doc?"

"Yes, nothing's happening, off you go, and I promise to let you know if there are any changes."

"Thanks, Doc! I could do with some shut eye," and with that he turned around and went into the outer office where there was a camp bed made up.

With Kevin asleep, he turned his attention to Catherine. She was mumbling, and her eyes were flickering. He was pleased to see how she was improving; but right now there were other things to see to.

First he got out a hooded cloak he had taken with him, and started to put it on her. He wanted to make sure she was well protected from the change in temperatures from here and the tunnels Below.

It was as if Cathy knew what he was doing, for there was no effort needed to put the cloak on. In her own way, she seemed to be helping him. Was it possible? With this young lady, it was!

Finding an extra blanket, he lay it across the end of her bed. He wasn't too sure if Jacob would have any, so better to be prepared. He looked at his watch, and went to check on Kevin. He was sleeping like a baby.

Going over to the door by the lift, he unlocked it and pressed the button to bring it up. Turning from the lift, he went over and gave Cathy a mild sedative to help her through the next hour or so.

His heart was pounding at the sound of the lift arriving, and the door opening. He sighed loudly, as there with a wheelchair was Jacob. This would get her to the entrance Below where they would transfer her to a stretcher.

The two men worked quickly, and in silence, till Cathy was comfortable. Jacob could not resist giving her a kiss on the cheek, she was so fragile looking but he knew better of this one. So strong willed and full of love, it seemed nothing was going to stop her from being with Vincent.

With the wheelchair in the lift and ready to go, the two men shook hands.

"I won't try and reach you for a while, Jacob. Just in case they will be keeping an eye on me, but please send me a message as soon as you can."

"Take great care, Peter, and thank you for looking after Cathy."

The lift door closed and pulling the outer door shut, Peter returned to the surgery and messed the place up a bit. When he thought it looked the part, and felt that Jacob was safe, he put the last part of his plan into action.

His timing was important now, as he gave himself a sedative, and went to the office and saw to Kevin. By the time he got back though, all he could manage was to fall towards the bed, as he became unconscious.

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Father met the others waiting Below, and between them they managed to make the transfer with some ease. Mary was there too, and she was so glad to see Catherine.

Back at the Hospital chamber, there was no lack of help, and it was in no time at all that they had her settled in bed and resting. She lay quiet but was whispering under her breath, and Father could only make out one or two words. '*Vincent*' and '*home*.' Did she know where she was? More than likely!

"Mary, you and I will take shifts to keep an eye on her tonight. Peter thinks she's breaking away from the coma, so we must be near if she awakens."

Mary nodded her head and went about preparing the things they needed for the night ahead. Turning back to Father she asked, "What about Vincent? He should be told about this!"

Turning to face her, he raised his hands in the air. "He's Above, and I have no way of reaching him! This has happened all so fast, I'm afraid we will have to be patient and wait for him to return."

Turning his attention to Cathy again, he gave her a complete examination. She was tough, and healthy when you gave thought to what she had been through.

Sitting on the bed, and holding her hand, he whispered to her. "Dear Cathy, you have no idea how much we all love you, and how much we long for you to be better. Vincent has suffered great pain since you left, and now he can once again live."

Tears were in his eyes, and he was about to rub them away when he felt another hand reach out, and a fragile finger brushed the drops from his cheek. He leaned closer to her, and she slowly spoke.

"Father, am I safe? Where is Vincent?" The effort was too much, and she rolled over and fell asleep almost without them knowing.

Sitting holding her hand, Father was trying to take it all in.

Mary was beside him and couldn't believe what she had seen. As she bent over to speak to Father, they both jumped, and Mary stumbled backwards.

Cathy's eyes had shot open. She was calling for Vincent, and there was pain in her voice as if she was frightened of something.

"Dear God! They must have their bond back. She's feeling Vincent's danger, I'm sure of it." They settled her the best that they could, but she rolled from side to side, letting out small cries of pain.

This unrest went on for a couple of hours until finally, she fell over and went to sleep. Tucking her in, Father noticed there was a smile on her face, and her colour had come back. He didn't think it was because she knew where she was, that she smiled, he was sure it had a connection with Vincent. Perhaps he had won at last, and was on his way home. Her powers to reach him, never failed to surprise Father, so anything was possible now.

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Vincent and Diana were inside the building, where they had managed to get to the penthouse floor, without being seen.

All was quiet. Too quiet! Was all that activity they witnessed earlier another move to another building?



Neither spoke these thoughts as they searched for signs of Gabriel and his henchmen.

Turning to go up some stairs, Vincent gasped for breath. All of a sudden he was flooded with overpowering feelings, and his chest was so tight he had to stop for a second to collect himself. This new bond, was it because he was near to his son? He didn't know, but they were the old feelings he and Catherine had shared, but stronger, and closer to him than they had been since he went to the caves below the chambers.

Just as quickly, his head cleared, and glancing over his shoulder at Diana, he made a dash towards the door in front of them. Swinging the door open wide, he was left standing in an empty room. Turning around he noticed a door to the side of the room, hidden by stairs. He was there in two strides, but as he approached it, he felt a calmness come over him, and instead of kicking the door down, as was his first thought, he slowly turned the door handle and opened it with great care.

His judgement was rewarded, when standing before him, was the thin figure of a man dressed in dark clothing, and holding a child in one arm. In his free hand was a gun, and it was pointed towards Vincent!

With animal-like quickness, Vincent took in the man but dared not make a move. His son was only a few feet in front of him, but he dared not make any sudden movement, as he knew this man was ready to shoot at the slightest sound.

He was frozen to the spot when the voice broke into the silence.

"Well now, Vincent! I wouldn't come any closer if I was you. I got rid of one person you loved, another wouldn't cause me any grief."

"Why are you doing this?" Slowly he edged his way forward.

"To explain would take many hours and neither you or I have the time to spare."

Hearing a familiar noise, Vincent looked towards the roof, and knew that what he was hearing was the helicopter! No! Not again! He wouldn't let him get away this time, not with his son!

Gabriel seemed to sense what was going to happen next, and as Vincent lunged forward a shot rang out.

"*'NO!'*" Vincent didn't realize it had been him that had shouted out, but as he did there came a banging noise as Diana came flying through the other side door. Rolling to the floor she fired a shot upwards, towards Gabriel's legs, in an effort not to harm the child if he was there.

Instinctively, Vincent crossed the space between them and caught the bundle from Gabriel's arms as he fell to the floor. Diana's aim was good and she had hit her target. Trying not to fall himself, Vincent had to use all his strength. What he didn't know was that as he fell, Gabriel also fired a shot and caught Diana in the arm. But luck was with them and it was only a scrape, but one that hurt.

"Ow!" Diana had forgotten, for the moment, about her arm and as she leaned against the wall to get up, she knocked it. "Damn!"

Vincent heard her cry out and noticed the blood on her arm as he came closer. "Are you all right?"

"Yes, I'm fine, but you must go now! There will be people all over the place soon. Take your son and go, before you are seen!"

For the first time since entering the room, he took the covers off the face of his son, and looking down at him, he could see a pair of small arms reaching out to him from further down the covers. With tear-stained eyes, he bent to kiss him, and he saw he was as beautiful as Catherine had said. With a great feeling of joy, and happiness, he was not surprised to feel her presence. He smiled as the boy wriggled about in his arms, with him so near and his feeling getting stronger and more intense, it was as if she was alive, and calling to him through their bond.

"He is a special child, Vincent." Diana came over to him and looked at the boy in the arms of this huge man. He

looked so small against him, and yet it was as natural a sight as there could be. "Take great care of him. He is very beautiful."

"Yes! His mother thought so too."

It was only a whisper, but she caught what he said. "Are you okay?"

"I'm not sure! It's Catherine. I feel her with me now, so strong and close." Drawing in a deep breath he turned to this friend of his and smiled. "I must go now, as you say, there will be many people about soon. Take care, and I will be in touch with you as soon as it's safe. I have no words to thank you, Diana."

"I did it for me too, Vincent."

He turned away for the last time and left her standing, watching him go. Funny, but now it all seemed like a bad dream!

She went over to the desk and dialed Joe Maxwell's number.

"Hi! It's me, Joe. Have I got some good news for you tonight!"

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Peter was feeling very groggy and confused when he came round. He looked about him and noticed Kevin sitting in a chair with his head in his hands.

Smith was standing in front of him, and as he moved, the man came over to him.

"Are you feeling okay, Doc?"

"Yes, I think so! What's going on, what happened?" Looking to where the bed used to be, he looked at Smith. "Where's Miss Chandler?"

"Well," Smith shoved his hands into his trouser pockets. "It looks like our man penetrated our system, did you and Kevin over, and took off with our prime witness!"

Leaning towards Peter, he asked. "Can you remember anything at all that might help us?"

"I'm sorry. I have only the faintest recollection of someone calling a man Gabriel. A woman I think. No! I'm not sure about that." He rubbed the side of his head, and felt some blood there. He must have hit his head when he fell. "The last thing I remember was giving Miss. Chandler some medication. I heard a noise and when I turned around, bang, just blackness."

"It's okay, Doc. You have confirmed what we thought," Smith spoke again. "What happened here, we don't know, but I have just had word from the DA's office that our man has been caught by one of their investigators. He's badly wounded and they don't know if he will last the night." Moving to the doorway Smith looked at Peter and continued. "There was no sign of our Miss Chandler, or her child, when they searched the building."

Taking a good look around the room, Peter noticed that apart from the chairs, the place was empty; as if nobody had ever been here, or would be.

"What now?"

"Nothing." Smith took a deep breath and waving his arms in a gesture around the room. "We go home and forget this place and what happened here!" Lowering himself in front of Peter, he asked, "Can you handle that?"

"Yes. Only too pleased to do so. But what of Miss. Chandler?"

"Oh!" Smiling to himself, more than anyone in the room, Smith looked up at the ceiling. "I have this gut feeling, you know, that our Assistant DA will turn up again, and in the not too distant future."

Shaking Peter's hand, he thanked him for his help and pointed out to him that if they ever saw each other in the street, he didn't know him.

"Goodbye."

Before he could say anything, Peter was left standing alone in an empty room. Here he had shared one of the city's best kept secrets.

Five minutes later he was on his way home and feeling better than he had done for nearly a year.

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The phone rang and Joe stirred from the chair he had fallen asleep in. "Yeah! Joe Maxwell here."

"Hi! It's me, Joe. Have I got some good news for you tonight."

"Diana! Is that you? Where are you and what are you talking about?"

"Joe, I've done it. I have our man here at my feet, a bit worse for wear, but I have him!"

"What the hell are you on about? I told you already not to go off on your own on this case!"

"Sorry! I had a tip off and couldn't ignore it. I did try and phone but you didn't answer."

"Okay, okay. Where are you? I'm coming right over."

Twenty minutes later Joe was by her side. The paramedics were cleaning up her arm and had just taken Gabriel away.

"They don't think he will last through the night. You made a good hit."

"Joe, I am sorry you couldn't be here! There are a few things we have to clear up over this, but please can we leave it till tomorrow?"

He looked at her and smiled. This lady was something else, and he had become attached to her. Not in the same way as he had been with Radcliffe, but more than with anyone else he knew.

"Let me take you home now. We can leave the report til you feel up to it. There are a few questions I want to ask, but I can wait." With that he took her by the arm and led her out of the building.

Once outside she felt a little dizzy and leaned against Joe for support. How late was it? She didn't have a clue, but with luck Vincent and his son would be safe in their world. Now, with Joe here, she felt safe in hers.

It had been a long night and all she wanted was to get to bed and sleep. She knew it wouldn't come without an effort, she had pain in her arm and the sedatives the boys gave her were beginning to work.

"You be okay on your own? Sure I can't stay to keep an eye on you?"

"Thanks Joe, but no. Phone me in the morning."

Joe laughed. "Look at your watch, better make that afternoon."

"Right, smart guy, afternoon."

Before he left, he gave her a hug and a kiss on the cheek. "You had me a little worried back there!"

"I'm fine, really. Call me later." She returned the kiss. "Goodnight."

Joe left her feeling pretty good, but his thoughts were of Cathy.

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Vincent could feel his insides crying out, as he approached Father's chamber. He was distressed over these emotions, and surely now, with his son safe, his feelings for Catherine shouldn't be so overpowering as this. Only a living being could cause such turmoil in a person! With every step he took he could feel her, the same

way he used to when she entered the tunnels to visit him. What was happening to him? He must get to Father.

Holding on to his son, he moved more quickly and felt he was being drawn to Father's chamber. There was no explanation or reason for what was happening, but he sensed the answer was within his grasp.

As he came closer, his heart was beating so hard and fast, he couldn't hear anything around him. He took time to check on his son, who in response smiled up at him, and he felt yet another great surge building up.

Turning into the chamber at last, his joy was replaced with a fear he couldn't put his finger on. Something was wrong. Father should have been back from seeing Peter by now. Where was he?

Standing alone he looked all around, turning in a complete circle. He faced the entrance to the Hospital rooms, and once again he felt Catherine was near. He shut his eyes tight, thinking these feelings would go away.

He caught his breath. No! Can it be that she's alive? How else could he explain this powerful painful state he was in. He was crying now, and the small infant in his arms seemed to feel what he was feeling, as he too started to cry. His head was spinning as he held his breath and moved towards the Hospital chambers.

Slowly at first, then his strides took over and his way ahead was quick, and with determination. Turning to the rooms he nearly knocked over Father.

"Vincent! Thank God! Are you all right, and the boy?"

"Father, we are fine in body, but my mind is driving me mad! Catherine! Is it possible she can be alive. I just don't know what to think any more."

Seeing the turmoil of this man gave him a tugging pain in his own heart. "Vincent, you are not mistaken. Your Catherine is alive, and waiting for you and your son!"

Not waiting for explanations, and still crying, he ran the last few feet to where she lay. There she was, looking more beautiful than he ever remembered.

Catherine was weak, but very much aware that Vincent was beside her. She could see his tears as he came and lay their son on the bed beside her. Slowly and with great care he lifted her into his arms and whispered her name over and over again.

Tears of frustrations, hopes and now joys, were left to flow freely. Nothing was held back and the two of them shuddered in each other's arms as the sobbing took over. They didn't want to let go, afraid that this miracle would end, and they would be alone again.

Slowly they parted, just enough to look at each other, and for Catherine to stroke Vincent's face. This beautiful face that she thought she would never see again.

"Oh, Vincent! I was away from you for so long, and yet all that time I felt you with me. Your love for me was all I had to hold on to, and the vision I had of our son. Between you, you saved me." She clung to him again and Vincent kissed the top of her head, as she had done so many times before.

"Catherine, I too, have been to hell and back!" Pulling her back from him to look into her eyes. "I have never felt the way I did when I held you in my arms, on top of that building, thinking you dead and gone from me forever!"

Shaking his head, trying to stop the new tears, he bent down and kissed his Catherine on the lips, with such tenderness and love she let out a cry of sheer joy.

The events of the last few hours had drained her, she was tired but held on to him for all her life. Then they were brought back to reality by the crying of their son. Catherine lifted him into her arms and kissed him as she spoke in low loving tones. As if by instinct, the boy turned tears to laughter and both Catherine and Vincent became absorbed in this beautiful reminder of their love.

Vincent lifted his hand and caressed Catherine's cheek. "I have no way of knowing what miracle has happened to us, but somehow our bond has returned, and is stronger now than before. We also share this with our son, for he also seems to feel our thoughts and emotions. Whatever is to come, we will never be parted again, and nothing will come between us, ever. We have each other, always!"

Holding his son and Catherine in his arms, he took a deep breath. "I love you with all that I can, and all that I am, and know that I will protect you both with my life!"

"Oh, Vincent! I love you too and finding the words is impossible, the only proof I can give you is here in our arms!" And with that she handed over the baby to him to hold. Looking up into his face, she put her arms around his neck and pulled herself higher to kiss him.

They were shaken out of the embrace by the approach of Father, who had quietly left them alone, and was now making a noisy return.

As they hurried toward him, Mary came from behind him, and smiled broadly at them all. "May we come in?"

"Of course, please. We were so lost in ourselves, we didn't even now we were alone." Catherine was sitting back as she spoke, weary now after all the events of the day.

"Oh! He's wonderful!" Mary bent and took the child from Vincent, who gave a broad, proud smile. "He is also very hungry!"

"I think it's best we keep him down in the nursery for the time being, and give you a chance to recover completely, Catherine," Father suggested. "That is, if you agree."

"Thank you, that will be fine. He will be in good hands and he must need rest himself." And Catherine bent forward to kiss him before Mary took him away.

Vincent called after her. "Bring him to my chamber in the morning, we will both be there!"

She nodded and was gone from sight, leaving Father with his own children. He now considered Cathy one of his own, and after recent events had no reason to doubt that she thought any less herself.

"Now you two, the best thing for both of you is rest, so I suggest that is just what you do! You will not be disturbed, as we all know you have a lot of explaining to do, but first, please rest!" and with that he kissed Cathy on the cheek, nodded at Vincent and left the chamber.

Vincent slowly got up from the bed, smiled down at his love, and with great care bent down and lifted her into his arms. She put her arms around his neck and they left for his chamber. There was so much to tell, but for now just being together was all they could think about.

Once in his chamber and Catherine was settled in the big bed, he made tea for them. The refreshing drink was welcome to them both and it seemed to revive Cathy.

Looking at her, Vincent noted eyes getting forced to stay open, so he took her cup and placed it on the table. He must keep a close watch on her tonight.

Sitting beside her on the bed, he asked. "Will you be all right?"

She looked back at him and nodded in silent reply.

He got up and kissed her tenderly, then turned to leave.

"Vincent!"

Her urgent tone turned him in his tracks, he swung around to see her sitting up on the bed.

"No, Vincent! You don't have to leave me now, not any more!" and she held out her arms to welcome him.

Smiling, with his head slightly to one side, he came to her like a shy child. "Catherine, you need rest."

"I will rest much better with you beside me."

Holding her hands in his, he sat down beside her once more, and looking into this loving face he asked, "The first time we loved? Was it when we were in the lower caves, when you saved my life? I have no memory of that dark time!" He let out a deep sigh. "I have spent many hours thinking about it, but there is a wall and I can't break it down."

"Yes, Vincent. It was beautiful, but you were very weak, and so determined to live. We shared it all, everything, in that time together!"

Closing his eyes, and let his head drop to rest on her small chest, he whispered, "I love you so much, it hurts."

Pulling him down beside her, they clung to each other. "Hold me, Vincent."

Without another word, he rose from the bed and got undressed. Not facing her, as he was still shy about his features. Turning to the bed, he saw this as another miracle, and could only pray he was doing the right thing.

She lifted the covers for him and he lay beside her. She turned to face him, and they lay in each others' arms, talking quietly of their love, learning to be relaxed in what seemed a strange but wonderful position.

The kisses started soon after and they could feel each other getting around. His shyness slipped away without him knowing, and they became lovers, finding each other as never before. They were lost to each other, body and soul, and with the tenderness of children. Their bond guided them, and the only words spoken were of love, and with each emotion they cried out in the sheer joy of what they felt.

Some time later, they lay once again, looking into each others' eyes.

"Catherine, I had no idea this would be so wonderful, so beautiful! You have fulfilled all my dreams and more."

"Vincent!" She pulled him closer. "We waited so long for this, it could never have been anything less than perfect."

Both were exhausted, and after kissing each other, they fell into a deep restful sleep. Holding on to each other as if there would be no tomorrow!

It was morning when Catherine stirred, and she sat up with such force, she woke Vincent.

"What is it? Are you all right?" He held her close, frightened there was a problem he couldn't cope with.

She held on to him and said, "Sorry, I had this dream! I thought I was back in the coma again and all this was not real, just my imagination!"

When he felt her relax, he lay her back on the pillows and brushed her hair from her face, careful not to scratch her. She entwined her own hand in his, and pulling him down to her they were soon once more lost in their lovemaking.

When they stirred some time later, they laughed and shared their happiness with each other.

Catherine was still weak and a little tired, but her love for this man had given her great strength. She lifted herself onto one elbow and placed her head in her hand. Looking down on Vincent she smiled, and whispered to him. "Now we can be truly together."

She traced his face with her finger, and finally let it come to rest on his cheek. Bending forward she kissed his eyes, nose and then lips. His response was immediate, and two strong arms went around her and pulled her close to him, landing on top of him. Laughing, they rolled over on their sides, relaxed and happy, just being with each other and with such freedom they had never known before.

"Catherine," Vincent spoke so quietly, she could hardly hear him.

Stretching and turning towards him, she could see a worried look come over his face. "What is it?"

“Our son!”

“What do you mean?”

“We must give him a name, Catherine!” He lifted himself up on his elbow and holding her hand said, “We can’t go on calling him *‘the child,’* can we?”

Smiling at him, she sat up in the pillows beside him. “I know, but the truth is I had thought I would never see him again, or you, and thinking of a name for him was not one of the things I considered.”

“I have had many hours to think of nothing else, and I have one in mind, but I know you will have your own thoughts on the matter.”

“You have a name in mind?”

“Yes.” He shifted closer to her and put his arm around her shoulder.

“Tell me! Is it Jacob?”

“No. I had considered it however, but the name I would like is, Elliot.”

“*‘Elliot’!*” She couldn’t believe what she had heard. Pulling back from him she looked into his face. “You can’t be serious!”

Vincent now took her hands in his and kissed them both before he went on. “Elliot is dead! Catherine, he died saving my life and helping me to find out who had taken you and our son. He was the one who found out about this Gabriel, he was the one who helped me to track him down, and he was the one who lost everything.” He brushed some hair from the side of her face. “I can never repay him for all he did except by this one gesture.”

“You met Elliot?” She shook her head. “When, Vincent. And how?”

“I went to him in desperation, there was no one else to turn to, and I knew that his love for you would be enough to convince him.” He shifted and put his arm back around her shoulder. “Catherine, I was lost and needed help. He was the one to give it to me and he did.”

She was trying to take this all in. There was so much he had to tell her, and yet this was so important to him. She and Elliot had a difficult time during their friendship, and he had loved her. Somehow, through all the bad times they had stayed friends, and she herself had used him more than once. Thinking back, it was Elliot she had turned to on that last case, perhaps then she had also played a part in his death. She let out a long hard sigh.

“Vincent, I’m so confused about things. We must talk, and recover these last months, but I have to agree with you on Elliot. We do owe him a lot and if calling our son after him is your wish, then let’s do it!”

He gave her a big hug, and then kissed her with all the tenderness he could. She was still very tired and there was a lot to tell her, but perhaps now was not the right time.

“You must rest now.” He got up from the bed. “Mary will be here soon, and you will need all your strength.”

Leaning over, he kissed her once more and left, for a well earned shower and to dress.

Catherine fell over, half sleeping, half awake, her mind in turmoil. She was in another world again, and the strain was just too much, so eventually sleep did take her over, and she drifted away into her dreams.

She thought of Jenny, Joe, Isaac and the others. How was she going to explain? When the time came she knew they would work something out. Drowsy and restless, the sound of Mary coming in with Elliot made her come back to reality.

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Diana opened her eyes, and turning over let out a small yelp. Damn! Once more she had forgotten her arm. Slowly closing her eyes again, she fell back on the pillows and tried to balance the events that had happened last night.

She allowed herself a smile as she thought of Vincent and his son. Were they safe? If Vincent was anything to go by, they would be more than settled by now, and happy. She stretched, and rolled over onto her good side, letting a smile creep over her face again as she thought of Joe.

The sound of the phone woke her from her thoughts and she reached out to grab the thing before it gave her a headache. "Hello."

"How are you today?" Joe's voice was full of concern.

"I'm stiff, tired and sore, but apart from that, I'm fine."

"You sure you're okay?"

"Why don't you come over and see for yourself!" She said, laughing into the phone.

"I'm on my way. Don't go anywhere!"

Replacing the phone, she got up to take a shower and throw on some clothes. She knew that the next few hours were going to be tough, but they had to come, and things had to be said. Where to start was going to be a bit of a problem, and keeping Vincent out of the story, but she would think of something.

The water felt great and she stayed where she was for a long time, only to have her door bell ringing as she came out of the bathroom. Joe! Hell!

"Can I come in?"

She let him in, and noted his look as she stood in front of him in only her bath towel. "Come on in, I was in the shower. Make yourself at home and get us some coffee, while I got dressed."

Fifteen minutes later she was sitting beside him with her coffee in her hand. "Well now, Joe? I suppose you want some sort of explanation?"

"You got it in one!" He turned to her. "There is a lot to go over, Diana, and I know you may not be up to it, but the air has to be cleared."

"I know. That's why I asked you over." She placed her cup on the side table. "There are some things I have not told you, but for good reasons, and I hope by the time I have explained, you will understand why."

She got up and sat in a kitchen chair; turned around the wrong way she was able to lean her chin on his arms. Looking straight at Joe, she started to tell the events and happening of the past few months. It was hard, and she could see that he was hurt, but she went on till it was done and waited for him to speak.

Not knowing where to start, Joe got up and shoved his hands into his pockets. "What the hell did you think that going out on your own was going to prove. Damn it! I told you not to do anything without backup, and there you were, gaily going around like Wonder Woman!"

He was more upset than he would let on, even to himself, but after this outburst he calmed down and returned to his seat.

"Joe, most of the things that happened, did so out of the blue, and gave me little time for anything, but to follow them up." She got up from the chair and went and sat beside him on the couch. "Surely, the main thing here is that we got the so-and-so!" Putting her hand on his arm, she looked at him with pleading in her eyes. "We needed all the help we could on this case, and when we got anything, it had to be acted on right away, you know that!"

He lay back, resting his head and shutting his eyes. He knew she was right.



"Yes, I know what you say is right, but there are still dead ends." He let out a sigh. "On the way over here, I got word that Gabriel never made it. That's it! End of case and end of our job. That's official!"

"What now?"

"We tidy it up, put it away, and get on with another case."

"You're not happy about that? Is it Catherine? I know how close you were, do you feel you haven't done enough?" There was genuine concern in her questions.

"Yeah, I guess so. There just seems to be something not right, but I can't put my finger on it."

Their friendship had survived, and they both felt a bit let down. It was a normal reaction for them to turn to each other and share these empty thoughts. They sat close together on the couch for a long time, lost in memories and events. Slowly, Joe turned to her, and with her in his arms, he knew that right now what they both needed was each other.

He stayed with her that day and night, and their friendship became even stronger and deeper than he had thought possible.

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Vincent came back only to find both Catherine and Elliot asleep. There was her hand, holding onto a book she had been reading, to free her mind probably - or try to - he thought.

He went to lift it, and tuck her in without disturbing her, but she felt his presence and woke as soon as his hands brushed against her.

"Are you feeling better now?"

Smiling and rubbing her eyes, she took his hand. "Hmmm. Yes, much better, thank you." Sitting up and giving him a kiss, something that was so natural now, she asked, "Can I get up?"

"I don't see why not. As long as it's only around here to start with."

"Well, I could do with a shower myself, Vincent." She looked at him with such longing, he couldn't help but agree.

He went to her and sat beside her on the bed. "Before you go, I have something for you." He went to the pouch with his rose that he still had around his neck, and pulled out the crystal she thought was gone forever.

"Oh Vincent!" She could feel the tears starting again, as he placed it around her neck. She caressed it between her fingers and looked up at him with loving eyes that shone with happiness.

He was about to help her up when Mary came back.

"Can I come in?"

She joined them both and they talked at some length about Elliot. "It's time I took him back to the nursery, you are still not up to having him all the time yet."

"Thank you, Mary," and he was lifted out of his cot and taken away once more to be spoilt by the other children.

Vincent was feeling extremely happy. Here he was with the lady he loved, and his son from the love they shared. There was only one thing left for them to be a complete family. But before he spoke to Catherine about it, there were other things to decide.

She had made it to the big chair by the fire and looked even more beautiful than ever. The shower had done the trick for her and she was feeling very much better as he handed her a cup of tea.

"Catherine, we have to talk about our future together." By now, he had told her everything about the past

months and hoped she understood it all. It had not been easy, but with a lot of patience and answering of questions, they had covered everything there was. Now it was about them alone!

"How do you mean, Vincent? Our future?" She looked puzzled.

"Even now, Catherine, I don't think you can cut yourself off from the world Above, and the life you have here." He could see she was frightened by what he was saying and went to her. "We have Elliot now. I know, but that must not stop you from your life Above. You are a special person, Catherine, and must be of both our worlds."

"No, Vincent. I'm here now and intend to stay!" She glared at him, and dared him to test her.

"Catherine!" With quiet control, he took her hands in his, and kissing each one he waited a moment before going on. "You have some very dear and close friends that have the right to know you are alive and well. They also have the right to share you with us, as without them there are things that you and I will never be part of without their help. All these things have to be taken into consideration, as I have things too, here Below that must be given much thought."

She stared at him for a moment and then leaning back in the chair, closed her eyes. *'God! Why was he always right? For once I would love to prove him wrong, but how could I?'* she thought. A long sigh escaped her lips, and he knew he had won this battle.

"You must go back, and soon. We will make some arrangements and get everyone to meet at your apartment. That way we will clear the air and I will be there to help you." He bent down and kissed her, she responded without any effort and they were distracted for some time.

Coming up for air, they smiled at each other. This was wonderful, the way they could be so relaxed and natural with their feelings and act on them without any worry about what may or may not happen.

"There is one thing left I wish to ask of you, Catherine," and he pulled her up from where she had been sitting. "Will you marry me?"

She couldn't believe what he had said. "Vincent! Did you just ask what I thought you did?"

"Yes, I asked you to marry me. Will you?"

"Oh yes, yes!" Yes!" She flung her arms around his neck, and they kissed each other with more passion than ever before. "I could want nothing more of life, Vincent."

"You realize it won't be like a marriage in your world, but it will be real and it will give Elliot a sound future." As he spoke, he brushed her hair with loving strokes, so gentle she could hardly feel it.

"Oh Vincent," was all she could manage and he lifted her up in his arms and swung the two of them around in a circle.

Laughing with joy and happiness, they fell on the bed, dizzy from their spinning around. They were collecting their breath when they heard Father clearing his throat before entering the chamber.

Smiling at them, he was delighted to see Cathy looking so well and happy. "Well, my girl. You have made a speedy recovery. Vincent must have a special formula," and he kissed her cheek as he stood beside her. To his surprise, she turned and gave him a big hug.

"Good morning, Father." This was Vincent. "We have some good news for you."

Father turned to face him. "Ah, and what would that be?"

"Firstly, we have decided on a name for our son, and I'm sure you will understand our reasoning for this when we tell you." Holding out his hand for Catherine to come and stand beside him, he took a deep breath, and leaning forward, so as to speak in a quiet tone, he said, "I have also asked Catherine to marry me!"

They waited for the outrage to come, but to their amazement, Father fooled them both a lot, a big smile

stretched across his worried face. "And has she accepted your proposal?"

His smile in return was as broad as he replied, "Yes, Father. She has!"

"I am pleased for you both, but you realize that a marriage here is not like the world above." Turning to face his attentions on Catherine, he took her hand and said, "Your happiness is all important, and I am delighted you have found each other again, but you will still have problems, married or not."

"We know the obstacles we will have to face, but we can overcome anything, as long as we have each other." With that, she gave him another big hug, and this time he returned the gesture. "My life in the world Above is secondary to me, my family is here, and my future is in this tunnel world. Perhaps not right away, but in time I will have very little contact Above, and this will truly be my home."

Looking at this woman in front of him, he knew, in his heart, that she was sincere and would never let them down. He shifted his gaze to Vincent and saw such love and happiness on his face, he had to admit that without each other, these two were nothing.

"I give you all my blessings, and hope that you will survive whatever is put in your path."

Vincent came to stand in front of him. "Your blessings, Father, is the only thing we ask of you," and he held this man in his arms, both near to tears.

"Let's have tea now, and a good talk. There are so many things to say." Vincent and Father sat at the desk, and Catherine went to make the tea.

They talked for a long time, each filling in gaps that had been left, and trying to tie all the events into one tidy bundle. Catherine was a little tired with all this, and had to go back to bed for a rest. She left the two men in deep discussion and knew that even now they would be thinking about wedding plans!

"The wedding must take place in the Great Hall, Vincent," Father said. "It will be one of the biggest events to happen here." He waited for his approval before going on. "Do you have any idea when this will take place?"

A deep sigh came from Vincent and he took some time in answering. "Not before I can convince Catherine to go back Above and clear things up." Father looked worried. "There are people who are close to her, and they should be told about the events that have passed. He got up and paced around the room, then glanced to see if Catherine was still sleeping. "Father, they have a right to know she is alive, and that she is well."

"Vincent." Father placed his hand on the other man's arm. "Give her a little time on this. She knows what must be done, but as yet she is far from ready to face more stress."

"I know, but we can't leave it too late. This must be done soon and I will go with her, to support her." He looked at Father and could see his worried look, but he said nothing. "She is a special person, and can not be cut off fully from the life she has Above. We will find it has its problems, but we have faced them before, and with less knowledge than we have now."

Nodding his head, the older man spoke. "As usual, you are looking to the future, and of course, you are right. She will always belong here, and be one of us, but her fate is such that she must also be a part of her world." Taking his son's hand he spoke again. "You will be tested to the limits in your union, but I have no doubts that whatever comes your way, it will only prove to strengthen you and keep you together."

With that off his chest, Vincent and Father talked at some length of tunnel business.

They were just having a second cup of tea when Mary came in. "How is Catherine? Will I bring Elliot back or should I leave her a while yet?"

"She is in bed and resting, we wore her out a bit," and Vincent handed her a cup.

"Oh, Vincent. We were all so happy when she came back, and looking after your Elliot is such a pleasure. We don't have many babies in the tunnels now."

Vincent went towards this woman, who devoted her life to the children and gave them all her love. "You are a godsend to us all, and we would never manage without you. The children adore you and could never have wished for a better mother."

Slightly embarrassed, she finished her tea, and said goodnight.

"Well, I must go too, it's getting late."

Helping Father from the chair he walked him to the doorway. They said goodnight and Vincent turned to the bedroom, and the woman he loved.

He was as quiet as he could be, not wanting to waken her from her sleep.

"It's all right, Vincent. I'm awake," and she turned to look at him. "Come to bed, it must be late."

"Father needed to talk."

"I know, so do we."

As he undressed he said, "Not tonight, it's late. Tomorrow will be soon enough!"

Getting in beside her, she didn't answer him, but instead lay in his arms and let him hold her and feel their hearts beating as one.

"Goodnight," and with a fleeting kiss, they both fell into a deep sleep.

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"Peter, it's good to see you!" Father went to his friend as he came into the chamber.

"Jacob. How are you?" Smiling at each other he asked, "How's Cathy? Is she recovering well? It's only two weeks since I saw her, but by all accounts Vincent has worked little less than a miracle!"

"You must come and see for yourself."

Taking hold of his arm, Father led Peter towards Vincent's chamber. They could hear sounds of laughter floating through the air as they got nearer. Peter looked at his friend slightly puzzled.

"It's like this most days, and it's wonderful to hear such happiness!"

Peter agreed and stood a moment taking in the sight in front of him. Here was Vincent, large as he was, and Cathy, playing on the floor with their son. It was a strange sight, but at the same time, a beautiful one.

"Peter!"

Cathy saw him first and ran towards him. "It's so good to see you. I haven't had a chance to thank you yet," and she gave him a big hug.

"Cathy, your own strength, and will to live and love, did what medicine could never do. I only helped a little."

She hugged him again, kissed his cheek, and taking his hand, led him to the two left playing on the rug. Vincent turned and looked up, extending his hand, he smiled at him. "It's good to see you, Peter."

"I would have come sooner, but I didn't want to take the chance that I might have been followed."

"You're here now, and we are pleased to see you." Father came to his side. "There is one more favour we want to ask of you."

"Anything, if I can."

Cathy lifted Elliot from the floor and handed him to Vincent, who was now sitting in one of his big chairs. Checking they were all right, she turned to Peter and explained how they had sent letters to the people she thought should be told about her. That they had arranged a meeting with them all at her apartment tomorrow night. Vincent was also going to be there, and would meet this small group.

"Meet Vincent! Is that wise?" He shot a look at Father.

Cathy went and sat on the arm of Vincent's chair and put her arm around his large shoulders. "We have given this a great deal of thought, and yes we feel this is the only way we can help my friends understand what has happened." She smiled at her son before going on. "I owe them that much and I trust them to keep our secret."

Vincent rose and put Elliot in his cot.

"It was I who forced the issue." Vincent spoke for the first time. "And I think we have made the right one, for our own peace of mind."

Father joined the conversation now, and he spoke directly to Peter. "Catherine would like you to be there tomorrow night, as you were the one who played the biggest part of this saga."

"Yes, of course I will." He smiled at Cathy. "I'll come over early and be there before the rest arrives."

"Thank you, I think we will need you for support."

Vincent went and made tea, and they all talked about the night ahead.

As the two friends got up to go, Cathy came up to them and said, "You're not going to escape just yet." There was a twinkle in her eye. "Besides, you haven't heard the best news yet," looking at Peter as she said these last words.

"What news is this?"

"Ah, yes. I forgot you don't know the latest gossip down here."

"Don't know what, for crying out loud! Tell me."

Vincent came up beside Catherine, and putting his arm around her shoulders, he pulled her to him as he spoke. "Catherine and I are to be married."

Peter was caught off guard, and with a look of amazement said, "You're what?"

Jacob patted his back and repeated what Vincent had said. "There is going to be a wedding in the tunnels!"

"I'm sorry, you took me by surprise, congratulations! I wish you all the luck in the world." With that he shook Vincent's hand and turning to Cathy, returned the hug she handed out earlier. It was late and the two men left to have a few long conversations on medical matters and trends, leaving them on their own at last.

"I'm going to be a little jealous of this Diana, you know."

Smiling at her, Vincent took her in his arms and kissed the top of her head. "There is no need, she was - is - a friend, and she gave me help when I needed it most."

"I know, but I feel it should have been me out there with you, not her."

"Oh Catherine!" He bent and kissed her. "This time tomorrow it will be all over, and we can make a fresh start. Lovers found, not lost, and a whole new future ahead of us."

She sighed and buried herself in his chest, relaxed and ready for anything that was to come.

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Slowly she opened the door of her apartment, and placing Elliot's cot in a safe place, she looked around. It was as if she had never been away, and with a shudder she looked towards the bedroom. Vincent went through great pain in there, and in some ways she had been aware of it all, but her memory would not function properly, except for the kiss.

She jerked her head upwards and swung around to the bed. Yes! She could remember that kiss!

The tapping at the window brought her back to reality, and she rushed over to open the balcony doors.

He was looking concerned, but relaxed when he saw her smile. Coming inside, he also looked around and flashing visions crossed his mind, but they didn't last, as now they were both at peace inside and nothing unpleasant lingered for long.

"Vincent, watch Elliot, will you. I'm going for a shower and change of clothes. They won't be here for a couple of hours yet." She kissed him before going to the bedroom and then, to have her shower.

Half an hour later she came into the kitchen where Vincent was making some coffee. He turned as she put her arms around his waist.

"You're so beautiful."

"Why, thank you, kind sir!" she laughed, and he bent down and kissed her. "Vincent, I remembered you kissed me in there, that night you carried me home. It came to me when I first came in, yet I have no memory of anything else from that night." She sighed. "That kiss was important, perhaps it was my lifeline!"

"I would like to think so." He spoke so quietly, she hardly heard him.

With their coffee finished, they went through to the bedroom and lay down side by side, holding on to each other. They tried to relax as they waited for the time to pass.

"Vincent, I love you." Catherine whispered into his ear.

"Catherine, I love you too, and know that we are doing the right thing here tonight." He held her closer and kissed her eyes and neck before returning to her lips.

"Oh, Vincent!" She was near to tears. "I long for this night to be over."

"I know, I know." He rolled over and got up from the bed. "It won't be long now," and as he went to help her up, there came a knock at the door.

"That must be Peter. He said he would come early."

With that, she jumped up, to answer the door.

"Hi, come on in. Thanks for coming early."

"That's okay. I'm a bit nervous about this," and he smiled a rather weak smile. Looking around, he noticed the bedroom door shut. "Vincent?"

"Yes, he has decided to wait in there until it's time to show himself."

He nodded his head. "Good."

"You want some coffee?"

"Got anything stronger?"

She laughed. "Sorry, no!"

"Well, it was worth a try! Coffee is fine."

As she came back with the coffee, they could hear a lot of noise outside the door. "They seem to have arrived!"

Peter got up. "I'll get it, you wait here until they are all inside."

She was shaking, and Vincent could feel her unrest. So did Elliot, as he started to cry for no reason. Lifting him relieved the tension, and it came through to him too, because he stopped as soon as he was in her arms.

Smiling at her son, she held him close. He gave her great comfort, and a strength to go on.

"What the hell is going on here?" It was Joe, and she couldn't help but smile. He hated mysteries!

Peter took them inside. Jenny, Joe, Diana and Isaac. They were the only people she could trust, and here they were in front of her.

They were all so busy talking to each other that they didn't notice her at first. Then Peter stood to one side and all you could hear was Jenny.

"Oh my God!" and she fell onto the sofa.

Joe turned white, Isaac just stared and Diana looked intrigued but not surprised. When Jenny revived herself, she couldn't speak at first, and her mouth just stayed open.

"Cathy, is that you?" Joe found his voice first and ventured closer to her.

"Yes, Joe. It's me!"

"I don't believe this is happening." This was Isaac. "Tell me I'm dreaming."

Coming forward, Cathy went first to Jenny. With Elliot still in her arms, she held her friend the best she could. "Please don't cry, I'll explain it all." Turning then, she went to Joe, who she also held close. Isaac came over and rubbed both her arms with his hands, as he felt out of place with these people.

Finally, she faced Diana. She held out her hand and Cathy took it with a smile on her face, and could see great emotion in this lady.

"I owe you a great deal, and words will never be enough to thank you."

Not knowing what to do next, Diana motioned to Elliot, and Cathy handed him over to her. She liked her, and trusted her.

All of a sudden, everyone started to talk at once, so Catherine had to hold up her hands. "Please, wait! You all know Peter. Well, he is here to try and explain everything to you, the best he can, and when he has finished, I will answer any questions you want."

Waiting for them to get a seat, she lifted Elliot and placed him in his cot, as he had fallen asleep. "There is also someone I want you to meet. He is very special to me, and is also the father of my child. But that will have to wait till you have all found out what has happened over the last few months."

Diana looked up and knew right away who she was talking about, and allowed herself a smile. Catherine spotted her reaction, but let it be and went to the kitchen to put on the kettle and let Peter get on with his awesome task.

She made the coffee and took it through as everyone was listening to Peter, who was being helped by Diana. She was filling in the gaps where she and Vincent had been involved, and Cathy was very glad she was there.

Getting her own drink, she took in a deep breath and sat down next to the cot, waiting for the end. To her relief it was over quicker than she had thought and both Peter and Diana had shone wonders in explaining things.

She felt a peace come over her, and waited for the questions. They didn't come. Everyone was trying to take in what they had heard, and make sense of it all.

"Cathy?"

"Yes, Joe?"

"Vincent! He is the key here, isn't he?" Going over to her and sitting beside her, he asked, "Is he the one you told me about that day in my office?"

"Yes. He's the man I love, and the one I am going to marry!" She got up then, faced her friends. "Before you meet him, I have to ask all of you to keep everything that has happened here a close secret, and what you are to see must also not be repeated outside this apartment. Promise?"

Looking at them one by one, they all agreed, and with that she turned to go to the bedroom. Vincent had seen everything, felt all Catherine had gone through here tonight and felt such pride in her, he was glad it was time for him to show himself.

He saw Catherine coming towards the louvered doors and as her hands reached for the handles, he opened them from inside. They smiled at each other and as she turned, she put her hand in his, and he gave it a squeeze.

They entered the room together and waited for the first reaction to pass. No one spoke, just looked at this great man in front of them.

Peter came up to them. "I think I'll go now, you don't need me anymore."

"Thank you, I could never have done that on my own," and she gave him a kiss before he turned and left.

Then Diana came up and gave Vincent a hug. "Hi, how are you?"

"Hello, Diana. Has your arm healed?"

"Yes, thanks!" She nodded towards Cathy. "I see your feelings were right, you knew in your heart that she was alive, didn't you?"

"I think you are right," and he gave her a broad smile.

"You know him?" Joe's voice sounded hurt.

"We worked together, once."

"Joe!" Cathy broke in. "Joe, Diana helped Vincent to find our son and to get that man Gabriel. Without her we could all still be out there, lost, who knows - but we owe her everything."

"What the hell was wrong with me?" He swung around to face Vincent. "Couldn't you have come to me, told me and given me the chance to help?"

Going to him, Vincent took him by the arm and sat him down near the others. With great care he explained his part, the best he could. Joe had to admit he couldn't have come to him in all fairness and sat silent, to listen to this man in front of him.

Catherine could see how they were all relaxing. Vincent's soothing tones had that affect on people, and they listened to everything he had to say. She smiled with pride, watching him and loving him with all her heart. She knew he could feel her as he lifted his eyes to her and a smile came over his beautiful face.

The next few hours passed with lots of chatter, questions and emotional feelings, but eventually the time came for this to break up. Sad in one way, but a great relief in another.

Everyone had left, but for Joe and Diana.

Seeing he had something to say, Diana said, "I'll meet you in the car park, Joe." She turned to both Cathy and Vincent and said her goodnights. "I hope to meet you again soon, Cathy."

"Me too, and thanks."

As she left, Joe spoke. "Cathy, would you consider coming back to work?" He glanced at Vincent before going on. "You have an office waiting for you, just say the word!"

She went to him and lay her hand on his arm. "Joe, I don't know what is going to happen in my life at the moment, but I'll give it some thought and get back to you on it, okay?"

He looked at her, then at Vincent and nodded his head. "Okay, Cathy. When you're ready." He gave her a kiss on the cheek, took Vincent's hand, and left with one last look back.

Catherine turned to Vincent. "I'll go down to the basement and let Father know everything is all right, and we



will be down in a day or two."

Vincent came to her, covered her in his arms and held her tight. They stayed like that for a long time, just holding on, needing to feel each other and know everything was working out for them at last.

When Catherine had come back from leaving the message for Father, Vincent had cleared up and made coffee for them. She noticed he had changed Elliot and fed him too, and he was sound asleep once again.

They sat out on the balcony, and just looked without speaking. There seemed no need for words now.

When they finished their drinks, Vincent lifted Catherine in his arms and carried her to the bedroom.

Slowly they undressed each other, touching, looking and loving each and every move they made. There was no shyness now and Vincent was a lover like no other, as far as Catherine was concerned. She loved him with her whole being, as he did her, and now that their bond was so strong there was no fear in them.

When they surfaced some time later, they lay in each other's arms talking over all the events of the night before, and decided that it had gone well and that now everyone was going to cope much better for knowing the truth.

They laughed at some of the reactions and worried about others, but finally they came to the topic of Catherine's job.

"What do you think?" Vincent asked her. "Would you like to go back to your office and do some more of your good work?"

"I don't know! I want to help people, but I have a family now and I can't put myself in danger like I have before," and she snuggled up closer to him.

"You could go back, but make Joe realize your situation and see what he can offer you." Looking into her eyes he whispered, "Catherine, I know I have to share you, but I also know that your love for me is beyond anything or anyone else and whatever you decide, I will stand by you."

"But Elliot!" She brushed some of his hair from his face. "How can I leave him?"

"Catherine," Vincent took in a deep sigh. "He is young, and we will work something out between us, don't worry. If it's what you want, for a little while at least, then you must do it."

"It's an option, Vincent, but right now I have other things on my mind!" and with that she lay on top of him and showered him in kisses.

His response was immediate and his arms enfolded her in a tight grip. From their kissing, they progressed to more lovemaking and more complete happiness.

This was the new beginning for those lovers found, and a future of mysteries and events that were yet to unfold. But whatever was to come, they would be together, always....

## REALITIES

### LOVERS FOUND PART TWO

Catherine came out from the shower, rubbing her hair dry with a small towel and then twisted it up into a turban.

She wore a silk dressing gown over her underclothes and her tracksuit lay on the bed. Moving across the bedroom, she stopped at the empty cot and ran her hand along its side, letting her thoughts wander to the Naming ceremony.

She had gone along with Vincent's wish to call their son Elliot, but had succeeded in having it as his second name. When they had told Father their choice, he had understood their reasons, but she could feel his disappointment. So when the time came and Vincent was asked to name him, he said '*Jacob Elliot Wells*.' You could see the glow of pleasure and pride all over Father's face and everybody clapped their approval.

She allowed herself to smile as now the children Below had nicknamed him JJ (*Jacob Junior*) and realized that this name had stuck. Even she and Vincent had started to call him that themselves.

He was Below at the nursery with Mary and the other children, his second home, and she missed him so much.

She smiled at the thought of him. This was their first time apart since they had been reunited three months ago. Well, if she was going back to work, being without him through the day was something she was going to have to get used to.

She let out a long sigh and turned to the bed. This, however, brought a fresh smile to her face and her mind went into overdrive, thinking of the magical times she and Vincent had had there. Their lovemaking was something out of a fairy tale, so beautiful, so full of love and complete acceptance of each other. There were no books or words to express the way they felt or explain their amazing bond.

Reaching for her tracksuit, the ring on her finger threw out a shaft of light across the bed. It was so beautiful, this wedding ring. She lifted her hand and looked at the crystal that was cut and shaped like a rose, and the band itself was covered in gold buds and twisting stems. Everything was so minute and painstakingly done; Mouse had excelled himself this time. Vincent's was similar, but wider and all gold. To someone Above, Catherine's ring would look like an engagement ring, but to her it was a wedding ring like no other, and would always confirm the union, and vows that she and Vincent had shared.

Still in deep thought, she sat on the side of the bed. Her head back, she shut her eyes tight and let the visions flow and give her a feeling of fulfillment and happiness.

The wedding was only two weeks ago and had been the most wonderful event ever to have happened. The Great Hall had been prepared for this occasion, ever since Vincent had asked Catherine to marry him. Special fixtures had been put up to protect them from the strong winds that howled when the big doors were opened. There was such a spread of food, and entertainment laid on that they said Winterfest was only a shadow in comparison.

But then, Vincent's wedding was so special to them all Below, it was an event that would never be equalled. A broad smile came creeping over her as she remembered the look on Joe's face when she had told him about the wedding and asked him if he would give her away.

One of the many things that had happened since her return from her coma and now to a normal life, was how she and Vincent could share a handful of her friends. Jenny, Joe and Diana had spent evenings with them in

her apartment and it was a special feeling being able to share him with them like that.

They were all at the wedding and Joe had given her away. Father had performed the ceremony, with another minister to officiate for Catherine's sake. Her eyes still closed, she could see Vincent dressed in all his splendour. His white shirt with its fine frilled cravat cascading down his front, the beautiful white, fine leather trousers and boots that made him look more handsome than she thought possible.

She had taken in a big long deep breath when she had first set eyes on him, and he had done the same when he had turned to see her coming toward him. She was wearing a plain, long satin and lace fully-shaped dress. The lace had a continuous pattern of roses, and around her neck was the crystal Vincent had given her on their first anniversary.

Remembering how on seeing him standing there, everyone else just seemed to disappear from view, and all her heart-felt wishes and love for him flowed through her to him. She knew he felt it too as their bond, their connection, drew them together as one. They never shifted their eyes from each other until she was beside him, and only then because they had to concentrate on their vows.

Another sigh escaped her as she remembered the kiss, there in front of everyone. Proof of their love was never needed, but to all around, this was the sealing of an exceptional union and one they would never witness again. A slight shudder of sadness came over her then as she thought of her father. He would have enjoyed the wedding and his grandson. These thoughts left her a little sad; sad that he had not seen either.

Still thinking of her father, she rose from the bed, took the towel from her head and went to reach for the dryer. She was so deep in her thoughts she never heard Vincent come up behind her, until he gently placed his arms around her waist and kissed her neck and ear.

"What troubles you, Catherine?" His voice was full of concern and as soft as velvet.

Turning in his arms, she looked into the beautiful blue eyes of her husband. Reaching up, she kissed him with all the tender love that flowed between them.

"Catherine?"

"It's all right, Vincent," she turned back to the small table and put a brush through her near dry hair. "I was just thinking of my father and how he would have enjoyed the wedding."

"That's not all that troubles you. Tell me."

She turned to face him again. "Oh Vincent, I'm worried about work on Monday and all the explaining that's to be done." Putting down the brush, she went to him. "And I miss JJ so much already!"

"We have been through this, Catherine. It will work out, wait and see." He hugged her to him. "Things are changed between us, we don't have to worry about how much time we spend in each other's company. There are no limits now, and that can only help us resolve any obstacles that come our way. Time together can be endless now, and a choice we ourselves can make without fear of restrictions." Bending and brushing her lips with his, he added. "We have our dream, Catherine, and can use it to the best of our ability."

She smiled up at him. "Are you always so right, Vincent?"

He gave a muffled laugh. "Not always!" and he remembered the times he had tried to get Catherine to lead another life, with another man, and this gave him great pain.

They held each other for a little longer until Vincent felt her relax, and gently pulling away, just enough to look into her eyes he said, "Catherine, breakfast is getting cold!"

She laughed, then went over to the bed and threw on her tracksuit before heading to the kitchen. Vincent was standing, pouring the coffee as she approached and she stood just to admire him in his tracksuit trousers and casual top. He had got into the habit of wearing casual clothes when in the apartment as his own were

cumbersome in such a small space. To her he was perfect, so beautiful, so normal. It tore her apart inside when she thought of the restrictions he still had, even here.

"Catherine," Vincent could feel her thoughts were of him, and what still could not be. "If you don't come and sit down, it will be time for lunch!"

He was holding the chair out for her to sit, and as she did he bent and gave her a fleeting kiss. It was still a miracle to him how quickly the casual way their relationship had taken hold and they could act like any other married couple. Sometimes their bond was so strong, words were never needed and they only had to look or touch each other to achieve complete contentment.

As they ate breakfast, they talked about her going back to work.

"Catherine, the last three months have been heaven, but even if you had decided not to return to your job, our lifestyle would still have had to change." Taking her hand in his, he automatically caressed it. "I have work that has to be seen to Below and Father needs me also, for various things." Sipping his tea, he looked at her over the rim of the cup. Smiling, he watched her thoughtful reaction.

"Yes, I know, Vincent, and I don't mean to be selfish," she returned his smile. "But I could at least have joined you Below for some of the day."

"No!"

She looked startled. "What?"

He turned his head to one side and slowly looked up at her, a grin spreading across his beautiful face. "If you joined me at any time of the day, I would *'never'* get any work done!"

They both laughed at this remark and the visions that flashed across their minds made them both slightly flushed.

"Seriously Catherine, it's not going to be so bad. You have already broken the ice with your visits to see Joe, when you and Jenny were out to lunch." He lifted the tea pot and poured them another cup. "You even had JJ with you on one visit, and I know that helped cover a lot of inquiries. There is also the fact that you are going back as Mrs. Wells. I'm sure that will curb any speculation."

Catherine sighed and nodded at his remarks. He was right in one way, being married and showing off their son had stilled a lot of tongue wagging and questions. Then the couple of lunch dates she and Jenny had had were great fun and full of gossip. Jenny was a good friend and she understood Cathy more than most. Yes, maybe things won't be as bad as she imagined, and there was always Vincent to come home to at night. They would have to share their time between Above and Below, but what they had now was only a means to strengthen their resolve.

The sound of Vincent cleaning the table brought her back to reality and she rose to help him. The task completed, they went and sat in the living room to read the papers and have a fresh cup of tea.

They were disturbed by a knock on the door and Catherine went to answer it as Vincent retreated to the bedroom and pulled the louvered doors shut behind him.

"Who is it?"

"Me, Radcliffe."

"Hi, Joe. Come on in."

"Thanks. Thought I'd come over and spoil the honeymoon!" he said, wearing a grin that went from ear to ear. Vincent came from the bedroom and even in these casual clothes, Joe noted what a powerful figure he made.

"Hello, Joe. Everything all right?"

"Hey, Vincent." He gave him a huge smile. "You look like the cat who had the cream!"

"I think you're right," and his smile and laugh matched Joe's.

Cathy came over with a coffee for him and he sat down on the couch. He noticed there was now a rather large chair amongst her furniture and smiled to himself. *'I bet Vincent had a problem with these 'dinky couches' as he called them.'*

"What's on your mind, Joe?" Cathy came and sat beside him and turned to face her boss.

"About tomorrow." He turned to face her and placed a hand on her arm. "It's going to be okay, you know, and the good news is your appointment has been confirmed." He squeezed her arm. "So from now on, you have a nice new office.... well, my old one anyway, and all the troubles that go with it!"

"Vincent!" Cathy nearly leapt on his knee, giving him a big hug and practically knocked them both over.

"Will this mean less danger for Catherine?"

"Yes. She can get someone to do her leg work for her now. Most of her time will be involved in the trial work." He put down his cup and looked at these two people. So much love flowed from them it even affected him.

"There will be some cases, I know, she will want to control herself, but there will be more office work than leg work."

"That's terrific, Joe. Thanks for coming and telling me." She went over to him and kissed his cheek. "You had a lot to do with the appointment, didn't you?"

"I like to know who's working with me, since that trouble with Moreno?"

Vincent came over and took his hand. "You're a good friend, Joe. Thank you."

Joe nodded and turned to leave. "Can't wait, I'm afraid. Diana and I are going out for a bite to eat."

"Thanks again, Joe, and say hi to Diana for us."

"Okay, Cathy. See you, Vincent."

Catherine turned to her husband. "You were right, Vincent. It's going to work out after all."

"I think," Vincent pulled her into his arms. "We should celebrate your good news!" He lowered his head to give her a long deep, loving kiss.

When they came up for air, he bent forward and lifted her, with all his love shining from his bright blue eyes and gently carried her to their bed.

They lay side by side, fully clothed, just enjoying each other and softly speaking of their love and hopes, kissing each other with tender feeling and caring. It didn't take long for the gentle kisses to turn to a more demanding, more fulfilling desire that ended up with tracksuits flung aside and their bodies joined in both the physical and the mental. Their bond became stronger and fuller with each and every loving move. These were the times that they both relished and clung to, remembering how things used to be between them.

Their love had always been there, but was only now being allowed to flourish and grow as it was released through them.

Later, as they lay holding on to each other, Catherine turned to Vincent and brushed some hair from his beautiful face, just looking and loving his special features. "God, I love you so much, Vincent!"

He pulled her even closer, kissing her neck and ear before he softly and with great emotion whispered, "Catherine, you are my life, my love, my hope and my future. My love for you cannot be measured with words alone and I hope that the joining of our bodies and souls will confirm to you my complete devotion."

She turned just enough to look straight into his eyes. The tears were evident and she reached up ever so

gently to brush them away, only to have him do the same to her. They lay, clinging to each other, not wanting this time to end. Suddenly Vincent sat up and pulled her with him.

"Come on," he said. "We have time to see JJ before he is put down for the night. Then you must come back and get an early night for work." He gave her a quick kiss and swung from the bed to have a shower.

Catherine lay waiting for Vincent to finish in the bathroom before getting ready. If she had gone in with him, they would never make Below in time.

The thought of seeing their son, and Vincent shouting he had finished, shook her from her dreaming and out of bed. She didn't take long to get ready and they were soon walking hand in hand along the tunnels.

It amazed her how much at peace she always became when here in this underground world, a world that was now part of her life and would be forever.

Vincent often felt that JJ shared their bond too, as he sensed things quicker than most children his age.

When he was ready for bed, they took him to see Father before putting him down.

"Well, how's my grandson tonight?"

At hearing the sound of his voice, JJ beamed up at him and held out his arms.

Father was delighted and lifted the small bundle to hold close. Looking down on this child, and at the two lovers standing beside him, he couldn't believe he was so lucky, or could be this happy and contented.

Cathy turned to Father and told him of Joe's visit and his news.

"That's splendid, Cathy," and he looked across at Vincent, who was deep in conversation with his son.

"Yes, Father, it is," he said, retrieving the child and handing him back to Catherine. "It will keep her behind her desk and at less risk to life and limb, for both of us!"

"Oh, Vincent!" she scolded him.

"We all worry about you, Cathy," this was Father. "And I, for one, am very pleased at the news."

Sitting at the big desk, he turned again to her and taking her free hand he held it tight and with some emotion cleared his throat before speaking.

"You have changed not only Vincent's life, but mine too, and if some times I'm a bit protective of him, it's not because I don't love you, I do." Letting out a long breath he looked from one to the other. "It's just that I've known Vincent longer."

Smiling, Catherine bent and kissed him. "Thank you, Father. Since my own father's death, I have looked on you, in many ways, as his stand-in, so to speak." She took her hand and placed it on his shoulder. "I hope I can continue to come to you for help and advice when I need to."

"Catherine, I would be proud to have you come to me when you felt the need."

Vincent could sense his father's joy at these words and silently thanked Catherine. She, in turn, threw a glance at him, knowing his feelings, and shifting JJ to her other arm said to the two men. "Well, I think it's time for this young man to go to bed, so we should say goodnight."

"Goodnight and good luck for tomorrow."

She smiled and turned to Vincent so he could kiss his son goodnight.

"I'll be in our chamber, waiting for you."

With their son sound asleep in the nursery, Vincent and Catherine spent what little time they had left, lying close together in the big comfy bed in Vincent's chamber.

Their lovemaking was never as powerful here Below as they had less privacy but tonight, their need was great and emotions were very strong. They needed each other.

This would be their first time apart since they had found each other three months ago, but now they had a great advantage, they could be together every night, all night, sharing their time between two worlds.

Finally, Catherine untangled herself and got ready to go. At the basement entrance, Vincent kissed her and gave her a lingering hug.

"Goodnight, my love, take care and have a good day tomorrow."

Reaching up, she kissed his cheek. "Goodnight, I'll see you after work."

"Catherine, I'll wait for you at the apartment, you will be tired after your first day back."

She nodded at this, gave one last quick hug and headed for home. They felt each other all night and when she woke in the morning, he was right there with her, she sensed his every move.

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Joe was sitting in Diana's apartment, drinking his coffee.

"Thanks, Joe. I enjoyed tonight," and she slid down beside him on the couch.

He put his arm around her and looked over at her *'work wall.'*

"What you working on?"

"Nothing."

Joe swivelled and looked her in the eye. "Who you kidding!" Putting down his cup, he asked. "Where were you all night - you sure as hell weren't with me."

She blushed a little, but looking at him she knew he wasn't angry with her, he understood how she worked and had come to accept things the way they were.

Leaning forward, she planted a kiss on his cheek. "Oh Joe, I'm not sure what to tell you about this one."

"That's not like you, kiddo!"

"I mean it, Joe." She sat back on her heels and holding his hands went on. "Do you remember the special agent that had hidden Cathy; Smith?"

"Yeah, Peter told us about him."

Letting out a long breath she went on. "He came to see me this morning and showed me some photos of suspects he wants to find and interview over Cathy's kidnapping."

"When was this?" Joe sat up, looking and feeling uncomfortable, and concerned.

"As I said, this morning."

"But that's the weekend," he was showing signs of annoyance. "They don't work weekends if they can help it."

"That's more or less what I pointed out to him and all he said was it's restricted to me, you and Cathy."

"What the hell does that mean?"

"From what he gave me, he's on his own and needs our help to tie up all the loose ends." She lay in Joe's arms for a bit of comfort. "It's Cathy I'm worried about. She needs this like a hole in the head."

"These photos, let's have a look at them," and they both went over to the *'work wall'* where she had put them.

"Did he say who they were; names, anything?"

"Yeah, Gabriel's hangers-on in one way or another and some of them are dead now." She pointed out and

named some of the faces until she came to the one at the end. It seemed familiar to Joe but he just couldn't quite place it.

"Who's that?"

"That is the missing link." She went to the photo and took it from the wall. "He said he's on our side, but he needs him to testify."

Opening her top drawer, she pulled out another photo and placed it beside the one from the wall.

Joe's mouth dropped open, then leaning over to take another look he exclaimed. "God dammit, I thought I recognized it!" He turned to Diana. "It's '*Elliot Burch*'!"

Diana drew in a deep breath. "We all thought he had died in that explosion he was involved in, but you stop and think, Joe. Vincent escaped, why shouldn't Elliot! There were no bodies, no evidence of any kind, just a boat blown up in the water."

Lifting the photo again, she contemplated it for some time. "He must have been badly burnt. It looks like he's had some sort of surgery."

"This Smith, did he give you anything else; background, something?" Joe asked as he looked over his shoulder.

"Yeah." She put the photos away and went to the kitchen to make fresh coffee. "Some lady found him, looked after him, cared for him and until recently they were living together in her apartment."

"Go on."

"Her name is Jacqui, average height, very good looking and rich." Turning to dry the cups, she looked over at Joe. "They fell in love and got married."

With the two cups in her hand, she joined Joe on the couch. "They had been under surveillance, but somehow they got away and haven't surfaced yet." She handed Joe his coffee.

"If Smith has all this information, why come to you?"

Diana smiled. "Just what I asked him, and the reply he gave me roughly means he's convinced Elliot will get in touch with Cathy - soon - and he wants us to be in on it."

"Nice fellow." Joe was feeling sick inside. "I thought this was all behind us."

"Oh! I don't think Smith is so bad." She placed her cup on the floor. "He wouldn't be going to so much trouble to keep things quiet if he wanted anyone to get hurt, would he?"

"I guess you're right," he sighed openly. "When is he going to give me a visit, do you know?"

"Tomorrow! But he said to keep it from Cathy for a day or two."

"Great!" He threw his arms up in the air. "It's Cathy's first week back!"

"In one way, Joe, maybe it's not such a bad thing." She lay close to him again.

"How do you figure that?"

"Well, there are loose ends over Moreno; we still have why and where's to answer over that notebook that's missing, and started the whole damn thing off."

Joe reached over and brushed some hair away from the side of her face and followed it with a fleeting kiss.

"You could be right. With Gabriel dead, Elliot may just be the only person left to tie everything up."

Diana got up and pulling Joe with her said. "Let's leave it till tomorrow, and concentrate on tonight!"

He didn't need to answer, just put the lights out as he followed her to the bedroom. Cathy had done this one thing for him. Meeting Diana had changed a lot of things in his life, things he was beginning to enjoy more and



more. They understood each other, and reasons for doing things that would pass other people by; here, explanations were not always needed.

Lying now with her in his arms, was a feeling he couldn't explain to himself and didn't try. It was enough just to be here! Turning and looking down at his sleeping partner, he eased back on the pillows and shutting his eyes, fell quickly to the depths of dreams and satisfaction.

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Jacqui stretched, stirred and looked lovingly at the man beside her. So much had happened; changed, since that day when she walked the beach and found him near death, burnt, bleeding, yet holding on to life. There was a gunshot wound that has just missed his heart and even the doctors didn't know how he had survived. His will to live was very strong.

He had lost his memory and for nearly a year, each day brought back more and more. Jacqui wasn't from New York, but was visiting when all this happened to her. She was rich, and lonely, so this was like a gift to her; someone to care for that didn't know or care who or what she was. He needed her; and she him and between them they brought him back to the real world and the memories that went with it.

Everything he remembered he shared with her, the good and not so good, but it made no difference to her. By the time they had been together a year, friendship had turned to love and then finally to them getting married. She knew in her heart, that even without her money, she would have found some way to help him; it seemed fate and she thanked God for it.

She now knew all he knew, even about Cathy Chandler and her Vincent. It seemed odd how he had confided in her, but he said one thing he had remembered from before, was Cathy always telling him people come first. Only now did he understand a lot of Cathy's thinking!

She stirred again. This was still tender ground so she changed her thoughts to other things.

They were both in some danger now, as what Elliot knew would cause a lot of unrest amongst certain people, if they discovered he was alive. He had been trying to decide the best road to take and he kept ending up at the same end; '*Cathy*.'

Jacqui knew he had changed, personality-wise, he freely admitted it himself, but for all he had gone through, he was determined to return to the real world and become a force to be reckoned with.

Elliot knew they had been followed for some time and that's why they were staying on this boat. He needed a little more time, and now it seemed was that time. He had read about Cathy starting her new job at the District Attorney's Office and he had tried to find out as much as he could about her reappearance too, but this had been hard to come by. As it always was with her, secrets, always secrets. And Vincent, was he alive too? The papers said she was now Mrs. Wells, but he didn't know - was this Vincent's name?

With this he let out a deep sigh and Jacqui turned to him, tenderly rubbing his cheek. He smiled his beautiful dimple-like smile at her and she just melted away. He had a beard, to mainly cover the odd scar left, but on the whole he just liked to wear one. His hair had grown back now too, but had streaks of silver and white through it, the result giving him an even more beautiful, handsome look about him.

Watching her, he slowly ran his hand across her front and up to her chest where he lingered to bend and kiss her with all his love. This woman was now his life and he would rather die than have anything happen to her. Once he had thought nothing would replace Cathy but, surviving the way he had and having her there when he needed someone so desperately, was like an omen. He didn't linger on the whys and hows, just that he was alive, was loved and could love in return without restriction.

"What's going through that lovely head of yours?" he asked as he raised himself up onto his elbow so as to look down on her.

"Everything."

He kissed her again, gently and tenderly and she remembered once more how his being near death had taught her to love, and nothing or no one was going to change that.

His love for Cathy Chandler had been something he thought he would never come to terms with, but here with Jacqui and her undivided love, it had become a thing of the past. She would always be special and both knew and were aware of this, but it had not come between them and never would. His love for his wife was a stronger, binding and unquestioning love, that included friendship and understanding. Something neither had had with anyone before and they had learned those things together.

"Have you thought about my plans to go to see Cathy?" he asked her, as he brushed some hair away from her eyes.

"Hmmm. Yes."

"And?"

"You can't go!"

"Why not?"

"It's far too dangerous!" She turned and smiled up at him. "I'll go."

"What?"

"You know I'm right, and I can handle it."

He fell back on the pillows, sighed and closed his eyes before answering her.

"You will be at risk too, you know!"

"I know." She pulled up level to him on the pillow and simply stated, "I love you, Elliot!"

They came together then and loved with such ease and the joy of emotions that only true lovers had.

Some time later, they decided on what their plan of action would be and when would be best to make a move.

"Friday would be best, Elliot," she spoke quietly. "Just before she finishes for the day."

"Yes, that's probably true." He smiled at her and they melted into each other's arms before sleep took over again.

They dreamed of what was to be and her future, that at this time was unsure in many ways but one; they would be together.

\*\*\*\*\*

Here it was, Friday, and Catherine couldn't believe how quickly the week had gone by and how easy it had been to fall back into her work. She should never have worried, and now she could look forward to the weekend with Vincent and JJ.

Lost in her thoughts, the knock at the door broke the bond and brought her back to reality.

"Come in." She looked up to see a dark-haired, good-looking, well-dressed woman standing in front of her. Slowly she rose from her chair. "Can I help you?"

"Are you Cathy Chand ... Wells?"

"Yes, I am." Glancing at her desk diary, there were no appointments for this afternoon!

The woman gave a broad, warm smile and without hesitation said, "I think you had better sit down again and listen to what I have to tell you."

"Excuse me," Cathy looked her in the eye. "Do I know you?"

"No, Mrs. Wells, you don't know me, but you do know my husband."

Hands on her desk and leaning forward she queried, "Your husband?"

"Yes," and pulling out a recent photo from her bag, she handed it to Cathy as she said, "His name is Elliot Burch!"

Slowly but surely, Catherine sat back in her chair with a thud. She saw the door being closed out the corner of her eye and after looking at the photo for some time, lifted her gaze to the woman now sitting across from her.

Jacqui could see the colour had drained from Cathy and said, "Please, just listen to what I have to say and then you can ask any questions you wish."

She told her everything she could relating to how she met Elliot; the way she found him and ending up with their wedding and how they now needed her help.

"I don't believe this." Cathy threw her hands in the air, part of her finding it possible. It could be true. "Elliot, alive?"

"Mrs. Wells," Jacqui rose and went to the desk. "Elliot said to use this quote if you were still unsure."

"What quote?"

"He said that below the park, you told him; *'I'm sorry, Elliot, but there is no possibility,'* when you had both been involved in some sort of incident."

Cathy stared at her. No one but Elliot could have known about that time and place. She had dashed all his hopes that night and they had nearly both gotten killed just a few hours earlier.

"You all right?" Jacqui placed a hand on Cathy's shoulder.

"Yes, yes, thank you." She turned to her. "I'm sorry, you must realize that this is a bit of a shock to me."

"Mrs. Wells...."

Catherine lifted her hands. "Catherine, please."

She smiled. "Catherine." Sitting on the end of the desk, she continued, "Elliot wants to meet with you. He's concerned about being discovered by the wrong people, before he can have his say and get everything down for the record."

"Have you already been followed?"

"Yes." She smiled again, and Cathy noticed how it improved her looks. "But we managed to give them the slip.... for the moment."

Cathy got up and stood beside Jacqui. Turning to face her, she asked. "How is he?"

"Better." She sighed. "It's been very hard, but he's held on and now we have the hope of a good future, if we can get this lot sorted out."

"He's lucky to have you." Cathy's voice was low, but sincere and Jacqui felt her feelings.

"Thank you for that," and taking her hand, added. "I'm so pleased to meet you at last. You hold a very special place in Elliot's heart. With me too," she smiled.

"Well now, we had better get this over with as quickly as we can." Turning to Jacqui again, she continued.

"How about my place tonight, could you manage that, around eight-thirty pm?"

"Yes, that sounds fine," and with that she lifted her bag and turned to leave. "Till tonight, Cathy."

They shook hands and she was gone.

The door was hardly shut behind Jacqui, as Catherine reached for her things to head home. She had had enough of this place today and wanted to be with Vincent. Grabbing her bag, she wondered whatever happened to her old one. *'Oh well.'* Shrugging her shoulders, she sighed and headed for the door. As if on cue, the phone rang. Looking at it for an instant, she thought about leaving it, but conscience told her otherwise and lifting it, discovered Joe on the other end.

"Radcliffe."

"Yeah."

"You in a hurry to get away?" he asked and sounded worried.

"Well, I was, but if you need me for something urgent...."

"Come to my office," and the line went dead.

Looking at the phone before putting it down, she shook her head. *'I spoke too soon,'* she thought, *'it's a rotten day!'* And headed for Joe's office.

She went in without knocking and was taken aback to find someone there.

"Sorry, Joe. I thought you were alone."

"Come on in." Joe shut the door behind her. Stretching his hand towards the man, he said. "Meet Mr. Smith. Mr. Trevor Smith."

"Hello, Miss. Chandler."

"Mrs. Wells!" Catherine shot back.

Smith held up his hands. "I'm sorry, Mrs. Wells." He came around to face her and she realized he was genuine in his regret. "The last time we met you were still Cathy Chandler." He spoke softly but somehow the voice seemed familiar.

"Do I know you?" This was the second time this afternoon she had said that.

"Yes, but not by sight." He smiled at her and then continued. "We shared some time together when you were recovering from your coma."

Slowly it dawned on her. *'Smith.'* Yes, Peter had told her about him; no wonder she thought she recognized the voice. Somewhere in the blackness he had come and gone over a period of time. His looks didn't match his voice, he seemed younger than her brain had told her he would look like.

"What do you want with me?" she asked and threw a look at Joe.

"Look, Mrs Wells ... Cathy." He paused. "Can I call you that?"

She nodded.

"Cathy, I need your help." She could see he was trying his best to find the right words. "You and I both know there are things to be accounted for involving your removal from the safe house," she blushed slightly at this statement. "But I am willing to forget everything relating to that time, if you will help me now."

She looked at Joe who nodded his agreement. Cathy could sense of lot of good in Trevor and felt she could trust him.

"Okay," she sighed. "What do you want me to do?"

He went to the briefcase on Joe's desk and pulled out a photo. Handing it to her, he watched her very carefully.

She looked at the photo, then to Trevor and finally rested her eyes on Joe.

"It's Elliot Burch," Trevor said in a soft voice.

"He's dead," was Cathy's flat reply.

"No, he's not," he said, taking back the photo. "He somehow survived and to the best of our knowledge is alive and well, not to mention, married."

"If you know all this, why do you need me?" She was getting a little tense.

"We, or I should say, I, am worried about his safety." He turned to face her now. "At the moment he's fairly safe, as no one but us are aware he's alive. When the others do, he's going to be in big trouble!" Grabbing a chair, he sat down before going on. "We need him to testify, but I don't want him dead."

"So?"

"I think he will get in touch with you fairly soon, and when he does, all I ask is you help me arrange a meeting with him. That's all."

"Are you sure he had the information you want?" Cathy had calmed down again, she was very tired.

"No, I'm not, but I have followed the aftermath created by Gabriel, and dead or not, there are still those who cling to his beliefs. The whole thing stinks of corruption and dishonesty in high places. That's what we want to stamp out once and for all." Letting out a long sigh he closed his eyes and nipped them with his fingers.

"Whatever Elliot has will help us."

He raised his head and looked her in the eye, lifted his hands as if to make an appeal.

"Okay, I'll help but on my terms."

"You have it."

She nodded, turned from the two men and left.

Back in her office, she leaned against the shut door with her eyes closed tight. *'What next!'* She nearly jumped out of her skin when the phone rang, and again she was in two minds.

Lifting the receiver, she spoke. "Hello, Catherine Wells."

"Catherine, are you all right?"

She nearly cried with relief. "Oh, Vincent. It's so good to hear your voice!"

"I was worried, I could feel your distress."

"Vincent, you're wonderful." She smiled at the phone and he could feel some of the tension leave her. "I'm on my way home."

"Take care, Catherine."

"I will. See you soon." Putting down the phone, she nearly ran from the office.

"Cathy!" Joe ran to catch her up. "You okay?"

"I will be if I ever make it out of here!"

"Sorry, I was worried." He took her hand. "Look, how about if Diana and I come over later."

Cathy's mind was racing. "Okay, Joe, about nine-thirty."

"Great. See you then."

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Elliot had seen Jacqui coming and sighed with relief. *'Thank God she's okay!'* As she came aboard, they clung to

each other and kissed before a word was spoken.

"Did it go all right?" he asked.

"Yes." She smiled at him and relayed the events in Cathy's office. "Your quote was the only thing to really convince her."

He smiled as the memory of that night flashed before him. Once he thought he would never get over her loving someone else, now he understood.

"So, it's tonight."

"Yes." She checked her watch. "Eight-thirty she said, her place."

He nodded at this and taking her hand they went to get ready.

"Elliot?" Jacqui looked up at him. "I love you and whatever happens, I'll stand by you, all the way."

He took her in his arms and held her tight. Somehow he had been given another chance and he was going to do everything in his power to see things right.

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Catherine fell in the doorway, right into Vincent's arms and held onto him for grim death! When he felt her relax, he held her from him and bent to kiss her. She responded with all her heart and they lingered where they were for some time.

Jacob Junior let out a cry and shook them from their private world and down to earth. Arm-in-arm they went over to him and Catherine picked him up, feeling the joy flow through her as she held him.

"Come and get something to eat." Vincent turned her to the kitchen and to their supper.

"I'm not that hungry."

"You will eat, none-the-less."

Looking at her husband, she smiled and put JJ in his bouncy chair while they ate. Half an hour later, they were in each other's arms, with coffee in front of them, sitting on the couch. Catherine had just finished explaining to Vincent all that had happened that afternoon and with great effort, he waited until she was finished before he spoke.

"Elliot's alive!" Vincent let out a great long sigh. "No wonder I felt your strong emotions today." Pulling her closer he kissed her head, then throwing his own head back on the couch he shut his eyes.

Catherine raised herself up and put her arms around his neck, kissing his eyes, cheeks and finally his lovely mouth. Slowly, Vincent turned and lifted her in one smooth movement and headed towards the bedroom. Their emotions were running high and their need for each other was overpowering. Breathless and happy, the last hour had passed by them with all the mysteries and wonder of a dream world.

Lying in each other's arms, happy and contented, they at last decided to discuss the day's events.

"If Elliot gives himself up to Trevor, I'm sure he will be safer." She sighed as she rolled over and placed her chin in her hands, looking up at Vincent.

"Perhaps." He was deep in thought. "He wants to rebuild his life and to do that he must clear away all the stigma created by Gabriel and the people who were connected to him."

"He's changed."

"What about his wife, Catherine," he asked. "Did you like her?" he smiled as he spoke.

She gave him a teasing thump on his chest. "Yes, very much." She turned onto her back. "She loves him deeply."

"Good." Vincent sat up and looked at the clock. "He deserves a good woman," and pushing Catherine over and nearly out of bed, he said. "Time to get ready."

"You're not going?" she stopped on her way to the shower.

"No." He smiled reassuringly at her. "I'll be here for you."

Coming out from the shower, Catherine was frowning. "They don't know you're alive, or that you are Mr. Wells," she said, holding the small towel around her. "He's told her about you, you know." Smiling, she patted his thigh as he passed her on the way to the shower. His reaction was quick. Grabbing her towel he shut the bathroom door before she could reach it. "Vincent! Give that back!" She could hear him laughing.

"Come and get it!" he teased and once more they were in each other's arms, lost to the world about them.

"I love you," she whispered.

"Catherine." Breathless, Vincent held her from him. "We had better get ready, it's getting late."

"Okay." She kissed his cheek and gave him one last loving slap on his thigh as she left to dry her hair. She felt so good. Vincent was a wonder cure!

She had just put the kettle on as Vincent came out of the bedroom. He was dressed in dark cords and white jumper. *'Beautiful is the only way to describe him,'* she thought, looking at him with loving eyes. She had put on a tracksuit for comfort.

"I've fed JJ and put him back to bed."

"Yes, I checked him." Vincent came to help her. "He's sound asleep." He put his arms around her waist and kissed her neck. "I'll wait in the bedroom till you think they are ready to see me."

As she turned in his arms to hug him, the doorbell rang. Vincent went to the bedroom as Catherine went to open the door.

"Jacqui, come in." She couldn't see Elliot. "Is he here?"

"He's just coming, Cathy." She smiled. "We came up at different times, in case we were being followed again."

Elliot appeared just as they were going inside.

"Hello, Cathy."

"Well, Elliot." She smiled and gave him a hug. "We don't give up easily, do we!"

He laughed and smiling back, he said. "Cathy, you always had more secrets than anyone I knew, but I'm catching up!"

Relaxing, she took them through to sit down and then went to the kitchen for the coffee. Sitting in front of them, Cathy spoke to Elliot. "You're looking well. You went through a lot of pain, didn't you?"

"So did you and Vincent!" He looked at her shyly before asking. "Wells? Your married name. Who's the lucky guy?"

She smiled and simply said, "Vincent."

"He did make it!" He was genuinely pleased. "Cathy, that's great! Will we see him?"

"Yes, and our son." She was so proud of them both, she couldn't hide it from her features.

"Oh, Cathy." He came to her and squeezed her hands. "You have everything you deserve."

Looking at Jacqui, she replied. "So have you."

It was his turn to show his feelings, and turning to his wife, Cathy could see the love on his face.

With that, Catherine rose from her seat and went to the bedroom. It didn't surprise her to see Vincent with JJ in his arms.

"He woke," he whispered.

"I know. I felt him."

They turned and went into the living room.

Elliot came forward and shook Vincent's hand, but couldn't speak. They nodded at each other and Vincent turned JJ to face them.

"Meet Jacob '*Elliot*' Wells."

Both Jacqui and Elliot did a double take, and seeing their confusion, Catherine explained. "When we thought you were dead, Vincent was concerned because he would never be able to thank you for all you have done for us." She kissed her son's cheek. "This was the only way we could think of."

"I'm very touched." Elliot went to the child and looking back at him, was the most beautiful baby he had ever seen. "He's very special." Going back to stand beside his wife, he added. "Take great care of him."

"We intend to," Vincent said, as Cathy retrieved JJ and went to get him to go back to sleep. "Elliot, you look well." Vincent sat in his chair and looked at the woman sitting across from him. "Jacqui, I'm pleased to meet you."

She gave him a broad smile, showing her great beauty. "You are all Elliot said, and more."

"I'll take that as a compliment," and he bent slightly forward as he spoke.

Cathy came back and sat on the arm of Vincent's chair, putting her arm around his shoulders and he put his around her waist.

"Before we go any further, Elliot, Joe's coming over soon. I'm sorry, but I think he should be here."

"That's fair enough," and he turned in his seat to reach into his jacket pocket. Taking an envelope out, he placed it on the table in front of them. "That," he said, pointing at it, "has everything you want to know, and all that I know from that book Joe gave you, to my death!" He sat back and Jacqui came close as he put his arm around her.

"When's Joe coming?"

"Any time now," and they settled down to wait, catching up on some of the events of the last year.

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Joe and Diana had a take away dinner and were relaxing in front of the TV till it was time to go.

"I'm worried about Cathy." Joe handed Diana a fresh cup of coffee. "She didn't look too good when she left the office tonight."

"It's hard on her, Joe. She thought all this was behind her and now all of a sudden, the whole thing is thrown back in her face." Diana gave his arm a squeeze, as she bent to put her cup down on the floor. Out of the corner of her eye she noticed a ladies' brown bag laying under his desk. "Joe?"

"Yeah?"

"Whose bag is that under your desk?"

"What bag?"

Lying flat on the floor she stretched under the desk. "This one!"

"God! That one, I had forgotten about it."



"Well?"

"It's Cathy's. I took it home from the office when she went missing." He looked it over. "I forgot about it."

"You didn't look inside for clues or information?" Diana was curious.

"No," he sighed. "I couldn't."

"Oh, Joe." She sat down beside him.

He shrugged his shoulders. "I can give it back to her tonight."

"When did she say to come over?"

"About nine-thirty."

"Well," Diana got up and ruffled Joe's hair. "Come on, we had better make a move."

"Okay." He reached for his jacket.

"Don't forget the wine and the beer!" Diana shouted over her shoulder.

Smiling, he lifted the bag. "Can you take this?"

Diana noted how heavy it was. *'There must be some files in here,'* she thought.

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Vincent looked around the apartment, now filled with all these people. He was part of Catherine's world in more ways than he ever thought would be possible. Yet here he was! Watching Catherine handing out the wine and beer, he couldn't help but adore her from where he sat. She blushed and turned to him as she was very aware of his thoughts, and his smile confirmed she was right.

It was sad in a way that it had been her disappearance and *'death'* that had brought these people together.

Catherine handed him his wine. "You okay?" she whispered, smiling.

He surprised her by grabbing her around the waist, resulting in her landing on his lap. She couldn't believe he was so relaxed, but loved him for it, and they had a fleeting kiss before she regained herself and sat on the floor beside his chair, reaching to take his hand.

Leaning forward he caught Joe's attention. "Joe! I think we should get the reason we are all here started."

"Yeah," and clearing his throat he spoke up. "Elliot, you know I was never one of your greatest fans and we both know the reason why." Getting up he shoved his hands deep into his pockets, then turning to face him he removed his right hand and offered it to Elliot. "But I am glad you're alive, and I hope we can start off on a better footing."

Elliot got up, took his hand and shook it. "Thanks, Joe, and I hope things work out too!"

Diana got up and came over to Cathy, kneeling down in front of her. "This is yours," and she handed over the brown bag.

"Where did you get this?"

"Found it at Joe's place," she smiled at her. "He forgot all about it."

"This is great. Look," and she opened the bag to pull a pile of papers out. "It's the photocopy of that book, Joe!"

"Photocopy? How?" He took the papers from her and flicked through the pages. "This is terrific."

"When you were in hospital, Moreno wanted me to give him the book you gave me. I wouldn't, but I did say I'd get him a copy." She sighed and went on. "I never gave it to him. He tried to kill me first."

Elliot took the papers from Joe and looked through them. "Well, with what I have in that envelope and this, I think you've got all you need, Joe."

"Joe," Cathy looked serious. "It's time to let Trevor in on this. He can protect Elliot and Jacqui over the next few months until we get the case tied up."

"Who's Trevor?" Elliot asked, looking between Cathy, Joe and Diana.

This time Diana explained to Elliot and Jacqui about the connection between this group and Trevor Smith.

"More secrets, Cathy?" He smiled. "How *'did'* you get away from the safe house?"

"I just don't seem to remember!" and laughing quietly under her breath, she went to the phone. "Hello, is that you, Trevor?" She looked over at Vincent who got up from his chair and came beside her, taking her hand. "Yes, it's Cathy. Yes, he is," she said, replying to the voice at the other end. "Twenty minutes. Okay, that's fine, see you then," and she replaced the phone.

She was in deep thought as she went back to the living room. Vincent went to the kitchen and put on the kettle. Jacqui decided to stretch her legs so she went and joined Vincent, giving him a hand with making the coffee.

"Something wrong, Cathy?" Joe asked as she came back.

"I'm not sure. Trevor said we were all to stay put until he gets here." She turned to Elliot. "Are you sure you weren't followed?"

"No, I'm not, but I don't think so, why?"

"Oh, nothing. I just felt he wasn't telling me everything. Just a hunch. Before he gets here, please let's keep Vincent out of this." She looked at them all, and as she knew they would, all agreed.

"Coffee everyone," and Jacqui came to the rescue.

Cathy went back to the kitchen and into Vincent's arms, shutting her eyes. She knew that it had only been a couple of hours, but the night was stretching out more than she wanted.

"Catherine."

"I'm all right, just tired," and she gave him a loving smile. "When Trevor gets here ..."

"Don't worry," he smiled back. "I'll be with JJ." They hugged once more and went back to join the company.

Lifting her cup to drink, Cathy was surprised by the knocking on the door. "That was quick."

Joe grabbed Jacqui and Diana, and motioned them to join Vincent in the bedroom. He glanced around. "Too quick, if you ask me!" He indicated for Elliot to get behind the door and then nodded to Cathy to see who it was.

"Who is it?" she thought she sounded normal.

"Miss Chandler... It's Trevor Smith."

No, it wasn't. He knew she was now Mrs. Wells. What should she do? She looked at Joe, then at the bedroom door as she heard Vincent making a noise.

"Wait," she whispered to Vincent and he retreated back to the bedroom.

Through the door, she spoke to the voice. "I wasn't expecting you, Mr. Smith."

"It's just some papers for you to look at, won't take long."

She turned to Joe and glanced over her shoulder at Elliot. "Okay, just a second."

Everyone was ready. Elliot behind the door, Joe beside Cathy and Vincent ready to spring from behind the

louvered door.

As Cathy reached to unlock the door, it was flung open, sending her tumbling backwards to the floor and landing with her legs caught beneath her. "Ouch!" she held her breath, unable to move. "Damn it."

Two heavies, looking like a couple of Elliot's towers came crashing in, brandishing guns, as if they had just stepped out of a Rambo movie.

Without thinking, Joe took a flying leap at the first and Elliot slammed the door shut in the second man's face.

Catherine was still trying to untangle herself and get up from the floor as the gun went off. She was aware of someone letting out a cry and turning to the sound she saw the bullet had caught Joe in the arm and had sent him reeling backwards, landing with a thud on the floor by the couch. "No!"

Elliot didn't get off well either, as a gun butt was thrust into his stomach, and doubled up, and went crashing backwards against the wall, letting out a gasp for breath.

Once again Cathy was trying to regain her footing and head towards the bedroom but was rewarded only with an outstretched arm that kept her from going anywhere. Looking at the man at the end of the arm, she became very angry, as he just grinned back at her. Closing her eyes, she concentrated all her thoughts on Vincent. *'God! Please stay where you are. It's too dangerous for you to help just yet.'* She sensed his concern, their bond was so strong at these times of trouble, but for once he could do more harm if he showed himself now.

Vincent in turn could feel her turmoil. "Oh Catherine," he sighed and paced the floor, fists clenched. He knew in his heart he must not do anything to help, as it could cause needless injuries with those two men and their guns ready for anything.

He glanced over his shoulder at both Jacqui and Diana, seeing their own worry and concern written over each face.

Raising his arms in a helpless gesture, they nodded at him, understanding but not able to conceal their own feelings that, hiding in here, with their loved ones only a few feet away, they were unable to do anything.

Diana and Jacqui both felt under some strain where JJ was concerned if he woke. They would have to keep him quiet, so as a precaution they had carried the cot into the bathroom and were taking turns about waiting with him. So far he had not moved a muscle.

It only took the gunmen a few minutes to be in complete control of the situation. They were all gathered together by the couch and the two men had not yet let a word pass their lips. They didn't need to! What they held in their hands spoke a thousand words.

Cathy reached for a cushion off the couch and placed it under Joe's head. "You okay, Joe?" she whispered.

"Yeah, I'll be fine," and he shut his eyes so she couldn't see the pain there. He was burning up inside, but he knew it was only a flesh wound and would heal.

One of the men came over and stood beside him. "It's only a scratch, he'll live," and nudged his side with his boot before he turned back towards the door, his gun still pointed at them and daring them to make a move.

"What do you want from us?" Catherine's voice was controlled but the anger within her was building.

Elliot reached out and held her arm, pulling her back slightly as if to say. *'Cool it.'*

Cathy turned to him, and became worried, seeing he was still doubled up and holding on to his mid-drift.

"It hurts, Cathy," was his reply to her unasked question. "But this is the least of our worries!"

Cathy threw her head back, shut her eyes and groaned. "Oh God!" Then she covered her face with both hands. Slowly she relaxed as she could feel Vincent reaching her. *'Be calm.'* He was trying to get her to calm down,

and she did. Glancing towards the bedroom, she let herself smile inside. He was there. *'Oh Vincent, I should have trusted you sooner.'*

Vincent was watching the activities best he could. All his efforts were trained on reaching Catherine's thoughts - the only way he could help her now.

Jacqui was holding her hand over her mouth, trying to control the strange sounds that were creeping from her as she watched, and felt Elliot's pain.

Diana appeared cool and calm but was torn apart inside, seeing Joe stretched out on the floor and not knowing what had happened when the shot had been fired.

Cathy placed a hand on Elliot's arm and was getting up from her kneeling position on the floor when the front door opened again.

She turned to face the newcomer, at the same time she could hear Elliot let out a groan. "Oh no!" he mumbled as he recognized the man at the doorway.

Swinging back to face him, Cathy asked. "Who is he?"

His voice was a harsh whisper. "His name is Pope. Gabriel's main head hunter!"

"Well, well, well!" Pope started, standing in front of them in his designer coat, and slapping his gloves from one hand to the other. "I do wish you had done the decent thing and stayed dead, Mr. Burch!" He let out a large sigh. "It would have saved me a lot of extra work and effort."

Looking around the room, his eyes finally came to rest on Cathy. "Ah," he said, smiling a sickly grin. "You must be that child's mother, the infamous Miss Chandler! You do realize that between you, your son and that so-called man Vincent, you destroyed my superior and any future I had planned for."

Going over to her, he reached out to touch her face. Cathy pulled away in disgust.

"What happened to him? No matter! Still, it would also have been to your advantage if you had stayed dead too. Now I'm afraid....," he just shrugged.

In the bedroom, Vincent could feel Catherine's dislike of this man and was tempted to go out, but could also feel her control and knew that there was still no urgency in her - for her. He admired her but wouldn't let her go too far, he loved her too much and would risk everything if he had to.

Going nearer to the louvered doors, but not close enough to cause a shadow, he tried to work out what was going to happen next.

Stepping backwards, Pope nodded to the two men. "Okay Mr. Burch, Miss Chandler, lets' go!" and a gun was pushed into Cathy's side.

She turned on him and pushed it away. "Don't you ever, ever do that again," and the fire in her eyes told him she was genuine in her anger.

"Let it be, Billy!" Pope motioned to him as he was about to lift his hand to her.

"What about him?" Good-looking number-two pointed to Joe, lying on the floor.

"He won't last long, left on his own the way he is." He gave him another kick. "Leave him."

Joe let out a muffled cry as the pain shot through him like a knife.

"Oh! There's just one more thing before we leave," Pope turned to Elliot. "Where is the notebook?" Again the sickly smile spread across his face. "I would rather like to have it! Besides, it is the main reason I'm here."

Elliot glanced at him. "I don't have any book," he almost spat the words out through clenched teeth, still holding his stomach that felt as if it was on fire. "Your man Moreno managed to destroy it."

"Yes! Well, if that were so, why then are you so important, I ask myself." He turned to Cathy. "Unless, of course, I have my information wrong and it's you who has it, Miss Chandler?"

Taking a deep breath, she spoke with care and her anger was still very evident. "My name is Mrs Wells, and if I did have that damn book, which I don't, you would be the last person on this earth I'd give it to!"

"Very noble, Miss ... Mrs. Wells." He started to move towards her. "But I'm afraid it won't help. Notebook or not, you two know too much to stay alive." He shrugged his shoulders again, and put his gloves back on. "And if I want to continue to have a full life, I am going to have to clear away - shall we say - *'any'* obstacles!"

Once more he nodded to the two goons.

As they went to grab both Cathy and Elliot, the front door was once more flung open behind them and Smith stood with his gun pointed directly at Pope.

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Pope moved towards Cathy.

Vincent snapped and snarling, he reached for the door handles.

"No!" Diana pulled his arm to hold him back. "Vincent, *'no'!*" He could see the pleading look in her eyes. She glanced at her watch. "Don't do anything just yet. Cathy is trying to stall him. She knows Trevor will be here any time now!" Her voice was a rasping whisper, and he knew she was right.

Taking a deep breath, he turned to look through the slats in the door, then facing her again he spoke. "Diana, I was too late once before." He looked straight into her eyes. "Never again, not now when I can stop this," and he hit his clenched fist against his thigh.

"At what cost, Vincent?" she asked, still pleading.

"Perhaps her life," and he turned from her to open the bedroom doors, just in time to see - and hear - the front door open again and another man standing there with a gun pointed at the one called Pope.

"It's Trevor Smith! Thank God!" Diana looked at Vincent, then at Jacqui, coming from the bathroom. "It's him at last!"

All three stood watching the activity, and could see more men come from behind the open door and swiftly gather Pope and his sidekicks into a nice tidy package.

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"Mr Pope!" Trevor's voice was controlled. "I have to warn you, please don't make any sudden moves." A smile spread across his good-looking features. "But if you do, it would give me the greatest pleasure to try and stop you in your tracks."

Pope pulled himself up to his full height and if looks could kill, Trevor would have been six feet under!

With them handcuffed, the three men were marched from the apartment. Passing Trevor, Pope spat a loose threat which fell on deaf ears. Ignoring the sounds behind him as they left, Trevor scanned the room and the people there. "Is everyone okay?"

"Joe's been hit." Cathy motioned Trevor over to where Joe lay on the floor. "He needs an ambulance."

"Hell, he looks rough!" Bending over, he said, "Joe, hold on, old buddy." Then he turned to one of his backup men. "Get a call through right away. Oh! And get on to Greg Hughes at the station and let him know you're coming in."

"Yes, sir."

"How are you, Mr. Burch?" He went over to the couch where he was sitting.

"I feel like death warmed up, but I'll be all right, thanks."

"The women? Cathy, where are they, are they safe?"

"Yes. They are safe," and she headed towards the bedroom, a place she wanted to be since this all started. It all seemed such a long time ago and Vincent was in great turmoil. She only wanted to be with him, safe in his arms. Her heart ached.

Just as she was about to explain how Jacqui and Diana had been in the bedroom through the whole evening's excitement, the two came rushing out, realizing it was now safe.

Trevor looked around and could see what had happened and that they were all safe, thank God. At least he could say this job was completed without too many hitches.

As Diana passed Cathy, she squeezed her arm. "JJ's getting restless." She winked. "You had better go and see him."

"Thanks," she smiled at her.

Jacqui went straight to Elliot and as Cathy stepped towards the bedroom, the paramedics arrived and all attention was focused on Joe and his condition.

Thankful for the diversion, Catherine closed the doors behind her and flew into Vincent's arms. They held on to each other a long time, kissing each other but not speaking straight away.

"Oh Vincent," she breathed into his neck. "I was so worried you might try to come out there and put yourself in danger."

"Catherine," he held her close. "I was tempted, more than once, but Diana's logic kept me from acting on my instincts."

"You could sense I was in no immediate danger." She pulled back and looked into his beautiful eyes.

"Yes, I could feel your anger," he smiled at that thought. "But, I also knew you were not afraid."

She sighed and fell against his chest. "That's because I knew you were here and your emotions and thoughts were so strong." Her voice was only a whisper. "But I also knew that if it came to a choice you would have been there for me."

Arm in arm they both went over to check on JJ, but thankfully he was sound asleep, and hadn't stirred through all the night's activities.

"Isn't he just wonderful, Vincent!"

"Yes," and with a muffled laugh added. "I don't know where he gets his sleeping habits from!"

They turned to each other and kissed, with all their love and desires stirred within them after the evening's events.

Pulling apart reluctantly he asked, "How's Joe?" Vincent caressed her cheek with the back of his hand. "It might have been you stretched out there!"

"Vincent," she could feel his mixed emotions and held his head in her hands as she reached up to kiss him. Slowly she pulled away. "He's going to be sore and out of action for a while, but he's strong and will be back on top before long. Yes, he'll be fine."

"Good," Vincent sighed.

"It's all over with now," she let out a sigh and with her hands either side of his neck, resting on his heavy top, she let them slide up and around to give him a hug. She looked towards the living room. "I had better get back."

He kissed her cheek. "I'll be here, waiting impatiently!" Then he bent and kissed her hand as she left to join the others.

"You okay?" Trevor asked as she came back into the hub of conversation.

"Yes, thanks." She replied, not elaborating on her statement.

"Well Cathy," Trevor gathered all the papers together and folded them into his inside jacket pocket. "I have all the evidence I need thanks to you and Mr. Burch." Smiling at her, she noticed he was younger than she first thought, back in Joe's office. "Tell me something, Cathy, your son, is he safe?" He held his hands in the air. "I'm not going against my earlier promise. I won't ask any questions, but when the ladies mentioned JJ, I put two and two together." He gave a child-like apologetic look. "I'm sorry."

"It's okay, Trevor," she smiled back at him. "Yes, he's safe, thank you."

"Good." He went over to Joe who was about to be taken out by the paramedics, holding his hand. "Get well soon, Joe. I owe you one!"

Joe gave a slight smile and squeezed Trevor's hand. He was reacting to the injections and could hardly keep his eyes open, as he drifted in and out of consciousness.

Diana shook hands with him. "See you around." He nodded at her.

"Bye, Cathy." Diana kissed her cheek. "See you tomorrow?"

"I'll call you." They spoke in lowered voices.

"Fine. Goodnight."

Trevor shut the door behind them and turned to Elliot. "How do you feel about going public on this? I think it would be a form of security."

Elliot thought for a moment. "You mean they would think twice about doing anything to me if it was out in the open - too many know too much, sort of thing."

"Yeah, I honestly think it would work." He looked at Jacqui. "And you could get on with your life; no worries about who's following you, etc. etc."

"I'm not sure about this, Elliot."

"Trust me," Trevor explained. "You will still be under our protection and Elliot can get back to work, doing what he always did and live a normal life."

Cathy came forward. "I think Trevor's right." She turned to Elliot. "Just promise me one thing."

"Anything."

"No more towers!"

"Well, folks. I'm off." Trevor shook both Elliot's and Jacqui's hands before turning to Cathy. "I have this gut feeling we will meet again."

"Trevor, you could be right," and they laughed as he opened the door.

"Thanks."

"Bye, Trevor," and he was gone.

"How about coffee, everyone?" Vincent came out from behind the doors at last and Cathy went to his open arms. They hugged.

"Thanks, Vincent, but I want to get Elliot home," Jacqui turned to help him up. "He needs some medication for his stomach."

"Yeah, thanks. We'll take a raincheck," and he gave a slight grunt as he straightened up.

"Night," Cathy gave them both a kiss on the cheek. "See you."

Leaning on the closed door, she couldn't believe they were alone at last.

"What a night!" She shut her eyes for a moment, but opened them at the sound of running water. She went to the bedroom. "Vincent?"

He came from the bathroom. "Catherine, come here." Again they held each other, then Vincent guided her forward. "Get into that bath, you will feel much better for it."

"Oh Vincent!" but she was too tired to argue, and once in the water she felt the tension and pressures leave her so her weary body could relax in the soothing suds and oils.

"Feeling better?" Vincent asked as he lay on the bed.

"Yes, it is lovely. Thank you for being so thoughtful," and she went and checked on JJ before joining him.

Lying together at last, the events of the day took over and they were both asleep within minutes of hitting the pillows.

Sitting bolt upright, Catherine had to gather herself, then realized it was her alarm. She had been so tired last night she had forgotten to turn it off. Thank God it was Saturday! Turning over she gazed at Vincent. What a special person he was, and how lucky she was to be part of him.

He sensed she was awake and without opening his eyes, he pulled her to him. "Catherine, I love you too," and he smiled into her neck.

"Oh Vincent!" she turned and lay over half of his body, kissing his cheek and moving to his mouth.

Stirring all his emotions, a small groan escaped him before he rolled over and spread himself over her.

She whispered into his ear. "I love you more," and they kissed tenderly and at great length. Then their emotions took over and once again they were one. One body, one mind and completely oblivious to the world around them.

After a shower and getting dressed, Catherine went over to Vincent who was sitting up in bed reading to JJ. She kissed them both and sat beside them.

"He's hungry. I'll give him breakfast while you shower," but neither made a move and they played with him for some time.

Vincent came from the bedroom and sat down at the kitchen table. "How are you feeling today?"

She turned to him and came over to place her arms around his neck. "I feel very special, here with the two people I love and who love me."

Shifting his chair back she sat on his knee. "Catherine, you have been through a lot this past week, but I am sure the worst is now over and we can continue our dream."

Resting her head on his shoulder, she looked over at JJ playing in the high chair. "Vincent, nothing that happens now can affect me the way it did before. You give me so much security, so much love. I have no fear as such and I trust in our bond, our connection to keep us safe." She looked into his beautiful eyes. "I'm yours forever, Vincent, never doubt it."

He bent and kissed her with all the tenderness she had come to love. Their dream was becoming a reality.



## UNEXPLAINED DREAMS

### LOVERS FOUND PART THREE

Lying back on the couch, her feet resting on Vincent's knees as he massaged them, she watched JJ crawling around the floor talking to himself.

A broad happy smile covered her face as she thought of her father, knowing that here and now she was having a *'happy life,'* and how he would have adjusted to Vincent; found happiness not only with his daughter's contentment, but with a future to watch his grandson grow and become a man.

"What makes you smile so, Catherine?"

Turning her gaze on her husband, she told him her thoughts.

"Yes," Vincent watched their son. "Your father would be happy to see us as we are now," and placing her feet back on the floor, he bent towards her and they kissed, as they often did, with tender love and affection.

Parting, Catherine took his face in her hands. "You look tired, Vincent." Then brushing the side of his face with the back of her hand and asked. "Is there any trouble Below?"

Sighing, he pulled back, then taking her hands in his he turned them and kissed her palms. "Not a problem as such, but our plans for more modern equipment in the chambers are causing some minor setbacks."

He smiled, and let his mind wander, thinking of the advantages for them when they would be completed. Once again Catherine had supplied them with items they needed, letting him know in no uncertain terms that she was going to get great benefit from them too, so there was to be no argument.

Vincent had to admit it would be nice to have his own private shower and kitchen areas, all tucked away nearly in a small side chamber.

"Vincent, what are you thinking about, you look miles away."

"Hmmm." He smiled a thoughtful smile.

She came to him, put her arms around his neck and lay her face on his chest, savoring his special fragrance, with eyes closed.

"Don't be so impatient, Vincent," she smiled her secret smile at him and gave his chest a kiss. "We will manage as we are until things are ready."

"I know," he said, taking a breath. "But the thought of you Below for much longer periods of time is my only wish," and as he held her closer, he added, "The sooner, the better."

"Oh Vincent!" She gave him a love slap on his shoulder. "I can spend any amount of time Below, but it's still never going to be enough!" She could hear his muffled laugh. "It's not the place that's the problem here, it's our time with each other."

"Catherine, we spend all the time we can together," he said, watching her. "But even if you were not working and living Below, we still wouldn't have any more time than we do now."

"I know that." She put her hand to his face and traced around it. "But I love you so much." She turned her gaze on his beautiful blue eyes. "Every moment we are apart, you are with me."

"And you with me." Vincent's hand came up and caressed her face. She closed her eyes at his touch and floated away.

He lowered his head and they kissed a hungry kiss, neither wanting to part, but lack of air and their son

looking for attention of his own, forced their hand. Vincent rose and went to rescue him from under the table.

"Well now, young man," he said, speaking to his son. "I think it's time for your bath."

In reply, the infant let out a happy giggly laugh and with great pleasure, pulled his father's hair. "D-a-d-d-y."

"Ow!" Vincent hadn't seen it coming this time.

Catherine laughed too and followed them to the bathroom. It was Saturday night, their night as a family and one spent amid great love and joy.

After testing the water, JJ was submerged and he splashed his heart out. He loved his bath, and with equal love, both Catherine and Vincent took great care not to rush these times. After being dried and powdered they lay a towel down in front of the fire and left him bare, to enjoy the warmth and freedom.

Watching this little miracle, they sat snuggled together, full of happiness and overpowering love, which seemed to vibrate in an unknown force between them.

Breaking the link, Vincent spoke softly into her hair. "You never told me how work was this week." He kissed her head. "Did you have any more trouble with Smith or the case?"

She turned in his arms and looked into his blue, blue eyes. "Compared to last week, this was a breeze!" She let out a soft laugh. "No Vincent, it was hectic, but not enough to worry you about. Besides, you have worries of your own Below, without thinking about my problems," and she snuggled into him to feel his love.

"Did you see Jenny?" he was playing with her earring and running his hand through her hair.

"Yeah, we had lunch yesterday." She shifted to rescue JJ and return him to his towel. "Diana joined us too." She lay back in his arms.

They watched their son planning his next move, knowing they would pounce as soon as he went too far.

"How's Joe recovering?" This time, Vincent went to retrieve the adventurer who had wandered off again. Lifting him gently resulted in an outburst of laughing as the hair on his father's hands tickled his small body - something he seemed to enjoy, like his mother!

"Joe's good." Catherine joined them on the floor. "It was only a flesh wound, and by the time he'd had his blood transfusion he was almost better. He should be back next week."

Lifting her son, she kissed him and hugged him, while thinking. *'Do you know how special you are?'* Then she returned him to his place on the towel and reached for his night things.

Vincent held out his hand. "Let me," he said, coming close. "I was too busy this week and Mary always had him in bed by the time I went to see him." His blue eyes were swimming with emotion.

Catherine handed him the pile of clothes and moved over, not wanting to show her own desires to dress him. They had both had a busy week!

As if he knew her feelings, the infant called. "Mommy," smiled from ear to ear, and held outstretched arms to her. Her heart jumped and she had to bite her bottom lip to hold back swelling emotions.

"He had our bond, Catherine, you know that." Vincent turned to her and kissed her cheek, knowing her feelings.

She placed one arm around his broad shoulder and held JJ's hand as he finished getting him ready. Half an hour later he was fed and lay talking to himself in his cot.

The lights were off, some candles glowed in the darkness and Cathy and Vincent sat on the floor in front of the fire with a glass of white wine. No words were spoken, they were just enjoying the harmony that passed between them. After a while, Vincent read some poetry and time was endless around them.

Eventually, with some soft music in the background, Catherine made coffee and a snack, taken as conversation turned to their plans for Sunday. Coffee finished and their need of each other growing stronger, they went through to bed.

Slipping beneath the sheets they lay in each other's arms, just relaxing and feeling their bodies mingle, stirring feelings that waited to be released.

"It's been a long week, Vincent," Catherine whispered into his neck. "The longest we've been apart since our union."

He kissed her head. "I know. Even the time we did have, was one more measured, like before," he sighed, "but at least we knew that it was a choice we made ourselves and not one forced upon us that's the difference."

Slowly moving upwards, Catherine kissed his face all over, before directing her desires on his waiting mouth.

"Oh Catherine," and his arms encircled her as he rolled over on top of her. "It seems like it has been forever," and kissing her tenderly he raced himself slightly, so not to have too much of his weight on her.

Then he kissed her from the top of her head to the depths of his desires and then returned to her face and lips. She was whimpering with pleasure and the joy he had created within her and could not control her emotions any longer, whispering between gulps of air. "Vincent, your love never leaves me, but now I need more."

"You shall have all I can give," and the sounds of their urgent needs and love lingered in the room long after they were satisfied to exhaustion.

"God, you're wonderful, Vincent." Catherine stretched and turned on her side, face turned up to see his silhouette in the candlelight. "I'll never regret anything that has happened in our time together and pray that we will survive whatever is to come." She sighed into his chest. "I love you."

Vincent found it hard to speak and never could understand what miracle had sent her to him. But now, here with all this love and hope he could want for nothing more. He felt his life was as complete as it could ever be. Lifting his head from the pillow, he held her face in his hands and kissed her as tenderly as was possible.

"I love you beyond everything but time itself," and hugging each other as one, they drifted into peaceful, restful sleep.

They woke early, as JJ was wanting someone to lift him.

Catherine thought how contented he seemed to be and very seldom had he cried. She kissed and cuddled him before leaving him with Vincent as she went to get the water ready for his wash. She stood at the bathroom doorway and watched the two playing on the bed. What a beautiful sight they made. Vincent so big and hairy, JJ so small and smooth, and nothing in the world looked more natural.

Vincent felt her thoughts and looked up to see her watching. JJ feeling her too, rolled over to see his mother, laughing as he did so.

"Come on you two." She lifted JJ to the air before hugging him. 'Big one to the shower, little one to the basin!'"

By the time Vincent had showered and dressed, Catherine had washed and changed their son, ready for Dad to feed him. Then, as they were occupied, she went to have her shower and get ready.

The day passed in complete contentment and as normal as any other family having a Sunday at home.

"Jamie will be here any time now for JJ." Catherine noted as she cleaned up the evening dishes.

"Yes, she loves the chance to take him in the park before going Below and handing him over to Mary." Vincent came and put his arms around her waist, kissing her neck.

"Do you think she and Mouse will ever get together?" Catherine asked Vincent as she turned in his arms.

"They are very close and seem to be tuned into each other's likes and dislikes."

"I think Mouse is very shy when it comes down to things like emotions," Vincent sighed. "He's not had a lot of love in his life."

"Maybe it's time he did," she grinned at him and on tiptoes, kissed his forehead before going over to see to their son.

There was a knock on the door as she came back from the bedroom. Going over, she opened it and smiled. "Come in, Jamie."

She was still unsure of herself in this apartment. "Hi, Cathy." She was dressed for Above and as before, Catherine saw how pretty she was. "Is JJ ready for his walk?"

"I think he knew you were coming." Turning towards the couch, she put an arm around her shoulder. "How's Mouse? I didn't see him last week."

"Oh, he's Mouse," she shrugged as she sat down. "Funny, recently he's been keeping very much to himself."

"Is there something wrong?"

"Well, I don't know. He won't say." She sighed and turned to Vincent as he came in with his son in his arms.

"Will you have a word with him? He trusts you above everyone."

"Of course, but I think perhaps the answer is nearer home." He grinned at Catherine.

She knew what his thoughts were and returned his look with a more sheepish smile.

Jamie looked at them slightly puzzled, then getting up she went to Vincent's side. "Right, Jacob Junior." She lifted him into his buggy. "Time to go, before it gets dark."

"Be careful near the tunnels." Vincent always warned her to be on her guard, in case she was watched. There was too much at stake.

"I will. Please, don't worry." Then turning to the door, added, "See you later tonight."

They kissed their son and said goodbye to Jamie

"Come here, wife!" Vincent teased.

Slowly and with her own form of teasing, she went towards him. Laughing, they hugged each other and Vincent swung her around the room.

"We have a couple of hours before going Below," Catherine said as she ran her hands through his beautiful hair. "But I must see Father. I missed a visit to him this week."

"Yes, I know, he missed you." He let out a quiet laugh. "And for him to admit that is another feather in your cap."

"Oh Vincent," she gave him a loving shove. "You know he's been more than a father to me since the time you were so sick. He feared he had lost us both down there in the lower caves."

"You're right, but I remember how it was," and he let his thoughts wonder back in time, letting out a long sigh as he did so.

"You okay?" she whispered, caressing his face.

"Yes." He kissed her hands. "Just counting my blessings."

"Oh Vincent." She put her arms around his neck and they kissed tenderly, emotions and memories washing over them and within them.

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After calling in on their son, they went to visit Father, who had tea waiting for them.

They talked, laughed and played a game of chess before leaving him. Then it was time for Catherine to return. Above and Vincent went with her to the entrance below her apartment.

"Another week, Catherine," he brushed the hair away from the side of her face. "Time never stands still long enough for us."

"No, it never will." She kissed him, hugged him and turned to go. "Until tomorrow."

He could only nod and watch her leave

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Dropping her bag beside her desk, she sat heavily down on her swivel chair. Allowing herself a secret smile, she stared out the window, going over the last few weeks in her mind. Everything was filled with unbelievable happiness and contentment. JJ was growing so fast and the alterations in the chambers was going well.

A month had passed since Elliot had surfaced and spread chaos and upheaval into their lives once more. On reflection, things had not been as bad as some of the previous occasions their paths had crossed, but it was early days yet!

She let out a long sigh. This week saw the start of the Pope trial and knowing that it was going to be long and drawn out, didn't give her much to look forward to.

A knocking on the door made her swivel back to the desk. "Come in!"

"Busy?" Joe stuck his head through the door first before entering his old office.

"Hi, Joe. What's up?" and holding on to the desk, she pulled herself forward.

Frowning and tapping the file in his hand, he looked at her. "Ready for some '*not-so-nice*' stuff?" and he threw the file down in front of her.

"What's this?" Lowering her gaze she opened the folder, only to have a photo of a badly beaten girl looking back at her. She had to shut her eyes and gather herself before looking at the rest of the file.

Next was a shot of an office building practically destroyed by fire, the third was of a fashion shop interior where piles of clothes had been torn to shreds or burnt.

Catherine could feel a sickness in her gut. Joe nodded at the file. "The girl, Josie Shaw, is unconscious in hospital."

Cathy frowned. "That name sounds familiar, Joe. Do we know anything about her?"

"She's twenty-two and was an assistant in an Estate Agents."

Catherine looked at the photo again, but she couldn't recognize her from that, she was far too badly disfigured. Leaning back in her chair, she repeated the name over and over until it dawned on her, '*Yes!*'

"Joe, that's the girl that helped Jacqui and Elliot with their apartment." She leaned forward. "Remember, Jacqui told us about her."

"Yeah, I'm afraid you're right," and he pointed back at the file and photos. "The next one is of the building, or I should say burnt building and agency where she worked. Number three, the fashion shop...." He let out a grunt, shoved his hands deep into his pockets and went to the window where he separated the slats so he could look out over the buildings. "The shop was one belonging to Jacqui Burch!"

"Oh God, no!" Cathy exclaimed, looking at the photos again before turning to Joe. "Is this what I think it is?"

Slowly nodding his head, he glanced over his shoulder. "Yeah. I think they are trying to put pressure on Elliot through Jacqui and anyone connected to her."

Slamming the file shut, she closed her eyes and fell back into her chair. *'Not again!'*

"How's the girl doing?" She could only manage a whisper, her own memories flashed before her.

"She's bad, broken ribs, dented face and internal damage." he turned from the window to sit on the end of the desk, picked up a rubber band and started pulling it in circles between both hands. "They won't know for a day or two, exactly the full extent of her injuries." The rubber band snapped!

He turned his attention on the file.

"Cathy, you could be in for some of this too." He stared directly at her. "I think you should stay Below for the length of this trial." This was said in a quiet, whispered tone.

"No!" She shook her head. "I'm not going to hide, Joe. I have to come to work!" She sounded a long way away when she spoke.

"I know. I know!" He threw his arms out in front of him. "I mean outside office hours. They can't touch Elliot, so they are going for the people around him!" He sighed. "Cathy, I'm worried."

"Can I come in?"

They hadn't seen her standing at the door.

"Diana." Cathy got up and went to her. "What are you doing here?"

"I'll give you one good guess." She blew Joe a kiss. "The boss sent for me," and she let a half-smile cross her face as she squeezed Cathy's arm.

"Have you anything to go on yet?" Cathy returned to her chair and Diana sat down on the small couch in front of the desk, scanning her notebook.

"Yeah, they've got the thugs already," she sighed. "But they are only the leg breakers. We want the head hunter, but he must have done his job well. They never saw him, everything was done by mail or phone." She got up and stood beside Joe. They exchanged a meaningful glance, but they respected the fact they were at work and it was lost in the moment. "We feel it's got to be Pope behind all this, but how do we prove it?"

Catherine got up and went to the window. Slowly she copied the actions of Joe a short time before, but lingered longer, trying to fathom out what should be done for the best. Joe and Diana waited, they knew she was going over things and would not rush her decision.

"Are Jacqui and Elliot safe?" She turned to face them.

"They are well-protected. Trevor is seeing to that." Diana spoke as she came round the desk. "Cathy, perhaps Joe is right. You should stay with Vincent until this is over." However, Diana knew Cathy better.

She allowed herself a smile, then letting out a deep breath replied, "I know that you are worried about me, and I love you both, but any place should be here where I can do the most good. You know that!"

Joe slammed the top drawer of the filing cabinet shut, making both women jump. "And how much help will you be if they get to you!" He was angry, but underneath his anger, the truth was, she would not be moved and was probably right.

"Joe, Joe!" Cathy came to him. "Okay, I'll live Below, but I am still going to come to work!"

"Huh!" *'Would she ever give in?'*

Diana came forward. "Joe, I have been put on this case. Why not let us work together." She looked deep into his eyes, testing him.

"Okay, okay! But you stick to her like glue!" He reached for the door. "And don't go anywhere or follow any tip-off without me, or Trevor being told!"

"Yes, Boss." Diana tried to make light of a very awkward situation.

Joe slammed the door, then re-opened it, his head the only part to be seen. "I'm serious, Diana. Nothing over the top, okay!"

She nodded, understanding his worry.

Catherine sighed and closed her eyes, trying to relax and get her thoughts straightened out. *'Oh Vincent! We saw this coming, didn't we!'* She smiled at the mere thought of him.

"Vincent, ha?" Diana saw her features change and was almost sure she knew why.

Smiling openly at her, Catherine rose from her chair. "Yes." Then reaching for her coat said, "See you back here in an hour or so."

"Okay, but no longer, or I'll come searching!"

They briefly held hands and without another word Catherine left the office, knowing only that she had to see Vincent, to be near him, confide in him, hold him.

Getting out of the lift she had a sensation of being watched, then as she started to walk towards the taxi stand, the feeling of being followed was an overpowering one.

She walked on past the taxi stand and around the next corner, trying to see if her suspicions were at all founded. Looking the best she could, she wasn't sure. Maybe it was all in her mind, working overtime. She turned away from the shop window and looked for another taxi. *'Damn it! You can never get one when you need one!'*

Frustrated and fed up, she couldn't wait any longer and started the walk to the park.

She crossed over the road and stopped to buy a paper, checking to see which one to take. She could feel someone close behind her. Turning to see, she was restrained and had to turn back.

"Please don't turn around, Mrs Wells. I won't harm you."

"What do you want?"

"Just to warn you. If Pope makes it to trial, think twice before you carry on with the case. We believe you have a young family. If you wish your son to have a healthy life, please think twice!"

Holding her breath, her mind in overdrive, she swung around, but there was nobody there - not a single person.

"You gonna read that or buy it, lady?"

She handed over the money and went as quickly as she could to Vincent.

Vincent came back from the nursery, still with a contented smile on his face. *'Oh, how happy could a man be?'* For he was now more at peace than he had ever prayed, or dreamed, let alone hoped for.

"Vincent," Father turned as he entered the chamber. "Is all well with your family?"

"Yes, thank you, Father," and placing a hand on the older man's shoulder, he bent and gave him a fleeting kiss on his temple.

"Yet you miss her already?" he said, watching his son over the glasses perched on the end of his nose.

"There is trouble in her thoughts. She has the trial starting this week, and I sense she is greatly worried." He sighed. "Not talking about it is her way of trying to prevent my worry, but I know it's strength within her and that worries me."

Father reached out a hand and tenderly held his son's in his. "Vincent, you know her better than she knows herself, and your connection has been your savior." He pushed back into his chair. "Trust in it now, and her."

Just as he was about to speak, Mouse came quietly into the room.

"Is that you, Mouse?" Father turned to the figure at the top of the stairs. "Are you all right?" It wasn't like him to be so quiet.

"Fine, Mouse fine." This was not the usual enthusiastic person they knew. Vincent threw a worried look at Father who in turn, shrugged his shoulders.

"Vincent, Mouse needs to talk." He looked down at the floor. "Your chamber."

"Of course, Mouse." He climbed the stairs. "I'll be back, Father."

"Yes, yes, when you're ready," and he returned his attention to his desk, but his thoughts wandered. *'Mouse could be in for something!'*

Vincent sat in his huge chair, watching the younger, lost person standing restless in front of him. "Mouse? Is there something that worries you?"

He threw his hands in the air and began walking up and down, back and forwards. Vincent sat watching him for some time, then....

"It's Jamie!" He stopped in his tracks, clutching his hands. "She's changed, watching JJ make her more.... more...."

"More like Catherine?" Vincent whispered.

"Yes, more like your Catherine!" He spoke very quietly.

Vincent came to his friend and put an arm around his shoulders.

"It's the baby, Mouse. Looking after my son has made some of her inner feelings come to the surface." He tried his best to explain. "She's a woman, like Catherine and has the same needs and wants as other women, only we have not noticed this in her before. Jamie has always been Jamie, and none of us saw her grow to the woman she is now." He let out a long sigh. "Do you miss her?"

"Yes." It was a simple reply, but full of feeling. Mouse looked at his friend. "Mouse is lost sometimes." He thrust his hands deep into his pockets. "Don't understand why."

"Do you want to be with her?" Vincent tried to choose his words with care. "Could you be in love with her?"

"Love? Mouse never knew love, Vincent!"

"Maybe now you do!" He smiled at the forlorn figure. "Why not try and tell her your feelings. It might help you both."

After some thought, Mouse spoke. "Okay, good. Okay, fine." He sounded more like his old self and scurried out without another word, or a look at Vincent.

Going back to his desk, he opened his journal - one of the ones Catherine had given him - and started to fill it in, bringing things up to date. Just as he was about to put his pen to the page, it happened; the connection was working overtime again. He smiled at how they could reach each other this way, but his smile soon turned to a frown as he realized that Catherine was in confusion and worried to distraction.

*'It's only halfway through the morning, what can be causing her such pain?'* It had to be from her world, as their own existence was pure heaven, and when she left him last night they were as complete and whole as they could be.

There it was again. Catching his breath, he read her feelings and getting up from his desk, he reached for his cloak and left the chamber.

"Vincent?" Father was coming towards him. "How was ..."



"Sorry, Father. Catherine needs me," and calling over his shoulder, added. "I won't be long.

Father threw his hands in the air. *'What is going on here? Nobody seems to have time to talk to me any more!'* Sulking a little, he returned to his chamber only to find Mary waiting for him.

"Father? Are you all right?" Mary frowned.

"Yes, yes." He glanced past her, then he returned her gaze. "Yes, thank you, Mary. Can I help you?"

"It's one or two of the children. They have developed some sort of rash. It could be off the new puppies Geoffrey rescued." She sighed and slapped her hands to her sides, her frustration showing through.

"All right, Mary." He gathered up his bag. "I'll come right away." He thought to himself. *'There are still some who need me!'* And he allowed himself a secret smile.

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Catherine was just arriving at the tunnel entrance when she felt his presence sweep through her. All of a sudden, she was lifted from her depression and thought only of Vincent.

Running to be near him, she nearly knocked him over in her eagerness to be held by him.

"Oh, Vincent!" She cried and flew into his arms.

"Catherine, Catherine," he sighed into her hair. "I'm here, tell me what's wrong?"

She explained in detail the events that happened both at the office and on her way to meet him.

"Vincent, I'm not frightened. I know nobody can get to JJ here. It's only a threat to scare me off the case."

"Catherine, I'm not so sure."

"Vincent, if I don't help Diana to clear this up, it will go on and on." She pushed her hands out in front of her before letting them drop to her sides.

Leaning against the tunnel wall, Vincent asked. "Have you any idea who's involved, and is there a link with Elliot?" He turned to her, his blue eyes clouded with worry. He knew his wife; how strong-willed she was and trying to talk her out of this would cause more trouble than trying to help her with it.

She shook her head, her hair swinging around. "No. Diana and I are going over this afternoon to see Jacqui and Elliot." She sighed and went to his arms once more, hugging him close. She shut her eyes long enough to block out everything except Vincent.

He felt her tension subside slowly and was aware of her complete love for him seeping through all her turmoil, and knew she was more relaxed now, and easier in her mind.

Pulling back and turning her face to him, they kissed a tender, emotional kiss, sealing their connection once again.

"I must go back," she whispered.

"Catherine, remember I am always near, and will keep you as safe as I can." He let out a deep frustrated sigh. "Don't take any risk, promise me this!"

Brushing hair from his face, she smiled a radiant love-filled smile. "Vincent, I have too much to lose to take risks!" and reaching up, kissed his cheek. "I'll collect some things from the apartment on my way home and join you as soon as I can!"

"Take care, Catherine." He kissed her and watched her leave, then turned back to join Father.

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"You're late! I was just going to send out a search party," Diana smiled up at Cathy as she shut the office door

behind her.

"Very funny!" She reached to answer the phone as she came around the desk, giving Diana a shove to vacate her chair. "Catherine Wells, hello."

"Cathy! You okay?"

"Jenny! I thought you were going away this week!"

"I am, but I had one of my dreams last night." She sighed. "Sorry, Cathy. But I couldn't go away without telling you."

Quietly she asked. "What is it this time, Jenny?"

"I think it's Vincent or someone near to you. It was all very blurred." She took a deep breath. "Whatever you do, keep them away from the park. It all seemed to take place there."

"I can't do that!" She looked at the phone and glanced over at Diana who was going over a file she had in her hand. "Are you sure, Jen?"

"Cathy, I'm never sure. It just scares me to hell that I have these things!" She heard the sigh at the other end of the phone. "But Cathy, there was a bit of difference to this one, I can't explain it, but it didn't scare me. It frightened me, but I was more confused than anything else." The line went dead. "Cathy? Cathy?"

"Yes, I'm still here, Jen."

"I could be wrong, but do me a favour, take care, for an old friend." She let out a strained laugh. "Amuse me!"

Catherine returned her laugh and smiled at the phone. "Have a good trip, Jen. Let's have dinner when you get back, okay?"

"Okay, Cathy. Goodbye."

"Bye, Jenny."

"What was all that about?" Diana looked amused and Catherine tried to explain Jenny's dreams. "And this one, is there any connection?"

Catherine shrugged her shoulders and leaned back in her chair. She decided to leave it alone.

"It's nothing, she seemed unable to explain its meaning or reason. I think the best thing to do is forget it."

"Right then." Diana picked up her bag. "Let's go. We can see Pope before we go over to Elliot's."

"Pope? How did you manage that so quick?" Cathy asked, grabbing her coat and briefcase.

"Joe and Trevor organized it between them." She smiled and winked as she opened the door for them. "It helps to know the boss." Sharing the joke they left the office, both well aware of the task ahead and all the problems that came with it.

"Diana," Cathy spoke quietly as they travelled downtown. "Promise not to tell Joe, but I was warned off the case today!" A frown covered her face.

"When?" Diana watched her. "Are you okay?"

"Yes. I'm fine and I'm not frightened. If anything, it's made me more determined than ever!"

Telling her about the warning, she had to smile.

"You know Diana, if JJ was living Above, I would be paranoid by now! But the knowledge that he's safe helps me control the fear and handle this threat for all that it is."

"Somehow I don't think they would go that far anyway, Cathy." She looked for a parking place. "I'm sure it's designed only to scare the hell out of you, but they have once more underestimated the lady they are dealing

with!"

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"Well, hello ladies." Pope bowed to them as he came in.

"Clever we don't need!" Diana was going to start as she intended to go on. "So, unless you have anything of interest to say, we have more important things to do!"

"Okay, okay, don't push - all right!" He turned to face Cathy. "Mrs Wells, if I tell you what you want to know, how will it help me in this case?"

Catherine looked him right in the eye. She had no fear of this man and she wanted him to know it. "It's up to you. How much you tell and if it's what we need, we can help, but it's a two-way street and nobody gets something for nothing!"

He watched this woman. She was not afraid of him and it seemed her determination was not to be matched. "When I talk, it's going to be everything; no half measures, but the lot!"

"All right, Mr. Pope. If you do that, I can promise to do everything in my power to assist you." Cathy opened up her briefcase and handed Diana the manila folder she took out.

He had this feeling that if there was any one person he could trust, this was she. Her strength amazed him, as he was well aware of what she had suffered because of Gabriel.

"Mrs Wells, it may not be much, but I guarantee I will give you what you want."

"Fine. I'll send someone down first thing in the morning to get your deposition."

"NO!" The guards came closer. "You, or nothing." He was pushing, but he had to.

"All right, Mr. Pope." Cathy glared at him.

He sat down again and Diana threw the file with the photos down in front of him. He looked up, puzzled.

"Look at them," Diana growled at him.

He jerked his head up, remembering this was not a lady to trifle with. "Nothing to do with me," he sniffed, uneasy in his chair. "But I had heard about it on the grapevine."

"You're not involved in this?" Catherine's voice was sharp but not severe.

"Strange as it may seem, but no."

Diana leaned over the table and breathed over him. "But you do know who was, don't you?"

"Maybe." He wiped his face with his sleeve. "Maybe not."

"What the hell is that supposed to mean? Diana was getting impatient and pulled back from him, throwing her arms in the air.

"Okay, okay." He turned to Cathy and for the first time she could see this man was afraid. Afraid for his life.

"Mrs Wells," he sighed. "Whoever did this was well aware that your first reactions would be to assume I was the contractor. I give you my word, I'm not."

"We need a name here." Diana was leaning over his shoulder. "We have to have a connection."

He cleared his throat. "Try looking at Hanover Norton Trust," he whispered.

Diana threw a look at Cathy, but her face never flickered, never altered. He shifted in his chair again feeling most uncomfortable. Letting out a deep sigh, he rubbed his forehead with the arm of his sleeve. He was not dressed to his approval, he thought, distracted for a brief moment.

"Mr Pope," Cathy's voice took him back. "Are you sure you can't help us on this?"

He could at last see a sign in her eyes. She believed him, he knew. Should he risk telling this extra bit of information? Slowly he rose from his hard chair, then bringing his eyes level with hers, he spoke.

"Arthur, Mr. Lewis Arthur. He was involved with Patrick Hanlon before he gave over the notebook and got himself killed. You find him, you'll find a lot of things." He spoke very quietly.

Catherine held out her hand for him to shake, which he did, after a slight hesitation. "Thank you." Cathy nodded at Diana and they left without another word.

They travelled in silence until they pulled up outside Elliot and Jacqui's.

"Cathy, I've given you long enough." Diana reached out and touched her arm. "You recognized that name, didn't you?"

Slowly Cathy turned to face her friend and working partner, trying hard to form some kind of smile.

"Come on, give." Diana was insistent.

"He used to work for Elliot!" She closed her eyes and leaned back on the head rest. "Well, Elliot employed his firm of lawyers, but it was Arthur that did his dealings."

"God no!" Diana followed Cathy's example and slumped backwards, thinking. *'Do all roads lead to Elliot Burch?'*

"It was some time ago," Cathy's voice was faint. "We were close then. I thought I loved him." Her eyes still shut, she let out a harsh short laugh. "But Elliot was not what he seemed, and it all fell apart."

"Yes, Joe told me." Diana turned to her. "That was the time they tried to get rid of the old folk from their buildings, wasn't it?"

Slowly turning, another sigh escaped. "Yes, but I don't know what happened to Arthur at that time." She opened her eyes and looked at her friend.

"One thing's for sure." Shaking her head, she took the car keys from the ignition before reaching for her bag. "Sitting here isn't going to solve anything."

"No! You're right!" Catherine pulled herself back to the present and they both headed for the Burch apartment.

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Mouse returned to his chamber and talking to his raccoon, he found himself still restless. He touched this and fiddled with that and went from one end of his chamber to the other. Jamie was there, in his thoughts, all the time. Why did he stay away from her, when he liked to be around her, share things, ideas with her? She never teased him like the others.

"Mouse," Jamie came in quietly. "Mouse, we need to talk." Recently returned from having a walk with JJ, she was still dressed for Above. Now she had caught him off guard; shuffling his feet in a circular motion, hands thrust deep into his trousers, he couldn't seem to lift his head to look at her. "Mouse?" Her voice was soft and almost a whisper. He could feel a welling in his eyes.

Slowly he lifted his gaze and was taken aback to see how close she was. He had a lump in his throat and words wouldn't come. He tried, but nothing happened. Thinking, *'Not like Mouse,'* he shut his eyes, afraid of her next move.

Jamie could see the complete confusion written all over his scared face. Her heart melted as she looked at him. She didn't know exactly when their friendship had developed into love, but there was no doubt in her mind, that was now the barrier between them.

It was a barrier that worried her, even frightened her. Jamie knew she was going to have to make the first

move. Slowly, deliberately, she went to him and put her hands out for him to hold. Painfully, as he raised his head once more to look directly at her, he withdrew his hands from their hiding place and closed them gently, over hers. Then surprising them both, he bent and kissed her left hand, before bringing it up to rest on his cheek, again shutting his eyes. Jamie could feel herself going weak at the knees, then she felt the warm wetness on her hand as the pent-up emotions could stay hidden within him no longer. The tears dropped gently. She freed her right hand and reached out to wipe away the tell-tale signs of his feelings.

Her touch was like a electric shock to his system and his eyes flew open.

Mouse's mind was like a kaleidoscope whirling at top speed. *'Trust your heart,'* Vincent had told him. *'Follow your feelings, remember, Jamie is new to these emotions as well, you can learn to cope with them together.'* He lifted his hands and held her face, so gently she could hardly feel them, then with an awkward grace pulled her to him for their first kiss. Short and fleeting, but a kiss nevertheless and it resulted in them falling into a loving embrace.

"Oh, Mouse." Now Jamie could not control her tears.

Pulling back, just enough to watch her, Mouse said. "Please, don't cry," and brushing away the tear drops, he let a small sheepish smile cross his face. "Love you, Jamie." He had never said that to anyone before and it felt wonderful.

She shut her eyes and dropped her head on his shoulder, letting him hold her close until the tears were spent and she could speak.

"I love you too," was all she was able to say, but they needed no words now, for both of them had come to this crossroads together, and would carry on down the road they chose as one.

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"Come on in." Elliot opened the door wide for them. "Jacqui will be back through in a moment, she's making coffee."

He looked tired, drained and worried; there was no familiar sparkle in his eyes. "How did you get on with Pope?"

Cathy turned to face him as she lay her coat over the back of the couch. "Who told you we were going to see him?"

Diana threw a knowing look in her direction. "Joe phoned to check on you; said I was to let him know when you arrived." He let a smile creep over his whole face. "Not more secrets, are there, Cathy?"

"Ha, ha!" and she smiled back, as they shared an old joke.

*'No,'* she thought. *'There are no secrets now.'* And her whole being went out to Vincent and their son. *'Soon, I'll be home soon.'*

"Cathy, hi!" Jacqui, coming in with the coffee, brought her back to the present.

"Hi," she smiled. "How are you feeling?"

She shrugged her shoulders. "We'll see it through."

"Good," and Cathy squeezed her hands.

Diana turned to Elliot. "Can I use the phone? Better call Joe and put him in the picture."

"Yes, but not that one." He smiled his dimple smile. "It's been bugged!"

Pushing her hair back from her forehead, she was glad to see him pulling a mobile phone from his briefcase. "Here, use this."

"Thanks, Elliot." She looked over at Cathy. "You had better tell him."

"Tell me what?" He turned. "Cathy, what?"

"It's just a hunch.... a tip if you like." She took a deep breath. "But our information is that a Mr. Lewis Arthur is behind these recent scare-monger tactics."

"Lewis Arthur!" Jacqui looked puzzled. "Should we know him?"

For some reason, Catherine could feel herself going red and trying to avoid both Jacqui and Elliot's gaze, she again remembered the first time she had seen Arthur. It had also been the first meeting with Elliot and the memories were still very strong.

Elliot also felt a little bit on the uncomfortable side and rose from his seat on the couch. Hands in pockets, he paced around a while, then rubbing his forehead and shutting his eyes, he tried to decide where to start. Explaining her - like Cathy - could remember their first meeting and the offshoots from it still stirred him inside, knowing the outcome!

"He - ah - he was involved with a few holding companies I had dealings with and in particular an apartment block development that went.... Well, let's just say it didn't develop!" With this, he looked at Cathy for the first time, and noticed she was affected by this also.

Returning to the couch, he dropped heavily onto it and rested his head on Jacqui's arm. "I fired him after that misadventure and have had no dealings with him since."

Catherine made a move for the first time and in a quiet voice, asked. "Elliot, can you see where there could be a connection here?"

He frowned, finding it heavy-going, and the effort was telling. Suddenly he sat up, remembering something. "Wait a minute. I have a feeling someone somewhere mentioned he went to work for Hanover Trust."

Cathy nodded. "That sounds about right, and we should be able to find his involvement there."

Elliot was sitting forward on the couch now, with his hands outstretched. "Cathy, let me try. I will have connections..."

Jacqui put out a hand to restrain his enthusiasm and Diana, who had been watching from the sidelines, jumped in before Catherine could answer.

"I'm sorry, Elliot." She looked from him to Jacqui. "But Joe wants you to do nothing! Keep clean and no interests with this whatsoever!" She smiled. "At least until after the trial."

"All right. Okay." Then he looked directly at Cathy. "But let me know if there's anything that ..."

She smiled and nodded, knowing he was sharing her memories.

Diana got up and standing in front of them stated. "Just keep a low profile and out of the limelight for the next few weeks and you should be home safe."

Cathy rose from her seat and looked at Diana. "We had better get back and report in." They shared a laugh as they could visualize Joe's worried face.

"What's the joke?" Jacqui asked.

"Oh! Just Joe doing his '*over-protective-boss*' bit!" and Cathy grabbed her coat as they headed for the door.

Elliot and Jacqui came to the door with them and Cathy noted how content they were. Arm in arm, they fitted well together.

"Bye. Take care."

"Thanks. See you," and Cathy and Diana returned to the office.

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Both were deep in conversation as they re-entered the office, and were caught off guard when Joe called to them.

"About time you two showed!" He was not pleased. With hands shoved deep into his pockets, he glared from one to the other.

"Joe!" Diana was getting annoyed with him. "For God's sake, we are trained for situations like this. It's our job, so don't treat us with kid gloves!" She went around the desk to him. "The only difference here is that we know Cathy just might be in danger." She leant over the desk at him. "We have been through a hell of a lot worse, and will be again, but don't let our personal involvement cloud our judgement!"

"Diana ..."

"No, Joe!"

All this time, Catherine had been leaning against the open doorway, watching.

"Joe! Diana!" They turned to face her. "When you two have finished, there's someone here to see you."

Glancing over her shoulder, they saw the figure of Trevor Smith.

Coming through the door, he sat at the desk. "Good help's hard to find, Joe!" and he smiled a broad happy smile, relieving the tension that had been building up.

"Okay, okay!" Joe let out a sigh. "I worry, that's all."

Rita came from the computer with a bundle of sheets, full of information and references to Mr. Lewis Arthur. The four of them gathered around the pile of notes and worked their way through them, each taking a handful of pages.

"Well!" Catherine sighed. "He's been a busy boy." She tapped the pile in front of her with the end of her pencil. "Since Elliot had him fired, he's climbed not only the professional ladder, but the social one, too!"

"Yeah." Trevor gave her his notes. "And I think they are all connected to Hanover or Norton."

Both Diana and Joe agreed.

Joe checked his watch. "It's late, guys. Let's call it a night and we'll get an early start tomorrow." He looked at Trevor, then at Cathy, watching how he phrased his question. "Vincent, he home tonight?"

She smiled back at him. "Yes, Joe. I'll be fine. We're staying with friends for a few days."

Trevor, unaware of the double meanings in these remarks, agreed. "Good idea, Cathy. As an extra precaution, it won't do any harm."

Cathy nodded towards the desk. "Joe's idea, he worries!" She laughed as she rose and went to collect her coat.

"Very funny, Radcliffe!" he replied, waving a finger at her.

"Don't you two start!" Diana came over and put her arm through Joe's. "Let's go home!" she smiled up at him.

"Right, everyone, here first thing," Joe said, his job taking over once more. "We've a lot of digging to do." He turned to Trevor. "If we get enough from Pope tomorrow, could we move on Arthur? At least, pull him in."

"That's more your department, Joe. But I'll work in with anything you need."

"Pope, is he safe?" Joe realized he hadn't taken out extra protection for him after Diana had phoned.

"His kind are never safe, not when they are going to talk." Getting up, he put on his jacket. "Somehow, someone always finds out, but if it makes you happy, I'll go over first thing and get a new statement." He

turned. "Will you come, Cathy? He seems to have some sort of faith in you!"

"Yeah, I'll come. I was going over later anyway."

And with that arranged, they all left, knowing what was ahead tomorrow.

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Catherine got a taxi from the office to her apartment to collect some things for the next few days.

By the time she got there, she had decided to take a quick shower first. Half an hour later she was ready; showered, hair washed, bag packed and wearing jeans and a sweater. Grabbing her overnight things and her briefcase, she headed for the door.

'*What's this?*' she thought, as there on the floor was a big brown envelope, and she hadn't noticed it when she came in. Shrugging her shoulders, she thought it must be from Joe; something he had remembered after she left, so instead of reading it there and then, she shoved it in the inside pocket of her briefcase and gently shut the door behind her as she finally headed '*home*' to Vincent and her son.

He was waiting for her as she reached the bottom of the ladder and lifted her into his arms. They kissed before they spoke a word, and all their day's frustrations melted away.

"Hi," she smiled at him as he eventually lowered her to the floor.

He smiled back, with a wicked twinkle in his eyes. "Come, Jamie and Mouse are babysitting until we get back, and dinner is ready." He put his head to one side as he lifted her case with one hand, and took hers with the other.

"Jamie and Mouse? Vincent, don't tell me you managed to play Cupid already!" And she pulled back from him slightly, tilting her head as she did.

"Not exactly." He pulled her to him and kissed her head. "I showed Mouse how to make the bow and he fired the arrows!"

"Well, good for him." She smiled and felt almost light-hearted after the day she had just had.

"Yes, they appear to be very happy," and pulling her by the hand added. "Come, we should hurry."

JJ let out a happy greeting when he saw his mother and father coming into the chamber.

"Hello, young man." Catherine lifted her son into her arms, kissed his cheek and held him close. "How were you today? Have you behaved for Jamie and Mouse?"

Looking into her eyes, matching their sparkle, he grinned and gurgled as if to say, '*I had a great time.*'

"I can't thank you enough. It was good of you to watch him for us," she smiled at Jamie and Mouse.

"We loved it, Cathy, anytime." They held hands and, saying goodbye, went off with eyes only for each other.

"They seem happier, Vincent," Cathy turned to face him and put their son in his bouncy seat, smiling at them both.

"Yes, it's special, being in love," and he pulled her to him and they once more kissed, with their son letting out sounds of joy and laughter.

Pulling apart, Vincent said, "Come, let's have something to eat," and he held out a chair for her.

They chatted and ate happily, and when they had finished, Cathy groaned and went to her briefcase.

"Catherine, not tonight, surely?" Vincent watched as she started to put papers on the desk.

Looking at him, she told him all that had passed that afternoon. "Vincent, there are one or two things I want to go over, so I have brought the readouts on Arthur home, that's all. It won't take long." She dropped the case



down beside his desk and went to him. "The sooner I start, the sooner I'll be finished." Smiling, she kissed his cheek.

"It won't take long?" He repeated, his head on one side, as if to enforce his feelings that he wanted her to rest, not spend time working.

"I promise," she replied, her hand covering her heart.

"Then I will take JJ to say goodnight to his grandfather, and when I return ..."

"Vincent, I'll be finished!"

"HMMMMM." And lifting an excited little boy, they left her to her pile of papers.

Going quickly through the ones she had seen at the office, she turned her attention to the group that Joe and Diana had had. *'There's something here, I can feel it,'* she told herself, and her instincts were more often right than not.

She was about ready to give up when one name came flying out of the page at her. Tom Gunther. "Oh God, no!" she gasped and held her hand over her mouth, then shut her eyes. *'Tell me I'm wrong,'* she told herself, then went back to read the page again, her hand still over her mouth, shaking slightly.

*'Yes, Tom Gunther.'* It was mentioned in several pages. Flicking through the rest, she picked it out in connection all over the files.

She was sitting, staring at the pile of papers when Vincent came back.

"JJ fell asleep on Father's lap." He tenderly placed him in his cot. "He was reading him a story when..." Vincent turned to her, realizing that she was unaware he had even come into the room. Going over to her, he gently placed his hand on her shoulder.

"Catherine, are you all right?"

All of a sudden, as she came out of her trance-like stare, he could feel such a mixture of emotions within her, looking up into her face, he could see the tears slowly running down her cheeks, and a small sob came from some hidden depth.

"Vincent, hold me, please."

"Oh, Catherine. Catherine," and he held her to him, and there they stayed for some time.

Slowly, very slowly, she finally came to grips with her emotions, and pulling back from Vincent, said. "I love you," and kissed his beautiful worried eyes.

He rose from the floor and pulled her with him to sit on the couch in front of the fire. He had changed a lot of the furniture since they married. With Catherine down here as much as in her apartment, it seemed right to have some home comforts, and the soft leather blended in.

"Catherine, you must stop your work on this now," he bent down and kissed her eyes, which were shut. "I'm very concerned the way it's affecting you."

"Oh, Vincent," she turned into his chest. "I think I have finally found the missing link. The one thing that has been niggling at the back of my mind." She sighed deeply and he increased his grip on her. "I always felt there was more than we could see, someone else that pulled the strings, and now!" She lay back from him so as to look into his beautiful eyes, eyes slightly clouded with worry.

He lifted a hand and caressed her face, brushing away the last sigh of fallen tears. "And now?" He spoke quietly, and with concern.

"Now I have come across a name that could be the link to Arthur, Pope and back to the notebook." She rose from the couch and flicked the pages on the desk. "His name is Tom Gunther."

"Do you know this man?" Vincent came and stood beside her, putting his arms around her waist so she could feel the love he had for her.

She turned to him and put her arms around his neck; kissed him deep and long before putting away and leading him back to the couch. Vincent sat with his back to the end and Catherine beside him, put her feet under her and sitting side on, he took his hands in hers.

Taking a deep breath, she tried to fill in some of the gaps for him, to help him understand why she was so distressed at this latest discovery.

"The night you found me, Vincent, I had been to a fund-raising evening with a man I had been spending a lot of time with." She sighed openly and rose from her seat. "He had been one of my father's biggest clients and over a period of time, I had somehow just slotted in where he wanted - but then I couldn't see life any different."

She was at the back of the couch, and arms outstretched, she hugged Vincent and kissed the back of his head before pulling back and going on.

"The man I was with was Tom Gunther, and he was trying to raise money for his latest building venture." Turning to sit on the end of the desk, she looked up at the roof of the chamber. "We had a disagreement and I left on my own, and that's when I was mistaken for Carol and.... well, you know what happened then." She shut her eyes.

Vincent came and sat at the desk, then taking her hands, he pulled her down on to his knees, holding her close. He could feel her body and mind were hurting at these memories, yet at the same time he knew he had to let her go on, let her get it all out in the open, for her, he stayed silent.

"After I returned Above and had come out of hospital, I did see him again, but only to finish with him." She gave a small, muffled laugh. "He didn't understand how I had changed, and for a while he wouldn't accept it." She let out a deep breath. "At the time, I didn't think him a very compassionate person. Perhaps there were a lot of other things I would have noticed if I had bothered to look." She lifted her head and gently stroked his face and let a smile come to hers. "The I started work at the DA's office and a new wonderful life with you in it, Vincent." She kissed her forehead. "I dread to think what I would have become without you."

She nestled into his arms. "I love you as much as it is possible to love any living being, Vincent, never doubt that."

He had been silent throughout her explanation, and now he just lifted her in one movement and took her to their bed, then as he lay her down, he tenderly kissed her. Seeing how drained she was, he didn't go any further with his affections.

"Get undressed and have an early night. If you don't, I'll have to go for Father!"

She could see the amusement in his eyes and also knew he was deeply worried about her.

"No! Not that!" she replied, trying to match his attempted humour, and started getting out of her clothes. "Are you coming?" she whispered.

"Not just yet." He bent and kissed her gently on the lips. "You rest, I'll join you before long."

Shedding her other garments, she glanced at their sleeping son, and then watching Vincent putting his things away, she slid into a restless sleep.

Vincent turned to watch her, he had sensed she was asleep and felt her restless state. *'It's going to be a long night for her,'* he thought, then turned his attentions back to filling Catherine's case. How she managed to carry this around he would never know! He was about to close it when he noticed some papers on the floor. Bending to pick them up, he knocked over the case and its contents scattered everywhere. He groaned aloud and then set about picking everything up.

"Vincent?" The noise disturbed her.

Going to her side, he apologized. "I'm sorry, Catherine." He touched her face. "I didn't intend to wake you."

"What happened?" She was sleepy.

"Your briefcase fell off the desk." He looked like a guilty child.

"Pass me my gown, I'll sort it out quicker than you!"

He reached for the white wrap-around, trying to resist what was uppermost on his mind, every time he laid his eyes on this beautiful woman.

"Now, now, Vincent," she smiled at his thoughts.

He laughed quietly and squeezed her hand. As tired as she was, she still had a strong connection with his thoughts.

"Yes, well!" and as she sat on the floor, sorting everything out into piles, she came across the envelope shoved unopened into her case earlier on.

"I forgot about this," and she lifted it to show Vincent.

"What is it?" He joined her on the floor.

"I don't know! I found it pushed under my apartment door and thought it was from Joe."

"There is only one way to find out," he stated the obvious.

She opened the end and shook out the contents. Some photos and a note attached fell in front of them.

Vincent gathered them up before Catherine could, and from the floor as he looked at them. "The note! What does it say?" He swung around as he spoke.

Slowly, Catherine rose to stand beside him.

"It's.... ummm, it's from Arthur," she said, trying to clear her throat. She went on in a whisper.

*"These were to be sent to you as a threat, but as I have come into some information that may be of interest to you. I am willing to do an exchange. The negatives; a promise of no more violence and what information I have for my freedom and protection.*

*If you are interested, contact me at the number below, tonight.*

*Arthur"*

"Let me see them, Vincent."

He handed the photos and there, looking back at her was JJ playing in the park. There were two of her and JJ, and one of Jamie, her and JJ.

"Oh God!" She inhaled deeply, holding her breath.

"Catherine." He pulled her backwards and encircled her with his powerful arms. "Catherine."

She shook from head to toe, but for only a moment, and she managed to pull herself together, then turned in his safe hold to put her arms around his waist.

"I have to go, Vincent." She looked into his face before he threw his head back in pure frustration.

"No!" He was not going to give in this time.... or so he thought.

"Vincent," she held his face in her hands. "Look at me."

Lowering his head, he did as she asked.

"Vincent, if Father will watch JJ, you can come with me." She waited for him to react. "I'll go to the apartment and use the phone there, make arrangements to meet Arthur." She was holding his hands now. "Vincent, it can be here, in the park where we are safe." She held her breath, waiting. She needed him and his approval to succeed.

"Oh, Catherine!" This was said with complete surrender, and she went to get dressed.

Once Father was comfy by the fire, Cathy put on her jacket and Vincent, his cloak.

"Cathy," Father motioned her over. "Take great care out there." He nodded to the cot. "He needs both his mother and father!"

She kissed his cheek. Once it would have upset her, but knowing him as she did now, she realized it was only worry for them that made him say what he did.

"We will try not to be too long, Father," and Vincent squeezed the older man's shoulder as she left.

"Take care, Vincent."

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Vincent was on the balcony waiting before Catherine came through the door. She quickly let him in and went to the phone, dialed the number and waited.

"Mrs. Wells?" Something familiar about this voice told her it was Arthur.

"Yes."

"Do you agree to my conditions?"

"I can only guarantee your protection. I don't have the authority to say you will not be charged. I can do everything to try and prevent it, but only Joe Maxwell, the DA has that kind of pull."

"Can you - would you - trust him enough to bring him in on this, Mrs. Wells?"

"I trust him with my life, Mr. Arthur."

Vincent squeezed her hand as a means of support.

"Could he join us at our meet?"

"I'm sure he would."

"Where?"

"The park; music stand." She glanced at Vincent who nodded his approval.

"When?"

She looked at her watch. *'God! It was only ten-thirty pm.'* She was sure it was after twelve.

"Midnight. That will give me time to get to Mr. Maxwell."

"Agreed, but only you. If I see any uniforms, I'm out."

"All right, just Mr. Maxwell and myself."

She smiled at Vincent and blushed slightly at the white lie.

"Until then."

Vincent made coffee and Catherine got hold of Joe. Twenty minutes later he was sitting, having a drink with them.

"Cathy, one of these days, would you mind doing all this in the daylight hours?" He visibly gave himself a shake. "I'm not like you. I need my sleep, you know!"

"Thanks for coming, Joe."

He smiled at them and went over the evening's activities once more.

"So, Tom Gunther could be our boy?"

"Yeah; looks like it."

"Well, maybe we should know for sure in the next hour." He got his jacket. "Let's go, Radcliffe."

"Vincent," Cathy hugged him and gave him a kiss. "See you in the park."

"I'll be watching everything, Catherine," he smiled. "I'll be near, don't worry."

"I won't."

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From where he stood watching, Vincent could also hear what was going on. Thank goodness it was going as planned. Arthur was scared and willing to tell everything to save his own skin.

Joe had looked over some papers and finally must have agreed to his request.

Before leaving with Joe, he handed Catherine an envelope, thanked her and was gone. Vincent let out a great sigh and could feel Catherine's joy reaching out to him.

She waited until Joe and Arthur were out of view then flew into Vincent's arms. "It's wonderful!" She was like a child. "He's got everything from Gunther down and if his testimony is as good as his paperwork, the trial will be over in less than a week." She was so excited, it spilled over to Vincent, and forgetting where they were, he lifted her and swung her around in a great circle, resulting in them falling to the grass, laughing like a couple of kids. "Let's go home," Catherine smiled at her beautiful husband and longed to share the rest of this night in his arms, in their chamber.

"Yes, let's go home," and arm-in-arm, they went to the tunnels, and their family.

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"Joe, Joe!" Diana was whispering gently so as not to give him a fright.

He could hear her tender voice before he felt her gently pushing his shoulder. 'Ow!' His neck hurt and rubbing it didn't help.

"You sleep here last night? What happened?" Diana had phoned his place, and getting no answer headed right here to the office.

"What time is it?" Joe tried to unravel himself from the ungainly position he had managed to get himself into in the few hours he had been able to sleep. '*God! When was that?*' He couldn't remember, was it four am or five?

"Well, are you going to tell me what's going on or not?" Diana was a little worried. "It's only seven-thirty am!" This was a little early for Joe.

As he regained his thoughts and the great feeling after last night's meeting, he grabbed Diana's face with his two hands and kissed her.

"What?" she asked, looking at him, puzzled.

"No, I'm not mad, and I've got some terrific news for you." He was like a boy with a new toy.

Diana held his hands and watched his excitement. "Slow down here! Start from where you dropped me off after dinner last night."

He was now pacing the office, hands in pockets. "Okay, okay! I fell asleep in the chair and then a phone call

from Cathy woke me."

Watching him, she saw him smile his lopsided smile. "Cathy? How?"

He put his two hands towards his chest and faced her. "Am I telling this?" She nodded, and Joe filled her in on the events that took place the night before. "By the time I had interviewed Arthur, It wasn't worth while going home so I flaked out here," and he waved his hand at the office couch.

She was about to turn on him, and ask why he hadn't got in touch, but she had second thoughts, when she remembered his reaction after her escapades with Vincent.

"Joe, that's great! It'll all be over with quicker than we dared hope!" She put her arms around his neck, and kissed the boss. "That means I'm off the case!"

"Afraid so, but guess what!" He grinned at her. "I just happen to have this file over here."

"Am I interrupting anything?" A grinning Trevor Smith asked, peering around the door.

"Hi, Trevor," Joe looked like a guilty school boy and Diana grinned as she picked up the file Joe had been talking about.

"This one?" she shoved it to him.

"Yeah. Go see Greg Hughes; he's in charge of that downtown."

"Okay. See you, Trevor. Bye, Joe," and they gave each other a '*see-you-later*' as she left them alone.

"Are you two an item?"

There was no reply.

"Okay, Mr. DA. What's so important you have to get me down here at this ungodly hour?"

Joe was searching in his desk for his battery-operated razor. Once found, he put the coffee on. Trevor was watching this activity.

"You sleep here last night?"

"Yeah!"

"Not a good sign, Joe!" And going over to the machine, he poured them a cup each as he finished off his chin.

"Wait till you hear why!" His eyes sparkled.

"Hope it won't take long. I'm meeting Cathy, remember?" and he gave him his coffee.

"No, you're not! Cathy's got the day off."

"Why? What's wrong?" He cringed as he tasted the coffee. "Where do you get this stuff?"

Brushing his hair and smoothing out his shirt, Joe once more went through the list of events from last night.

Trevor seemed impressed. "That's great news, Joe, really terrific! And Pope?"

"I'll come with you, once you've had chance to have a quick look at what I got last night. Trevor, we may be talking deals here."

"Great." He went to the desk. "This it, Joe?"

"Uh-huh. Help yourself," and Joe went away to the gents.

By the time he came back, Trevor had been right through the file. "You're right, Joe. This puts it into a nice neat package."

"Okay, then." He was smiling. "Let's go get this over with."

"Oh, before we go, I found this outside," and reaching inside his coat pocket, he pulled out a brown package. "It's got Cathy's name on it."

"Just leave it on her desk. She's bound to be in sometime today." Joe smiled as he collected his coat.

"Even on her day off?" Trevor shook his head. "As I said, Joe, good help's hard to find!"

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Father could hear them before he saw them, and from the sounds of things, all had gone well. *'Thank God!'* He slowly shifted to straighten up before they arrived.

*'It's never dull any more,'* he thought and smiled down on his grandson, who hadn't moved a muscle. *'He is so beautiful, truly born from pure love.'*

"Father, are you all right?" Vincent came to him, worried at his expression.

"Yes, I'm fine." He smiled at his son. "I was lost in the beauty of your child."

Catherine came and put her arms through Father's and kissed his cheek again. "Can I walk you to your chamber?"

"Yes, Cathy, that would be a pleasure." And the two went off, leaving Vincent to make tea for her return.

"Everything went well, Catherine?" he patted her hand as they walked.

"Oh, yes. Better than we had hoped." She sighed. "Things will be back to normal soon. Don't worry, Father."

"You know how I feel about you all," he found himself blushing. "If anything were to happen to any one of us, the other would never survive. Your love is beyond anything I have ever known or will know and I - I...." He trailed off, finding himself lost for words.

Catherine held him and simply said. "We love you with that same love, Father." Then kissing him goodnight, she left him to collect himself.

"Tea?" Vincent was waiting for her by the fire. He had felt her emotions just now and thought better of mentioning it. She and Father had developed a sort of bond, of their own and he would not intrude when he felt they needed this time between them.

"Please," and she came and sat beside him.

The warm tea and heat from the fire made her realize how tired she was.

"I don't have to go in to work in the morning." She turned to face him.

"Ah." The twinkle of his blue eyes matched her own. "Then we can tidy up in the morning," and with that he lifted her to bed.

They loved each other for most of the night until complete exhaustion overtook desire and they were forced to surrender to the sleep they so badly needed. Contented and happy, they were wrapped together as one, and so tired, they never saw or heard Mary come for JJ early the next morning.

Father had seen Mary earlier and had suggested she collect his grandson, as he was well aware how tired they were.

"Vincent," Catherine stretched and whispered his name. She could feel his thoughts, knowing that he was watching her, and this brought a sleepy smile to her face. Turning on her side, she looked right into his blue-lagoon eyes. "Oh, I love you so!" and reached up to meet his face as he was bending to kiss her.

"Good morning." He spoke quietly and was in no hurry to get up, or move from where he was.

"JJ?" Cathy climbed up over Vincent to try and see him.

"Mary must have come for him." He laughed a quiet, smooth laugh. "We slept in."

"I wonder why?" Catherine's own laugh came from her boots and caused the two of them to cling to each other in hope they would stifle some of the noise they were making. "Oh, Vincent. I never thought I could be so happy."

"Catherine, I also have these feelings and know that there is nothing in this world that could ever replace you for me."

He came to her then and they made beautiful, tender love, slowly and with all that they felt for each other. Shortly after, they showered and dressed, had a quick snack and cleared up after last night. They were just going to have tea when Jamie came in with their son.

"Mommy."

Cathy reached out her arms to the laughing infant and hugged him to her. Vincent came behind her and kissed his head, resulting in another tug at his hair.

"Thanks, Jamie." She turned to go. "Don't go, have some tea with us," and Catherine guided her to a chair.

"Excuse me," Vincent had got the hint. "I must go and see Father."

"Cathy," Jamie looked rather shy. "Mouse and I, we have been talking. Thanks to you and Vincent, we have come to understand each other and are able to express our feelings more openly."

"That' wonderful, Jamie. I'm very pleased for you both."

"It was hard for him, but our ... our love, seems to have won through."

Cathy held her hand and gave her a reassuring squeeze.

Vincent came back as Jamie left and he tilted his head at Catherine. She smiled at him and finished putting things away, then lifting her briefcase, put the last of her papers inside.

"I'm going to go to the office for a couple of hours, Vincent," she stated, looking at his '*I-thought-you-would*' look. "But I'll be back as soon as I can."

"Catherine, leaves things to Joe." He took her hands. "Remember what he said last night."

"I know," she smiled at him, then frowned. "But I want to see this cleared up just the same."

Lifting their son, Vincent came to her. "Take care, my love," and kissed her cheek before taking JJ to the nursery.

Catherine kissed his small hand as he passed.

"Mommy, Daddy" staggered from his tiny mouth and she could feel the tears welling up as they left the chamber. Looking upwards, she told herself. '*Cathy, it can't go on much longer!*' It hurt more each time she said goodbye to her son.

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As she came out of the lift, she bumped into Jacqui.

"Well, hi. How are you?"

"Cathy! I was just searching for you." She put her arm through hers and walked back towards the office.

"Is everything all right?" Cathy was unsure.

"Yeah! Elliot's in with Joe and Trevor, so he could be here some time going over statements and things. I was going to ask you to lunch."



"I'm only just in, and had the morning off. I'm sorry, another time."

"Sure, it's okay." She turned to leave. "Oh, Cathy. I'm going to see Josie in hospital this afternoon. I hope you don't mind, but I would like to tell her about you, and see if it will help her come to terms with what's happened."

"No, I don't mind," she smiled at her. "How is she?"

"You could probably judge her better, but I think she's adjusting pretty well." She lifted her hand in a wave. "See you soon."

"Bye, Jacqui," and she pushed herself backwards through the swing doors.

"Cathy," it was Rita. "Your printouts on Gunther came through. I put them on your desk."

"Thanks, Rita."

"And Joe wants to see you!"

She nodded as she went to put her coat in her office.

Going around her desk to check her mail, she noticed the brown packet left earlier by Trevor Smith. Picking it up she shook it, and a videotape fell out with a small piece of paper.

*'Mrs. Wells,*

*I fear I am in danger since we talked today, so as an extra precaution, I have recorded all you need to know from me. Johnson, an officer here is present and will deliver the tape for me. I hope you won't need to use it. If you do, it will be because I am dead. If that happens, I wish you well in finishing your work alive.*

*Jonathan Pope'*

*(Witnessed B. Johnson)*

Cathy had been standing when she started to read the note, but now realized she was sitting, and automatically picked up the tape, turning it around in her hand.

Her phone rang and made her jump. "Catherine Wells."

"Cathy, how long you been in?"

"Just this minute, Joe. Why?"

"Come to my office, will you."

"Okay," and she lifted the note and tape before going to see her boss.

Knocking on the door, she could see Elliot was still in and so was Trevor.

"Hi, everyone," she smiled around the room, but felt disturbed when she saw Joe's face. "What's wrong?"

"Trevor and I went downtown to see our star witness this morning." He glanced at the other men.

"And, what?"

"He was being taken out on a stretcher in a black bag!" He threw his hands in the air. "They got to him, Cathy! In our custody and they still got him!"

Shutting her eyes, she let out a deep sigh, then going over to Joe, she gave him the letter.

"It was hand-delivered." She then gave him the tape. "I don't know what's on it, I only just opened it."

Joe scanned the note. "Trevor, get downtown and trace this officer, B. Johnson, and get him back here in one piece."

He was out the door before Joe caught breath.

"Cathy, this could just save our case!"

"God, I hope so, Joe." She sat down next to Elliot. "I couldn't face the thought of what could happen if they threw this out of court now."

"Rita!" Joe shouted her name as she passed the office door.

"Yeah, boss?"

"Is the TV and video still set up in the main interview room?"

She nodded.

"Okay, let's get to it, Radcliffe." He turned to Elliot. "You had better wait here."

"Okay, Joe."

"See you soon," and Joe and Catherine went to view the tape.

By the time they had seen the video, Trevor was back.

"Everything go okay?" Joe was hopeful that it had.

"He's safe, Joe. And has confirmed he was the one to witness the tape being made."

"Great, that's great." He was beaming with anticipation. "Elliot," Joe turned to him as he leaned on the front of his desk. "I'm going to ask for a contingency on this case. We may get it settled out of court yet."

"Is that possible?"

"I don't know," he said, grinning. "But I'm working on it!" He put his hands in his pockets as he pushed himself away from the desk. "You go back to work, we'll reach you when we need you."

"If you're sure...." He put out his hand to shake Joe's.

"I'm sure."

And Elliot Burch left the DA's office, unaware of what was ahead, but with every trust in these people that he had been less than honest with in previous times.

Cathy was going into her office as he passed.

"Cathy! Remember, I'll always be there for you, you know that." He smiled. "You were my first true friend, and that has a great meaning to me."

"Elliot, we have had our ups and downs; we've used each other and needed each other. Things like that build friendships." She kissed his cheek and gave him a hug. "I won't forget."

Nodding his head, with memories flashing inside, he said. "Say hello to Vincent for me, will you?" Kissed her back, then turned away as Cathy went into her office.

Looking at her watch, she decided to go home. It was still early enough to pick up some things for dinner. She would stay Below now until the weekend and enjoy the freedom she felt there.

She glanced over the desk, lifted a couple of files and shoved them in her case; grabbed her coat and left.

" *'RADCLIFFE'!*"

Everyone in the office turned to look at her as she passed Joe's door. Stopping, she retraced a couple of steps and stuck her head inside.

"Joe," she frowned at him. "Could you use the phone more. It's not the best system you've got here!"

"Come in a second." He motioned her in with his hand. "I've just had a phone call from Gunther's lawyer; he wants to meet."

"Where?"

"Here, tomorrow." He was holding back an urge to laugh. "The ball's in our court, Cathy. I think we've got them."

"Good instincts, Joe."

"Thanks to you, Cathy. If you hadn't stuck to your guns, I would still be out there."

"What now? Will they settle out of court, do you think?"

"I sure hope so." He couldn't hide his pleasure any more and he was smiling his lopsided '*happy*' smile. "Good work, Cathy."

"Thanks, Joe. See you tomorrow." Smiling to herself, she could only think of the night ahead. There was a concert in the park and they could relax and enjoy their time together.

Vincent was waiting for her at the park entrance, just as she knew he would be. They could practically hold a conversation through their bond enough, and right now her thoughts were very strong!

Vincent was smiling to himself, feeling her thoughts and plans for the night ahead of them. He remembered the days when he knew she had similar, strong urges, but he had held her at arm's length, afraid of what might happen and the hurt that might have resulted from it. Now, he sighed a happy contented sigh, now there was nothing to hinder their happiness.

Catherine turned into the entrance and straight into his waiting arms. Kissing by pure instinct and as part of the natural feelings that they showed so openly now, he held her close.

"I love you, Catherine," and from inside his cloak he took out a single rose.

She held it in her hand and smiled up at him, with all the love she could, from deep within, knowing he would also feel it. No words came from her, but her eyes told him all he needed to know.

Tilting his head, he took her hand and together they went home. Home to their son, their dreams and hopes for the future, that they could now all share.

Above or Below, it made no difference to them now, wherever they were, they were one and would face the future with love.

## **ALWAYS LOVERS FOUND PART FOUR**

Catherine groaned inwardly and then threw a pleading glance in Joe's direction as they exited through the double swinging doors of the court room.

They had spent endless weeks on the '*Gabriel*' case and everyone connected to it. Sighing, Catherine felt thankful it was now finally over and, the severity of the verdict imposed had put the lid on things once and for all. However, the complex case and the DA's involvement had sparked off an exceptionally large amount of press and TV coverage, creating even more stress and worry to be felt by Joe and Cathy.

Joe returned her concerned look and gave a slight smile, then nodded before he gently took her elbow and guided her through the never-ending bodies that seemed to re-group every time he advanced. After a few moments of battle, came the realization that they were getting nowhere fast! Joe stood his ground and squeezed Cathy's arm.

"All right, people - a short statement." He lifted his hands to stop the protests. "It has been a long hard haul for everyone involved and, at last justice has been done." He paused before going on. "All we want now is to get back to work, and do what we are best at - helping people. This was only one more case for us and there are plenty of others waiting to be dealt with." Looking at Cathy, he inclined his head in the direction of the elevator. "I'm sorry! That's it! You can get an official statement at the Press Office. Thank you!" and they tried to push their way through, as the hangers-on kept shouting.

"Mrs. Wells? How do you..."

"Mr. Maxwell, could you just..."

"Give us a break, Maxwell!"

Joe smiled at them. "Sorry folks," was all he said, as the elevator door shut tight on the shouting crowd. Leaning back on the side of the elevator, they both let out a sigh of relief.

"Thanks, Joe." Cathy patted his arm. "I don't think I could have managed on my own out there today!"

"Yeah," he grinned. "I know what you mean!"

He lifted his eyes to her as she smiled. "At least now I can rely on the DA!" Reaching out, she hugged him close. "Well done, Joe. You deserve it!"

He blushed.

They left the building and narrowly escaped more reporters before going to their office to finish up for the day. Deep in conversation, they didn't notice the lack of people in the outer office and only when Rita and Edie came out of the computer room, did things seem strange.

"Where the hell is everyone?" Joe shouted at Edie.

"Don't ask me, I only work here!" and winking at Cathy she motioned her over beside her. "Get Joe into the conference room somehow."

"Why?" she looked around. "What's wrong?"

"Keep your hair on!" and Edie joined her in Cathy's office.

Picking up the phone, Catherine buzzed Joe. "Hi! Slight problem, could you help me out?" She could hear Joe sigh.

"Now?" Joe was still concerned at everyone's absence.

"Yeah - in the conference room, if that's okay?" She lifted her hand to Rita and Edie, who quickly headed for the door way. Joe slammed the phone down.

*'She's only back five minutes,'* thought Joe, *'and she's up to something already!'* He joined Cathy as she came out of her office. "What's up, Radcliffe?"

"A complaint, Joe. And I'll need you as a witness."

"Complaint? About what?"

"You," and with that the doors opened and all the office staff were waiting to greet the new DA.

Joe was taken completely by surprise and his face went the colour of a red rose - but he felt very happy. It was an emotional gesture by these people and it meant a great deal to him.

"You know about this, Radcliffe?" He smiled at her.

"No, Joe ... not until five minutes ago!" and she grinned back at him.

"Cathy - Joe."

They turned and Jenny came over to join them.

"Hi, guys." She gave Joe a kiss on the cheek. "Congratulations on both the case and the promotion."

"Thanks, Jen." He was then called over to the other side of the room, leaving Jenny and Cathy to chatter.

"Who told you about this?" Cathy put her arm through Jen's.

"Edie phoned me earlier today," she sighed. "She was worried because Diana said she was *'too busy'* to come, and she wanted Joe to have an outsider friend here." She turned to Cathy. "Edie knew you wouldn't wait long!" and they shared the statement with a rather distorted laugh.

"Jen, you have seen a lot of Joe over the last few months - have he and Diana drifted apart? They seemed so close for a while." Catherine frowned as she handed over some of the overflowing punch.

"I think she just gets so involved with her cases, that poor Joe was becoming an after-thought! It hurt him, Cathy." She turned to watch him and she smiled as she felt for him. Catherine saw the change in her eyes and wondered if Joe and Jen could come together and make something of their lives.

Jen turned back and sipped her punch. "We met by chance one night at a restaurant. Diana had stood him up again and, I was leaving a book for Maria - you know - at the Italian place we've been to a couple of times." She sighed. "Well, I happened to see him sitting on his own and went over to say Hi!" She shrugged her shoulders. "We ended up having dinner."

"He's one hell of a guy, Jen!" Cathy's voice was low and full of feeling.

"I'm beginning to see that." Jen's tone was soft and she turned back to watch him. He must have noticed her looking over at him, as he gave her one of his most beautiful smiles and she actually blushed. Cathy felt for them both.

"Well, you were right about one thing, Jen."

"What's that?"

"I can't wait!" She put her glass down and laid her hand on her friend's arm. "Say goodbye to Joe for me, okay?"

"Sure, Cathy." They exchanged a quick hug. "Say hi to the family for me."

She nodded and casually drifted unnoticed out of the room. Going to her office, she collected her things, put on her coat and headed for her sanctuary, her husband and son.

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Vincent and Father were studying the plans laid out in front of them when Mouse came flying in, jumping the small steps.

"Vincent, Vincent! Mouse found well!" He was covered in mud and must have been on the go for hours, by the look of him.

"Well, Mouse?"

"Are you all right?" Father removed his glasses and leaned towards the small figure who was panting for breath.

"Okay, good. Okay, fine!" he beamed at them. "Found well." Looking from one to the other, he could see he was not getting through to them. Vincent placed a friendly hand on his shoulder.

"Mouse, take a deep breath and start again. What well?"

Mouse was always exploring new areas and providing maps for the community, but sometimes he forgot his original plan and ended up miles away. This had caused a great deal of worry, for they feared in the case of an

accident, that he would not be found. Now he had to always tell them in which direction he was headed and to give them a rough idea as to how long he would be away.

Jamie had been the one to enforce this rule, as they now shared a life together and she had no wish to be left searching endless miles of tunnels when he didn't return on time.

Mouse was supposed to have been down by the Catacombs this trip, but by the sound of things and the look of him, he had been diverted -- again!

"Mouse?" Father leaned on his walking stick, waiting with concern and apprehension over this young explorer. Secretly he admired his efforts and enthusiasm which seemed endless and indeed - more often than not - helpful in ways none would have realized. However, at times like this he was exasperated! "Mouse!" Father let out another long, suffering sigh. "Just where have you been this time? You know ..."

"Father." Vincent laid a gentle hand on his shoulder and let his head drop ever so slightly to the side, letting Father read his eyes more clearly.

Nodding slowly and patting Vincent's hand, Father took a deep breath and pulled himself up to his full height. Glancing at Mouse, he slowly turned and went to sit at the main desk, waiting for an explanation. Mouse was shuffling his feet and had his hands deep inside his baggy trousers.

"Mouse," Vincent's soft tones reassured him once more and with only a tentative glance in Father's direction he beamed at his friend.

"Went down below Catacombs, but to the side of one section - not straight down!"

"Side, Mouse? You mean you found a new tunnel?" Vincent held the young man's arm.

"A slide, Vincent. Open, new crawlway." He took out a scrap of paper. "Look." He spread the crumpled sheet out on the desk and they leaned forward as he excitedly showed them where his latest scavenger hunt had taken him. When they worked out where it was the new crawlway had appeared, they tried to match it up with one of the original old maps that John (*Paracelsus*) had left, and even there they found no trace of this entrance.

"Mouse? How far allong this crawlway did you go?" Father looked up at him over the rim of his glasses, which were balanced beautifully on the end of his nose.

"Short time - not long crawl." He moved away from the desk as he raised his hands. "Then big open space like two chambers, high and wide," he nodded to himself, happy with the description. "Yeah, big place!"

"The well you mentioned," Vincent quietly encouraged him to go on.

"In centre of chamber with rocks like seats on each side." His eyes sparkled at Vincent's interest.

Father looked from Mouse to Vincent and then back at the maps. "If this well is there, its position could be the reason for us not coming across it on any of our other observation trips!" he sighed. "We have left the Catacombs alone because of what they represent and out of respect - but if what Mouse says is correct, then perhaps we should at least send a small group down to survey it properly." He shrugged his shoulders, looking to Vincent for confirmation. He had no desire to disturb what was incarcerated below ground.

Vincent studied the plans again and grunted. "Hmmm! A well!" He looked up, nodded slowly and watched Mouse.

"Did you get water from this well?" His hand hovered over the sheet of paper.

"Did! Okay, fine." He lifted the water bottle attached to his rucksack and handed it to Father.

Carefully, he poured some into a cup and tasted. It was as pure and fresh as he had ever tasted - below or above ground.

"Vincent, here." He handed him the cup. "It tastes wonderful!"

"Yes, it is indeed very good, Father." He sighed and sat across from him. "And I agree, we must send a party to investigate this find."

"You sound a little unsure, Vincent?" Father removed his glasses and leaned forward to reach his son's hand.

Vincent leaned back as he looked at Mouse and then at his father, before shutting his eyes. The area around and below the Catacombs held some bad memories for him, and he was aware that Father knew his emotions would be affected. He must ignore these feelings.

"It's dangerous down there, Father. We will have to take great care." He sighed. "Mouse, go and get cleaned up. I'm sure Jamie will be waiting for your return." He smiled at his young friend, knowing he would enjoy nothing more than to take Vincent right now to see his find.

"When can I show you? We go tomorrow?"

"Ah! No, Mouse?" Father rose and put his arm around the young man's shoulders. "We have a lot of preparation first and besides, it's the weekend and Vincent must spend time with his family."

"Catherine! Below or Above?" He looked at Vincent for his answer. He loved Catherine nearly as much as he did Jamie and he knew they sometimes stayed Above in her apartment, when they wanted to spend time alone and uninterrupted.

"She will be here at home, Mouse." Vincent's voice took on a different air whenever he spoke of his wife or son.

"Okay, good. Okay, fine!" and with that he scurried out, happy that he had done something worthwhile for a change!

Father laughed and shook his head. "Do you think Jamie will ever get him under her control?"

Vincent's muffled laugh turned into a chuckle at the thought of Mouse tied down. "No, Father! Nobody can control Mouse!"

"Will they get married, do you think?" Father was slightly concerned over the current arrangement between the two young people.

"Oh, Father!" Vincent rose, placed a hand on Father's sagging shoulders and smiled. "They are young and trying to find their way. They don't know yet what they want, or what they are looking for, but by the time they do, they will be ready!"

"Are you trying to tell me I'm too old-fashioned, Vincent?" He smiled up at his son.

"Father! Did I say such words?"

"Vincent - sometimes one look from you speaks volumes!" He sighed and, lifting his walking stick, let his thoughts wander to Catherine, as he went to make a cup of tea. How their lives had changed since she came into their world.

His son had become a changed man and no wonder, with the love of his underground family; from Catherine and now, his own son!

The old man shut his eyes and thanked whoever it was, that had sent Catherine to them.

"Father? Are you all right?" Vincent came to his side.

"Yes, yes. I was only daydreaming again!" and he smiled at him. "Go now and prepare for your weekend!"

"Are you sure you're all right?" He bent forward to kiss his father's temple, then left for the nursery to pick up Jacob and take him to their chamber. Catherine would be home soon and she was tired. He could feel her

excitement as she came nearer home.

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Elliot swivelled around in his chair to reach the automatic control button for the TV. Switching it off, he let out a long deep sigh and shut his eyes. Catherine and Joe had looked exhausted, but there had been a sign of relief in their expressions as they fought their way through the reporters.

Leaning back, eyes still shut, the images remained. The Court Case - they had hoped to settle out of court, but it was too important to keep under wraps it seemed. The faces, the sleepless nights - and Jacqui! He sighed again and smiled as his thoughts wandered to his wife. She had come to him when he needed someone to help him rebuild his life and now, he knew what a great strength and love she possessed throughout everything. She had stood by him through the good and the not-so good and, nothing would move her, or her love for him.

Once Cathy had been the only woman he ever considered worth anything and he had loved her with such intensity the pain sometimes had been unbearable. When she went missing, it tore him apart - yet he had known there was someone else in her life. Someone that she loved beyond all others, a love he thought he would never find for himself. Opening his eyes, he reached out and caressed the photo of Jacqui, facing him on his large desk. He smiled and, lifting it towards him, he once more moulded himself into his designer chair.

"Cathy, you and your never ending secrets and requests for help!" he spoke to the window, as he lay the photo frame against his chest. "God, how we used each other! Yet somehow our friendship has survived everything we threw at it!"

Placing the photo gently back on the desk, he pushed his chair back and plunging his hands deep inside his pockets, he leaned against the large window to scan the skyline. He shuddered and shook his head as he recalled his first reactions to Vincent. He could feel his face reddening, as the thoughts of that initial meeting caused him to lower his head in shame.

*'If only I knew then what I know now.'* He bit his lip and lifted a hand to wipe his eyes as means to prevent the tell-tale fears from reaching their destination within his well-groomed beard.

It wasn't the look of Vincent that had affected him - it was the whole man! His pure magnitude had turned his stomach and the thought of Cathy with him - and not himself - he couldn't bear. He had hated Vincent for no other reason than pure jealousy! *'What could Vincent offer her that she couldn't have gotten from him ten-fold!'*

Taking in a deep breath, he now felt that same intense sickness, but not towards Vincent; it was more a type of guilt complex. Knowing Vincent as he did now, and what he and Cathy had, would stir anyone with any feelings. They had taught him a great deal and when Jacqui came on the scene, he was given a chance to put into practice what he hoped would be a better future.

"Well! Who said women were always late for dinner dates?" Jacqui breezed into the room and broke up his daydreams.

He jerked his head round and looked up at the clock - oh God! He opened his arms and walked towards his wife. "I'm so sorry." He held her close. "It's been one hell of an afternoon!"

She pulled back and looked into the cloudy pale blue eyes.

"What's happened? You were miles away when I came in!"

He lifted his hand and tenderly traced around the finely shaped face before turning it upwards for a gently placed kiss.

"Elliot?" she frowned. "What is it?"



"Not here - not now." He attempted to smile. "Let's go and have dinner, I'm starved." With that, he led her from the office. *'I need more time to think over this new problem,'* he told himself. *'God, Cathy and Vincent would not be ready for another round of distorted upheaval and emotional blackmail'* - and that could be the result of what his late afternoon visitor might cause! He sighed, shook his head and resolved to leave well alone until Monday. Jacqui was working hard on her new dress designs for a charity affair next month, so the weekend was the only time they had to spend together.

With that decision made, he took her arm and with a brilliant dimpled smile, steered her in the direction of the restaurant. She smiled back at him, but deep down, Jacqui knew that something was brewing. Whatever it was, she had this feeling that there was no way he would budge until he felt the time was right. That was one of the many things she had learned to judge since his return to a stable lifestyle and a workload that he thrived on.

She sighed. He had changed - she knew - for the better, but Elliot Burch was back and people were well aware of it and yet, she had this niggling feeling tugging at her, telling her this new development had nothing to do with his latest building venture; but you didn't need to be a mastermind to work out who was weighing so heavily on his thoughts. Catherine - it would have to be her.

"A penny for them!" This time Elliot took her off guard.

"Sorry, I was going over..."

"Not tonight, not for the next two days - no mention of work," he cut her off.

"Okay," she agreed wholeheartedly and, squeezing his arm they went through the swing doors and were escorted to their table.

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Catherine smiled as Vincent entered her mind and took over her whole being. She was tired, but with a weekend ahead to look forward to, all signs of fatigue were disappearing the closer she came to the tunnels. Her heartbeat started to increase and her strides took her to nearly running pace. *'Vincent's near,'* she thought and by the powerful emotions she could feel, he was as impatient to be with her, as she was to be with him.

Cathy had come across the park tonight. It was a lovely clear night and she was enjoying the peace and quiet after the day's hectic activity. As she neared the tunnels, she shuddered, at an odd feeling - *'of what? Be followed?'* Everyone had become extra cautious over the entrances since the troubles and Catherine was probably the most aware of this. Rather than risk being seen, she circled round and returned to a seat not far away. Waiting for a while and being reassured that it was safe she again headed for the entrance - but the uncertain feeling returned and unsettled her.

"Catherine, what's wrong?" She jumped as Vincent's voice disturbed her thoughts, not expecting him to be here to meet her. "I felt your sudden unrest, are you all right?" and he held out his arms.

Willingly, Catherine fell into his embrace and sighed with contentment as his own special feeling encircled her.

"I'm all right," and turning her head upwards, they kissed with the love and depth that only these two could. Their devotion for each other never faltered and their bond grew in strength as Catherine found she was capable of learning its powers.

"Tell me." Vincent seemed concerned at her unease and waited for her to reply before they moved off.

"I'm not sure what it was, Vincent - a feeling like a coldness crept over me." She sighed and took his hand in hers. "I thought I was being followed!" She shrugged her shoulders and lifted her eyes to his.

"You saw no one?"

"No."

"But yet you still feel the presence of someone?"

"Yes." She tugged at his hand. "Come on, I must be overreacting."

"Hmmm." He tilted his head slightly. "You do not over react, Catherine!"

She smiled then. "If it was anything else, I would agree, but when my family is involved, perhaps I do."

He smiled back as they turned and headed towards their chamber, both of them anxious to be with their son.

Jacob let out a cry of joy as Catherine and Vincent came down the few steps into Father's chamber. He was balanced on Father's knee and trying his level best to retrieve the glasses so nicely placed for his reach - at the same time, Father was trying to read and hold JJ's attention - but failing miserably!

"Ah, Catherine, Vincent!" The relief was evident as they came towards him and lifted the wriggling bundle.

Catherine hugged and kissed her son before placing a tender butterfly kiss on Father's cheek. "Thank you for watching him. We were a little longer than Vincent thought."

"Perfectly all right, my dear." He patted her hand. "JJ and I have this understanding."

"Yes, Father! We noticed!" Vincent's voice turned the toddler's attention to him and his tiny arms stretched out towards him in the vain hope his father would respond. Without hesitation, Vincent knew what his son was feeling. He lifted him and in one move held him above his head.

"Vincent, do be careful!" Father scolded. "He's still too young for ..."

"It's all right, Father. Don't worry," Vincent smiled and JJ smiled at the older man.

"Cathy ..." He turned to her for support.

"Perhaps you are right. Come on, Tiger," and reluctantly her son was lowered from his father's grip to his mother's arms. She winked at Vincent as if to say *'Keep him happy!'* His smile in return showed he would be more cautious in his father's company from now on.

"William left dinner for you as it was getting late," Father said as he returned to his desk. "Perhaps you should get it before it gets cold! Hmmm?"

"Yes, thank you, Father," and the trio left him to his pile of books and his thoughts.

Father sighed as he watched his family leave and decided that truly there were no words to describe what was once a dream that had now become a reality for him and for Vincent.

Dinner over and JJ settled for the night, Catherine and Vincent sat close together on the couch, just holding each other and feeling the tensions floating away and being replaced with a contentment that was pure love. Catherine sighed and cuddled closer.

"How was your day?" Vincent finally asked, knowing to hold back mentioning work until he knew she was relaxed and ready.

After filling in all the day's activities - the trial, the party - they returned to her uncomfortable feeling she had earlier.

"Thinking about it, Vincent, it was more like being watched, then followed." She looked into his beautiful eyes.

"One comes with the other, Catherine."

She nodded slowly. "No Vincent, I'm not going to let it get to me, not tonight." She reached up and kissed him ever so lightly, but with great love.

"I take it you have other plans?" He tilted her head and his eyes sparkled as they surveyed her.

"You could say that!" and grinning she got up to make them tea.

Vincent sighed and watched her before slowly stretching and getting up to go and sit at his writing desk. Opening his journal, he looked at the empty pages as his thoughts went back to Mouse. He lifted his pan and leaned back in his huge chair, still deep in thought.

Catherine came back with the tea and gently touched his shoulder. "What's on your mind? You seem miles away."

He reached up and covered her hand with his. "It's Mouse."

"Mouse! Is there something wrong?" She turned to face him.

"No." A slight smile spread across his face. "He's been exploring again."

"Oh." She sipped her tea as Vincent told her of Mouse and his discovery.

"We are in urgent need of a new water supply, Catherine," he sighed. "Some of our pipes are badly damaged and beyond repair." Leaning forward, he took the last of his tea. "With a new source we could at last re-pipe the main chambers, showers and kitchens. Our Helpers have supplied us with enough pipe over the months to more than do the job."

"Vincent," Catherine held out her hand. "Come on, you're tired. This will keep until tomorrow."

"Perhaps you're right," and replacing the journal, he let her guide him to their huge bed, where they shared the night and early hours as one, each knowing what the other wanted and needed without pain or effort - just the purest of love from these two special lovers. Then a contented sleep covered them and warmed them so their dreams could live and grow into the dawning of another day.

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Joe was enjoying all the attention this party was giving him. He wasn't a great one for these occasions, but as it was for him, he was making the best of it all! Besides, he was among people he knew well and it was a friendly atmosphere, easy to relax in and unwind from the strain of the last few months.

Still, he realized it was getting late and people were drifting away and ready to call it a day. Glancing around, he was pleased to see that Jenny had stayed on when Cathy had left and he smiled to himself. There was a warm feeling inside him and it was nothing to do with the drinks he'd had! She approached him, coat in hand, ready to leave.

"Well, Joe," she smiled at him. "It's been a great evening, thank you!" and reaching up she gave him a kiss on the cheek.

"Hey! What's the hurry? You got a date?" Joe held her at arms length and looked into her eyes.

"Well no! But it is getting late and I thought perhaps..."

He held his hands up in protest. "You hungry?" His smile broadened and she lowered her face before returning his smile.

She nodded her head. "Yes! I'm a little hungry."

"Great." He grabbed her arm and headed towards the door. "I know this secluded little place that make terrific lasagna!"

"Sounds good, Joe."

"Okay, let's go!" and smiling at each other, they left the bedraggled office behind them.

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Sean paced the tiny bed-sit room, running his hand through his hair as he did so, wondering whether he had done the right thing. Perhaps he should have left things alone! This man, Elliot Burch didn't seem the type of

person to have done what his brother had described in the scribbled notes he had found.

He sighed and puffed on his cigarette and sat on the squeaky bed, reflecting on the past year. It had not been a pleasant one. When his wife had walked out on him, he had returned to his elderly parents. This was a hard adjustment for everyone and, finding a job was another nightmare. He had been a labourer, a bar man, car sales executive and the dreaded insurance salesman! He was in fact a teacher - but an out of work one. *'Oh God!'* What to do for the best! He flopped back on the bed, shutting his eyes as if to hide from his thoughts. *'No! He couldn't go through with it! It just wasn't his style and he still couldn't understand why he thought he would.'* Scoffing at himself, he smiled. *'That was Bernie's job, he was the investigator and newshound and where did it get him? Dead! Surrounded by mysterious circumstances that had never been revealed.'*

*'Could Burch help? What about this Chandler person, or... who was it? Bass? Steven Bass?'* He shook his head, grabbed the off-white towel and opened his door to cross the passage for a shower. He somehow had the feeling that he wouldn't come back all that much cleaner than he was now! But then, it might just distract him from his thoughts long enough to unwind before going to bed.

Lying on the bed afterwards, he thought he was about to go into orbit! Someone had tried to cut the legs level and had not, it seemed, measured them beforehand and this accounted for the uncomfortable angle he was now faced with. Sleep was not going to come easily, so he stopped fighting it and let his mind wander.

His walk in the park earlier had made him feel like a comic book detective out on his first assignment. Following Miss. Chandler had not been a good idea, as she somehow managed to give him the slip anyway. Again, she did not appear to be involved with the goings-on that Bernie had described. *'God! How did I let a pile of old papers and scribbles get to me! None of it makes sense anyway. Bernie was always getting himself into situations that he only just managed to scrape out of.'*

He rolled out of bed and went to get a glass of water. Standing, he looked out of the *'never washed'* window and glancing down, lowered himself to sit cross-legged on the floor.

Perhaps these items had nothing to do with Bernie's death! He could have upset someone on an earlier job and that's why no connection was made. Being a free-lance was a downfall in this situation. By the look of the writings, they were very bare outlines of his rough copy before he submitted - or planned to submit it. He always used his tape recorder for final drafts - but that had been found empty. The tapes which he had found contained no reference to the notes he had. *'Oh Bernie! What on earth were you up to?'*

Lifting some of the papers he read the one where Bernie thought Elliot Burch was his source, but as he hadn't seen him he couldn't confirm it. Whoever it was, they were making him work for his information. Just a name dropped here and there; places to be at etc. *'What game were they playing?'* Besides, all his notes were a mess.

Getting up from the floor he folded some newspapers into small bundles and placed them under the appropriate legs in an attempt to get the bed level. Sighing, he bounced gently to try out the bed, then he lay down. It seemed okay, so he turned out the light, shut his eyes and willed himself to sleep.

\*\*\*\*\*

Catherine stretched and stirred uneasily. Something had disturbed her sleep! Sitting up, she realized Vincent was not beside her.

"Catherine! Did we wake you?" Vincent was pacing with JJ in his arms.

"What's wrong?" She smiled and moved to stand beside him. Her smile quickly faded as she looked at her son and, placing a hand on his forehead, she looked at Vincent. "He's very restless. When did he waken?" She held out her arms to take him and went to the big bed to nurse him.

"Not long, he wasn't crying really, it was more of a whimper, as if he was in pain." Vincent reached for his robe. "I'm going for Father."

"Yes, perhaps you should. He seems rather hot." She was worried. JJ had never been ill since birth and they thought he was taking after his father in that respect; but now?

"Shhhh, little one. Daddy won't be long," and the small face looked up at his mother as if he knew everything she said and understood, but he still hurt. She rocked him and talked reassuringly to him, wondering what was taking Vincent so long.

"Catherine, bring Jacob to the Hospital chamber," Vincent spoke as he came through the doorway. "Father has his hands full. It seems there is some sort of food poisoning spreading among the young children and William."

"William?" She looked concerned.

"Yes, it appears he tested whatever the source of the virus was." Holding onto Jacob, he waited for Catherine to pull on her track suit. "You go on ahead, Catherine. I must dress."

She nodded and with her son safely in her arms, headed for the Hospital chambers.

"Father!"

"Thank goodness, Catherine." Father looked very tired. "How is he?"

"Hot and restless, Father." She pulled the cover back for him to check on him.

"Hmmmm," he nodded. "Yes! Yes! Hmmmm, yes! Good! Good!" he mumbled, going over his grandson with his usual thorough and gentle medical manner that Catherine had always admired.

"Well, how is he, Father?" Covering him up again and holding Jacob close, she looked up with worried eyes.

"It seems he has avoided the worst of the virus, probably due to his baby food diet!" He glanced at his grandson, then back at Catherine. "He'll be all right, but I'll give you a course of medication for him to break down the fever and relieve him of any stomach pains he may have." With a weak and loving smile, he placed his arm around her shoulders. "Don't worry, he's an extremely strong young man and he'll recover very quickly." He sighed and looked around the medical chambers. "I'm not sure about these children though - or William."

"Have you managed to trace the source of the outbreak?" Shifting Jacob to her other hip, she saw for the first time, the amount of children that has been affected. Father shook his head. "What can I do to help, Father?" She turned back to face him.

"Nothing, my dear. You see to Jacob." He shifted to retrieve his walking stick. "Vincent is going to get some samples to Peter who - we hope - will help clear up the identity of the virus." He pulled himself up and scolded her with a smile. "Off you go and take care of my grandson!"

"But..."

"It's all right, there are many willing hands here," and with a slight shove, faced her towards her chamber, just as Vincent returned.

"How is he?" Rubbing his son's cheek, he noticed that the usually beautiful pale blue eyes were clouded and sad-looking.

"He's going to be fine." Catherine kissed his cheek. "But Father needs your help."

"Yes, I knew he wouldn't let you stay." Kissing her, then Jacob, he added. "I'll be back to see you shortly."

"Okay," and holding her son closer, she left the men to their work.

Father waited until Catherine had gone then he turned to Vincent. "Did you see Peter?"

"Yes!" he sighed. "He has taken the samples to the hospital and he will get back to us as soon as he gets any results."

"Let's hope it's not too long. I'm at a loss on this one!" Slowly, he sat down on a bed and started to check the boy in it.

"There are no more since I left you earlier?"

"No, it seems the worst is over, but we must find the cause," and with that he continued to go from bed to bed reassuring the small faces that all was well.

Vincent left the big chamber and entered the smaller single side one where William was impatiently lying.

"How are you, my friend?" Vincent's gentle voice seemed to have an immediate affect on him.

"Fed up, if you must know!" He tried to sit up. "Whatever it was, seems to have run its course, but Father wants me here for observation."

"Perhaps Father is just wanting to be quite sure our cook is indeed fit," and a brief smile crept over his beautifully haunting features.

"Yeah! You're probably right! I just feel so helpless lying here," and he rolled over to get a better look at Vincent. "Are there many?" He nodded in the other chambers.

"Enough, but it seems there are no more since the morning rush!"

"Thank God for that!"

"Have you any idea where it could have started?"

"No! There are so many down here now and the kitchen is always a busy place," he shrugged.

"I understand, don't worry, William, it will soon be over!"

"I hope so!"

With that, Vincent left and after a quick check on Father, he went back to see his son.

\*\*\*\*\*

Jacqui watched as Elliot dozed in the big leather armchair by the open fire. Once, not so long ago, he would never have done that, let alone sleep through a whole night! Perhaps he was mellowing, or perhaps he just didn't want to talk about what was really on his mind.

She had designs and material spread out all over the floor and Elliot had voiced his opinion on some of them earlier - with the result they had ended up having a fun fight which ran its course to more intimate and loving adventures! Yet still, there was something niggling at the back of his mind - but knowing not to press him about it, she just waited to see if he would eventually confide in her. It was often a waiting game with Elliot and besides, she really must get on with these last designs for the show.

When she was happy with the choice she finally made and was tidying up, Elliot stirred, as if on cue!

"What's the time?" he yawned at her.

"Time you got up and made some coffee for us!" she grinned back, before walking over on her knees to him.

"You still working on those things?" he asked in a gentle tone.

"I was just finishing!" She pulled herself up and sat on his knees. "You feel any better?"

He fell back into the depth of his chair, with his eyes closed. Slowly he looked at her and pulled her towards him in a gentle embrace, to give her a long lingering kiss. Finally, they parted.

"You finish clearing up and I'll put the coffee on, then we'll talk." Elliot rubbed his hands up and down her arms as he spoke. This action was his way of apologizing for not having said anything earlier.

Jacqui nodded. "Okay," and they both busied themselves for the next twenty minutes or so.

"Coffee's ready!" he shouted from the kitchen.

"Right, I'm coming!" With a quick glance in the mirror and screwing her nose up at her image, Jacqui joined Elliot to hear what had been on his mind these last two days.

"You knew something was troubling me, didn't you?" he smiled at her, over the rim of his coffee mug.

"Hmmmmm," she grinned back.

"Thought so." Elliot placed the mug on the table and wrapped his hands around it, as he stared at the whirlpool of darkness. "I'm not sure what worries me most about this," he sighed. "What has been - or what may come!"

"Elliot, you'll have to start at the beginning, you've lost me already!" she tried to joke gently, without interrupting his train of thought, but at the same time could sense his intense worry.

"On Friday I had a visit from a man called Sean Swain." He lifted his eyebrows as he looked up at her. " *'Who is this man'*, you are asking yourself and *'should I know him'*?" Getting up, he stretched, feeling the effect of sleeping in the chair. Then rubbing the back of his neck, headed for the study, with Jacqui slowly following in his wake, a frown covering her forehead; unsure whether or not he was ready to disclose his hidden fears. The questions she would like to ask would have to be held back until the time was right, as she knew that once he started to talk, he would not wish the flow to be interrupted.

With this resolve, she settled down beside him - not too close - but close enough to Elliot to know that her love and affection was within his grasp should he need it.

Legs stretched out in front of him, his hands in his pockets, he leaned his head back on the couch with his eyes closed.

"Do you know who he told me he was?" He turned his head towards her.

Shaking her head, but saying nothing, she waited.

"Bernie Spirko's brother!"

Jacqui's mouth opened in disbelief. "Spirko? As in nearly-destroyed-Vincent-and-Cathy, Spirko?" she asked, her voice husky and strained.

Elliot's eyes were once more closed and he smiled with the smallest of nods. "Yeah! That Spirko!" he sighed. "It seems that Bernie changed his name when he started in journalism. Anyway, the reason for Swain's visit was some papers that he had come across while clearing out his brother's room." Elliot shifted slightly, but remained stretched out with eyes closed. "Funny thing is, he seemed a nice enough guy. All he wants to do is clear up any misgivings regarding Bernie's death. Some of the papers he found were only doodles really - names here and there - ideas with Bernie's early thoughts. Places where he may have met a contact."

Uncoiling his body, he went and sat at his desk, laying his head in his hands for a few moments. Slowly he pushed them over his face and back down his hair to rest clasped hands behind his neck.

"He showed me some of them - ones with my name on! How Bernie came to the conclusion it was me he was meeting I'll probably never know - but he did - so that's why Sean arrived at my office. There was also mention of Catherine and a guy called Steven somebody. None of it made any sense to him and only some of it did to me - but the thing I'm not looking forward to is telling Catherine!"

By now, Jacqui felt it was safe to interrupt. "Do you have to? Can't you give him the answers he's looking for?" Getting up, she sat on the edge of his desk. "From what you say, he's only looking for answers, not trouble. How about having a word with Greg Hughes?"

"I thought of that, but in fairness I feel I ought to tell Cathy." This time, his hands reached for his wife.

"Yeah, perhaps you're right, but if you tell Cathy, then you may have to tell Joe and Greg anyway."

"I know that too," he sighed. "Maybe I'm letting this get to me too much - perhaps it's not as bad as it seems on the outside."

"Right - and you said yourself he seems an okay guy," she smiled and squeezed his hands tighter. What she knew of the time with Spirko was not very pleasant - and the young reporter had been found dead, without any explanations as to the reason why. What she did know was that it nearly tore Catherine, Vincent and the world Below apart, and that would be the paramount thought in Elliot's mind. Nothing must cause any connection with Catherine and her other world. Protection was the number one priority - even Jacqui was aware of that.

Elliot got up and put his arms around her. "Come on, let's call it a day." He held her close. "I'll sort it all out in the morning."

"Thanks for telling me, Elliot." She reached up and kissed him.

Switching off the lights, they left the conversation behind them and concentrated on the night that lay ahead.

\*\*\*\*\*

Mouse came running into Vincent's chamber and only just managed to stop himself from bumping into Catherine, who was about to lift JJ.

"Mouse!" Vincent snapped. "Take care. Jacob is still unwell."

Head dropping, he shuffled his left foot backwards and forwards, as he turned the paper in his hand over and over.

Catherine came to him and placed a hand on his dejected shoulders. "What is it, Mouse? It must be something important for you to come in with such speed!"

Slowly lifting his head, he handed her the sheet of paper, avoiding looking at Vincent.

"From Peter, for Father."

"Father," Vincent came over to them.

Nodding his head, Mouse stepped back as his large friend came nearer. Again he spoke to Catherine.

"Father sleeping - thought it might be important," then turning to Vincent added, "Came to give it to you."

Looking at Catherine and then back at Mouse, he lifted his large hand to rest it on the younger man's shoulder. "You did the right thing, Mouse." Then, after a pause added. "I'm sorry."

Mouse beamed and bounced up and down before leaving the chamber.

"Oh Vincent, he thinks so much of you, he gets so hurt when you scold him!"

Pulling her near, they hugged. "Yes. I shouldn't have been so harsh, but he understands."

Then JJ stirred and Catherine lifted him from his cot.

"Well now, how are we feeling, did Mouse wake you?" Pulling the shawl closer around him, he replied with a kick as his fist headed towards her long hair and a twinkle appeared in his baby blue eyes.

"He's much better, Catherine." Vincent leaned over her shoulder and rubbed his son's cheek, a smile creeping over his beautiful face. Turning to watch, Catherine was caught off guard when JJ reached his target and pulled his mother's hair.

"Ouch!" But the child's laughter was well worth the discomfort and Vincent could feel her relief at their son's apparent recovery. "The note, Vincent - you should go and see Father."

"Yes, it's probably the results of the tests," he sighed. "I don't like to disturb his sleep, but he'll be anxious to have this news."



"Go now, he will be expecting you soon anyway." They kissed - a feather's touch - but full of all the love and understanding only these two could possess, in such a world as theirs.

"I won't be long," and with a gentle movement of his hand he caressed her cheek before turning to leave and waken Father.

"Father, Father," Vincent's voice was low and soothing, but had almost the opposite effect he wanted.

"Vincent! What is it? What's happened?" He looked about him, as if unsure of his whereabouts.

"It's all right, Father! I'm sorry to wake you, but we have the results from Peter." He helped him up from the bed, bent to retrieve his heavy -but warm - dressing gown. "Here, best you put this on."

"Yes! Thank you!" and reaching for his stick they went to the desk and lit some candles. Searching for his glasses, Father opened the letter and leaned forward to read. "Ah huh!" He slowly nodded to himself before holding the letter out to Vincent. "I don't suppose we should be surprised with this, but I had hoped we could avoid it for some time yet!"

Vincent sighed as he sat across from Father. "There must be a fault in one of our filters for lead to have gotten into the water supply." He shook his head. "We have been very vigilant over our pipes and cleaning systems."

"Vincent," Father patted his son's hand. "We both know that some of the pipes are in desperate need of repair and in some cases, replacing!"

"Yes, that's true, but we watch them more closely than the others." He rose and paced the chamber, finally coming to rest against one of the smaller desks. Leaning forward with his head lowered between outstretched arms, his voice was soft. "It seems Mouse's find has come at an opportune time, Father." Then pushing himself up to his full height, he turned to face the older man. "The children; will they recover?"

"Oh yes." He sat back in the large leather chair that was practically moulded to his shape. "The medicine I have been giving them was the right antidote. However, Peter is sending me more - just to be sure!"

"And William?"

Father chuckled. "He discharged himself earlier, when he said his stomach thought his throat had been cut!" Smiling, he shook his head. "I'm afraid it will take more than the small dosage he contracted to put him out of circulation!"

Father was asking Vincent about Jacob Junior, when Alex and John arrived. "Father, may we see you?" Alex talked before he entered down the steps.

"Of course, of course, come in," and he waved them forward.

"You're back sooner than expected," Vincent's voice sounded concerned.

"Yes, we are." This time John came forward. "We found what we were looking for way over on the far east tunnels."

"What did you find, John?" Vincent came closer to the two men.

"You know we mended a filtering unit over there about a month ago. Well, we went back last night and found that a disused length of pipe had dropped on top of it and it had caused the damage."

"Not only that," Alex spoke up. "But the pipe was so old it was covered in lead paint and all the water that came into the filtering system was washing over it."

"It must have happened shortly after our last check up visit." The two men watched Father.

"What have you been able to do?" Father tapped his glasses against a book on his desk.

"Well, for now we've by-passed the broken filter, but this system shouldn't be in use for much longer."

"Yes, you're right." Father rose and was silent for a time. "Alex, John, prepare for a short trip, say two days." He looked at his son. "Vincent and Mouse will go with you. It seems there is a new water source."

"Where? We know most of the outlets." John turned from Father to Vincent and then back to Father.

"Mouse was down around the Catacombs and came ..."

"That's a dangerous area, Father." Alex showed great concern over this.

"We know," he sighed. "But we are in need of a fresh supply, urgently!" He turned to the men, standing watching him. "I don't want any more children or adults suffering if we can avoid it!"

They were quiet for some time, then John came forward. "If it's possible, Father, then we will do all we can."

"I know you will and, good luck."

Both men moved to leave. "Early start, Vincent." Alex turned to him.

"Yes, I'll be ready." His voice was low and thoughtful, then nodding, they left discussing tomorrow and what they hoped to find.

Vincent and Father talked a little more, then leaving to join Catherine, Father readied himself to do his rounds of the sick children, happier now that his diagnosis had been correct and they would soon be well again.

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Joe stirred and stretched to find the clock. His mouth felt like something had crawled in and died and his head was full of little men with mallets! Not finding the clock, he opened one eye cautiously. He shut it quickly as he couldn't see anything he recognized as his! A moan escaped his lips and turning very slowly, realized he was stark naked and the sheets of silk were most definitely not his! *'Oh God! Where the hell am I?'* He tried to concentrate, but this was hampered by the growing sickness coming from his lower body!

"Good afternoon, Mr. DA - nd it's through that door over there." Jenny threw him a towelling robe before opening the curtain wide.

Joe cringed and halted that smiling face that looked so healthy and.... happy? Showing great discretion she left the room as she told him. "Bacon and eggs in five minutes."

That did it! Robeless, he bolted through the bathroom door and only just made it! Some ten minutes later he surfaced with a towel wrapped around his more sensitive area and holding a thudding head, he expected nothing less than tortured laughter from Jenny, but instead he found a very caring and worried lady waiting for him to emerge.

"You okay, Joe?" Softly spoken, this statement didn't seem so out of place.

"I will be now, thanks!" As he watched her get him some hot coffee he stammered. "Was I bad.... I mean, how did we....?"

A smile and a twinkle in her eye made him worried, but she decided on honesty being the best policy and put his mind at ease.

"You were fine, till we got back here!"

Climbing the bar stool as if it was Mount Everest, he cringed. "I knew it - tell me the worst!" and his head promptly landed on the breakfast bar.

Handing him the robe again, she paused as she surveyed the sagging figure. She had planned on teasing him a little, but looking at him now, she didn't think he could handle it.

"There is no '*worst*,' Joe!" She placed some food in front of him, causing him to pull back. "By the time we got back here, I think everything just caught up with you and you just .... crashed out!"

"But..." He pointed to the bedroom, wondering how she managed to get him through there.

"You were putty in my hands!" and patting his cheek, she went through to make the bed as he attempted to eat while trying to remember!

Feeling better after the food, Joe went for a long, soothing shower and had a memory recall at the same time - it was hazy - and nearly all there and he knew Jenny could have led him a merry dance but thought more of her for being honest with him.

"Help! Who's that coming from my bathroom!" Jenny cried in mock alarm.

"Very funny!"

"Feeling better?" Her voice was softer and more gentle.

"Yeah, thanks Jen. You were terrific." He held out his arms and they hugged. "You put up with a lot from me last night?"

Nodding, she pulled back. "We all need someone to talk to, Joe. I'm here if you ever need me, you know that."

He lifted his hands and held her face as gently as he could without shaking, then bending forward, he kissed her. When they parted, both gasped for breath.

"Joe - I'm sorry... I didn't..." Jenny was flustered and lowered her head.

"No! It's okay. Hmmm," he cleared his throat. "I enjoyed it," and he lifted her face with his hand and gave her a butterfly kiss.

"Oh Joe!" Jenny fell into his arms. They stood holding each other for a long time and were content to stay that way. Then, with a sigh that seemed to come from his boots, they knew he should go.

"Listen, I'm tied up all next week, but I'll call and we'll make plans for next weekend, okay?"

"Great!"

Another kiss followed before he left.

They both had a lot to think about, but they were both smiling to themselves.

\*\*\*\*\*

Sean woke late and to his surprise, he was still in the bed. he had been awake on and off all night for the second night running and his body was crying out to him. God, he could murder a decent bath now. If only his money would spread to a better hotel. Sighing out loud, he put the kettle on for coffee, then changed his mind when he saw the colour of the water. This prompted him to dress and go to the little cafe he had found around the corner; warm and friendly, the coffee was hot and the food cheap, accompanied with a smiling face to pass the time of day with.

He had actually found out a lot there and that was the reason for his decision to go home again in the morning.

Elliot Burch had a varied reputation, but he also seemed to do a lot for people that was not public knowledge and these down-to-earth types made him realize he would have in no way been the cause of Bernie's death. There was also a lot he had found out about Catherine Chandler - now Wells. She worked hard and for the people; a Samaritan and now a mother. No! She couldn't have been involved, perhaps it was the office and not the woman Bernie was working on.

Well, whatever it was, he was heading back home in the morning... that was until - returning to his hotel room - he found a note asking him to meet with Burch on Monday afternoon. '*Should he cancel?*' He thought about it for some time, but finally he decided to go to the meeting - it might fill in some gaps. Yes, he would go!

Feeling much better, he grabbed his coat and went to the park for a long refreshing walk before another night feeling as if he was sleeping on the side of a mountain.

\*\*\*\*\*

Catherine let herself into her apartment and sighed at the realization it was the start of another week. Thankfully JJ was much better and safe in Mary's care. Vincent had awakened very early, knowing he would be very busy this week and might not see her again for days. She closed her eyes, sighing as the shower cascaded over her tired and weary body, letting her mind float to earlier that morning.

*'Catherine? You awake?' Vincent's beautifully velvet voice had stirred her and she snuggled up closer to him. 'Hmmmmmm.'*

*'Oh Catherine! I'll miss you!' then bending, he had kissed her head before reaching her lips as she turned to face him.*

*'I'll miss you too,' and without any more words they had loved. This was always an experience of great beauty and tender, loving emotions that continued to amaze her, even now.'*

Turning off the shower, she paused and whispered, "I love you, Vincent," as a surge within her told her he had received her love and was returning the feelings from deep within himself. As she dried off, she checked the answer phone and found there were some messages. Sitting on the edge of the bed, she pressed the play button. The first call was from Jenny.

*'See you for lunch Tuesday. Great weekend, great DA!'* There was nothing more and Catherine had to laugh. Jenny was winding her up!

The next call wasn't so funny. Elliot wanted to meet early this morning, could she get back to him. *'What was it this time?'* she thought. She couldn't help it, but even now, Elliot always caused her to fear the worst!

Glancing at her watch, she decided to wait until she was at the office before calling him back and, slowly getting up, she got ready for the day ahead.

"Hey, girlfriend. You look tired." Edie came over with coffee for her.

"Yes, I am. Little JJ wasn't too good over the weekend." Sipping the drink thankfully, she realized she had skipped breakfast. "How's Joe?"

"Ah, well now!" Edie grinned. "He's got a smile like a Cheshire Cat and ..."

"Radcliffe!"

"See you later," and Edie departed.

"Hi, Joe." Cathy smiled at him.

"Burch is looking for you! What's up?"

*'He was still fairly normal,'* she thought.

"Dont' know yet. I'm just going to call him," she shrugged her shoulders.

"Let me know if there's a problem, okay?" He left some files and handed them over. "Five o'clock tonight?"

"No, Joe - I'm swamped in there!"

"Tut, tut. It's the job, Radcliffe," and he turned her towards her office, grinning from ear to ear. They both knew he was keeping her office-bound and out of trouble the best he could, but it was frustrating some days. Like today!

Going back to her desk, she dumped the files on one side and bent over to grab the phone as she walked around to her swivel chair.

"Get me Elliot Burch please, Mavis." Landing on her chair with a thud, she shut her eyes and let her thoughts wander below ground and to the people she loved. This always helped to relax her and, with the knowledge that there was to be a meeting with Elliot, she could do with as much relaxation as possible. She didn't have long to wait as her phone buzzed and the light flashed.

"Mr. Burch for you, Mrs. Wells."

"Thanks, Mavis." She pressed the outside line. "Hi, Elliot. What can I do for you?"

"Hi, Cathy. How is everyone?"

She sensed he was holding back. "Oh, JJ was off colour for a couple of days, but we're all fine, thanks." The line went ominously quiet. "Elliot, what is it? Is it Jacqui?"

"No, she's working hard on her Charity Show," he sighed. "It's something I've got to talk to you about - but not over the phone. Can you come over?"

"When? Now?"

"Yes - I think it's that important!"

Catherine let out a deep breath. She couldn't think what was so urgent - but then, she had called on him at short notice many times before, so it was the least she could do in return.

"Yeah, okay."

"Great! See you soon!"

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"Come on in, Cathy," and he planted a kiss on her cheek, before guiding her to the chair across from him.

Settling herself down, she waited for Elliot to begin. When he had finished, the colour had gone from her face and she lowered her head into her hands.

"Oh no! Elliot, no! I thought that was all behind us!"

"I'm sorry, Cathy - but I had to tell you and the hard fact is, that he is coming here this afternoon!" Elliot came round the desk and took her hands in his.

Suddenly, she sat up, not wanting her emotions to get the better of her and alert Vincent. His work Below was too important for anything to distract him.

"Cathy, I don't want to pry into your private life, but tell me if I've got things right." Sitting back, he watched her regain her calm, then he began. "This all came to a head at that penthouse on Sutton, where we found Father, right?"

She nodded.

"Now, whoever - and I don't want to know who - set us up, was using my name as a means to get to you and expose Vincent." He paused. "I'm not sure why he went to so much trouble, but he must have been the one who killed Bernie after he had done his job and caused Vincent a great deal of anguish - what did he have, Cath, do you know?"

"Some photos and a tape." She shrugged. "They were never found."

"Okay, so we know there's nothing around that will be connected to Vincent - who as a result became very ill at the time, yes?"

"Yes. It had a devastating effect on him and those close to him." She sighed. "We went though a lot, Elliot. I don't want this starting up again!"

Elliot rose and paced the office floor, hands deep inside his pockets as he tried to work out the best way of

getting Mr. Swain out of their hair.

"How much is he aware of, Elliot?"

"Not a lot, so that's a good thing for us!" He turned back to her. "And you know, I think if I tell him exactly what I've just said -but avoiding any mention of Vincent - I'm convinced it will be enough to satisfy his curiosity!"

"Yes, but what could you say?" Her eyes were pleading.

"How about, he was used as a set up and paid the price?" Elliot pressed his hand to his forehead. "A double deal situation?"

"Do you think he will go for it?" She rose and then looked out of the window, trying to understand this man.

"Don't see why not," Elliot shrugged. "He's only slightly curious - I think it's given him something to do." Elliot squeezed her hands then went back to sit at the desk. "His wife walked out him and he's with his elderly parents."

Catherine paused, then nodded. "Okay, Elliot. Can I leave it with you? I don't want to get involved!"

"Sure, Cathy. I owe you," he smiled and his beard sparkled in the sunlight. "It'll be okay."

"Thanks, Elliot," and Cathy kissed his cheek. "Listen, tell Jacqui to give me a ring. I want to hear all about her show."

"Will do and don't worry. I'll get back to you."

"You're a good friend, Elliot." With that, she turned and left his elegant office, safe in the knowledge that he would keep his word.

Getting back to her office desk, she sipped at the coffee which tasted so good and nibbled at her chicken sandwich, noticing that it didn't stick in her throat as she imagined it would.

"Are you okay?" Joe stuck his head round the door.

"Yeah, no problem."

"And Elliot?"

"Oh, Joe - Don't be so suspicious!" and she pulled another pile of folders in front of her.

"Will that lot be ready by five?"

"No - but I'll take them home and work on them tonight!"

"I'll need them tomorrow, Radcliffe," and with that, he grinned at her and left her snowed under with work - which she was very glad of at this moment.

By late afternoon, her thoughts were filled with Vincent. Not in connection with Swain, as funnily enough, she had great faith that Elliot would resolve the situation - but with the task Below. Somehow she felt that it was far more dangerous than he had admitted to her, and she was getting such jumbled feelings, it disturbed and distracted her. Finally, she could cope no more and with files and coat, left the office and headed home to her apartment.

Dumping everything, she had a quick shower, changed into casual gear and headed Below. She would see JJ and let Father know about Swain.

Hugging her son, she kissed him goodnight and thanked Mary once more, before going to see Father.

"Catherine!" He took off his glasses and turned to face her. "I wasn't expecting you."

"I had to come and see you. I've learned something you ought to know about." She squeezed his hand and sat

opposite him. Taking a deep breath, she told him of her visit to Elliot and all that he had told her about Spirko's brother.

"Did Elliot get back to you yet?" He looked worried.

"Yes! It's all right, Father. Elliot's explanation seemed to satisfy him, so Swain is away home with a very flattering introductory letter for him, regarding a job he hoped to get!

"Ah! Our Elliot never misses a trick!" Father was visibly relieved.

"Yes, it was a little something he had up his sleeve as usual," she smiled to herself - remembering another such occasion.

"Are you all right, my dear? This must have upset you." He leaned forward.

"It did, Father, but now my concern is for Vincent." She rose and wandered around the chamber.

"Vincent?" Father looked surprised. "I don't understand."

"Neither do I - it's just an inner feeling I have." She turned to stand beside him. "Is this really a hazardous trip, Father?"

"No, not really. They should be back the day after tomorrow." He turned to watch her. "Please don't worry - I'll get a message to you if need be!"

"I'm sorry, Father. Perhaps I'm just over-tired."

"You look it. You should try and get some sleep." With this, he rose and placed his arm around her shoulders.

"You're right, as usual," and with a kiss on his cheek, said. "Goodnight."

"Goodnight, my dear."

Catherine spent a couple of hours working, before falling into a deep and restless sleep.

\*\*\*\*\*

Vincent was quiet as they walked along; Mouse chattered non-stop, but Vincent was not concerned - his mind was on Catherine. She had been tired this morning, he knew, but her mixed emotions over the last few hours had been giving him reason to worry. At one time, she felt very near, perhaps it was JJ again? No! They were still within the range of the pipes, so a message would have been sent if he was needed.

"Oh, Catherine!" He stopped suddenly without realizing it and leant against a rough wall.

"Vincent, are you okay?" John had retraced his steps when he noticed Vincent was some way behind.

"Yes! Thank you." He moved away from the wall and started walking again. "I'm sorry, my mind was on.... other things."

"Well, I'm sorry too, because it looks like this is where we might have to stay tonight!" John didn't sound too happy about it.

"No! Not here!" Vincent surveyed the area and finally getting his bearings, made a decision. "We must travel another hour, there will be a stream and softer ground."

Looking at each other, they agreed and, lifting their packs once more, headed off in silence.

The hour had passed quickly enough and a fire and food soon revived the small group. Relaxing with hot coffee, they listened again to Mouse and his description of the crawlway - its distance and the cavern which held the wall.

"How full was this well, Mouse? What level did it come to?" Alex was working things out and decided that *'the well'* must be filled from Above as there was no underground stream or river as low down as Mouse has

described.

"Very deep well - sealed at bottom maybe," he shrugged. "Saw three tunnels coming off from inside well wall!" He frowned and rested his head in his hands as he studied the crumpled paper in front of him. Legs crossed, he was deep in thought when Vincent turned around, causing him to jump.

"What, Vincent? What's wrong?" Watching, John and Alex waited for his reply.

"I'm not sure, Mouse - something tells me we must take great care here."

"Not Catherine?"

Vincent smiled at his young friend and reached out and squeezed his shoulder. "No, she sleeps now," and nodding to the others, added. "And so should we."

"You're right, Vincent. We will need to be well rested for tomorrow," and John patted the larger man's shoulder as he passed to his sleeping bag. "Goodnight."

"Goodnight." Vincent lay down, clutching the pouch with his rose. He could feel Catherine beside him and soon fell asleep with her deep in his thoughts.

\*\*\*\*\*

They awoke early and were soon near the Catacombs and Mouse's latest discovery. Alex was leading at a steady pace when Mouse shouted "No!"

They stopped short.

"What do you mean, 'no'?" Alex seemed annoyed, he had been in deep thought about the drainage tunnels leading into the wall of the seemingly manmade well.

"Not that way!" he pointed back the way they had come. "This way."

"Good God! No wonder we never saw it before." John was impressed and Mouse bounced on the spot, waiting for Vincent to take a closer look.

"You're right, John." Vincent examined the wall that had an almost dimensional look. "We must have passed by here many times and never seen this."

"Yes - you would probably pass by it." Alex was now standing beside him. "It was designed like this for a purpose." He let out a deep breath. "Maybe as some kind of deterrent, or just a mean of protection for the entrance. It might have been the only water supply at the time!"

"It's very clever," John stepped back. "Even from here you would never see it as an entrance!"

"How did you find it, Mouse?" Vincent turned to the beaming face, which fell on looking at him.

"Mouse tripped, rushing to get back!" He slowly lifted his head and saw the amused looks. "Noticed this from the ground - look!" and he motioned them to crouch down.

Sure enough, it had a different concept from that position and you could tell it was an opening of some kind.

"Perhaps we should now continue." Vincent motioned Mouse to lead and once more, they were on their way.

The walkway was very narrow and at times Vincent had to turn sideways to pass through. However, this was not a long corridor and before long it started to widen, then suddenly they came across a pile of rubble.

"Here, Vincent. Crawlway over there." He pointed to the far right side.

"Yes, I see," and they inspected the space Mouse had crawled through on his first visit.

"You'll never get through there in a million years, Vincent!" Alex slapped his sides as he pulled himself up from his kneeling position he'd been in to use the flashlight.



"So it seems!" Vincent felt very uneasy. "Did you find signs of another opening before, Mouse?"

He shook his head and shrugged his shoulders. "Mouse only had a lantern and a small torch."

"Yes - he could have missed something." John was leaning over, looking at the rubble around the entrance.

"It's very soft stuff, we could make it bigger without much trouble - just hold us up a bit, that's all!"

Vincent and John started to work together as Mouse and Alex made refreshments. They were only working a short time, when John shouted. "Look out! I think it's giving way again!" and he jumped back to make room for Vincent - who just wasn't quick enough.

There was dust everywhere and although some rubble fell on Vincent, he was unhurt and pulled himself out, none the worse for wear.

Coughing, he accepted a drink from Mouse. "Thanks, Mouse." His voice was husky, but still velvety soft.

Slowly the air cleared and Alex's whistle could be heard vibrating around the small cavern. "Will you look at that?"

It seemed they had started a knock-on effect and now, with the dust settling, they could see a beautifully designed archway entrance with a corridor behind. Pointing at the pattern around the arch, Mouse stuttered. "More like that inside."

Although there was a great deal of soft rock in the way, they could get through into the main chamber without much trouble. Once inside, they were amazed at its height and size. Perfectly rounded with the well in exact dimensions, the centre of attention.

"Vincent, look!" Alex waved him over to one of the walls. "There were some kind of bathing rooms!" The small wall hid a series of seats with sunken floors, in two stages.

"Good grief, Vincent," John joined them. "There could be all sorts of thing hidden behind these walls!"

He sighed. "Yes, I think perhaps you're right, but let's not forget the reason we came here."

"I know, but you have got to admit it sure has promise!" He thrived on adventure and his mind was figuring out plans already!

"Another time, John." Vincent's voice was tense, but patient, knowing how much could be discovered here. Joining Alex and Mouse at the wall face, Vincent noticed the same inscription as they had seen on the outside. "Alex, do you recognize that?" and he pointed to the design.

"No - but I'll sketch it before I leave."

Vincent nodded, then reaching for a flashlight, he lowered himself over the side of the rounded well to inspect its contents. It must have been his weight - but before anyone could do anything, the wall crumbled and Vincent disappeared over the side, into the darkness.

"'VINCENT!'" Three voices were heard in unison and all lifted their lights as one.

"Vincent! You there? We can't..."

"Look there!" Mouse interrupted John.

"Yes, I see. God! Yes, he's holding onto one of the inlets."

They shifted their lights.

"I'm all right, but you must hurry with a rope!" Vincent's voice was strained. "This is very chalky and soft." He gasped for air. "I don't think I can hold on for much longer."

The three worked quickly and quietly as they could hear plopping sounds, as if rubble was still falling into the water. As they didn't know how deep the water was, they couldn't afford to take chances.

"Here, grab hold." John motioned Mouse to put his arms around his waist as he and Alex fed the rope down to Vincent.

"That's it." Alex kept the rope and light towards the dangling figure below.

"Hurry!"

"I can't..."

They were too late. Vincent's voice trailed off - they heard a splashing sound and then silence. You could hear the tense atmosphere and the silence! The men were too frightened to speak and held their breath, waiting. It seemed like forever, but only a few seconds had ticked by before they heard his voice.

"Mouse! It's all right! I'm all right!"

They could hear him splashing about as if trying to find something to hold onto. Between breaths he shouted for them to lower a light down by rope.

This done, they could see much better and Vincent was able to find another of the inlets just above his head.

"Vincent, are you hurt?" Alex shouted down.

"Nothing broken," and he pulled himself up onto a ledge below the lowest of the inlets. "Owww."

"What? What is it?" Mouse shouted this time, knowing his friend sounded hurt.

"Nothing! I'm all right!" He couldn't tell them that he thought he'd damaged his ribs; cracked probably, with the awkward way he fell. Balanced on the ridge, he leaned inside the inlet to get his breath back and take stock of himself, as he felt dizzy and it was an effort to keep awake, but he knew he couldn't give into it, he must keep alert. "Catherine, oh Catherine," he whispered. He could see her, feel her - she would give him the strength he was looking for. Holding light to his rose, all went black.

"Vincent!"

He spun his head round to see Alex dangling behind him with another rope at his side.

"My friend, you took me by surprise!"

"Sorry, Vincent! I think you were out for a while, we've been calling you for ages!" His voice was quiet and caring and so good to Vincent's ears. "Here, let's get this around you," and he pulled the loose rope inside. "I'll have to go up first, then I can help to support you, so take your time."

"Thank you." He held out his hand. "Before you go, can I see your light?"

"Sure, why?" He took the torch from his belt.

"I'll show you," and with that, shone the light into the small tunnel. "Look there." Vincent could see far enough inside, but Alex needed the light.

"It's some sort of barrier - dam?"

"Yes, and if I'm not mistaken, the others will have them too," then he pointed to the left corner. "Can you see over there - that rod or rope going upwards?"

"Well then, what the devil are we going hanging around here?" And attempting a laugh, Alex pushed himself back and then up. Once back on solid ground, he joined forces with Mouse and John, to pull Vincent up.

Stretched out with Mouse kneeling beside him, Vincent had time to check on his body and to instruct John and Alex how to strap him up. Then he explained to Mouse about the control of the water flow and before he had finished, Mouse was scurrying away looking for some unknown means to get Vincent's theory to work. He was true to form - within minutes he found the first control underneath a hinged stone (*that was a mystery in itself! Ropes with knotted ends!*) John joined him.

"I think it's animal hair, or something; it's sure not rope as we know it." He turned to Vincent who Alex had helped up.

"Shall we try it?" His voice was strained.

"Okay." John turned to Mouse. "You do the honours, ol' buddy," he grinned at him.

"You got us into this."

Slowly at first, Mouse tried to pull the rope. Suddenly, it came loose and he fell backwards landing with a thud. This created some relief to the situation and the chuckling sounds reverberated around the walls.

"Has it broken?" Alex asked him.

"No, I don't think so," John pulled at it again and more came away, but suddenly stopped. "That's it, Vincent."

"All right, let's see if my theory was right," and they all went back to the well.

They could hear the sound of running water and lowering the light they could see the small waterfall filling the well.

"Bingo!" John was delighted. "Hey - it's working!"

They lowered a can down to check its worth and when they retrieved it, Vincent chose to try it.

"It's fine! Refreshing and cool, but let's seal it and get Father to check it."

Within the hour they were ready to head off home. The water sample and sketches safely tucked away. They made their way towards the corridor and their way out.

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Catherine stretched and forced herself to get into the shower. She was tired and her restless night had taken its toll - another couple of hours would have done wonders! Never mind, there was the prospect of lunch with Jenny and just thinking of her brought a smile to Catherine's pale face. Nevertheless, she couldn't keep Vincent from her thoughts. At some stage in the night, it was as if he was beside her, holding her tight to reassure her that all was well. It had been so intense she had awakened, thinking he was actually there beside her and was bitterly disappointed when she found she was alone.

"Cathy! You got those files ready?" Joe was behind her as she entered the office.

"Yeah, Joe! All done," and she smiled to herself as she waved the files, knowing Joe had thought otherwise.

"Okay. Yeah, okay." He was off guard. "That's fine - bring them in, will you, when you're ready."

"Sure, Joe!" and a cheeky grin spread across her beautiful face. "Give me five minutes."

Nodding and with hands in his pockets, Joe returned to his office in a quick retreat!

The morning flew by and Catherine only looked up from her desk to see what the noise was in the outer office. She jumped up from her swivel chair and felt a glow of joy as Jenny approached with JJ in his buggy.

"Hi, Cathy." Jen kissed her friend's cheek. "Look what I found outside!"

Lifting her son from the buggy, He gave her a wonderful smile and a "Mmmmm," that caused her heart to beat.

Edie came over to join the group that was crowding around this popular figure, who was having the time of his life! His little smile broke their hearts and his giggles finished them off!

"Hey, girlfriend!" she grinned. "You trying to tell Joe something?"

Cathy laughed and winked at Jenny before regaining her son from Edie's grasp and going back to her office.

"Where did you get him, Jen?" she asked, strapping JJ back into the buggy.

"I left work early and took some time in the park." Bending, she let JJ grab her finger. "Jamie was taking him for a walk so I '*kidnapped*' him!"

"Oh, I'm so glad you did." Catherine bent to give him a kiss as Joe poked his head around the door.

"This a private party or can anyone join in?"

"Come on in, Joe." Catherine's happiness was evident.

"Well now, let me see the cause of so much disruption in the office!" and getting down on his haunches, he started up an in-depth conversation with this beautiful child. "He has your smile, Radcliffe," and he grinned as he pulled himself back up to his full height.

"Thanks, Joe." He was a real softy at heart, and she knew he was telling her more.

"You two going to lunch?"

"Yeah." Jenny found her voice at last. "And don't tell me, I'm always hungry!" They shared the joke and Catherine collected her things. "Ready?"

"Oh Jen, can I have a word?" Joe held out his hand to gently hold her arm.

"I'll see you at the lift, Jen. Rita wants to see Jacob before we leave," and Catherine tactfully left them in her office.

"Something wrong, Joe?" Jen asked quietly.

"Nothing. I... I missed you." He was a little flushed but went on. "Is Friday still on?"

"You bet your sweet life," and kissing his cheek, she whispered. "Phone me, okay?"

"Okay." Relieved, Joe smiled with pleasure as he stood watching her join Cathy at the lift, and throw a quick glance back over her shoulder.

Catherine never mentioned Joe until they were seated at their table, with JJ in his high-chair beside her.

"Well, are you going to tell me about it or not?" she demanded.

Smiling, Jenny leaned forward towards JJ. "Nothing to tell."

"Oh - you!" She knew Jen was stringing her along. "That's okay; wasn't all that interested anyway," and she shrugged her shoulders.

They stared at each other, then burst out laughing. With their little game over, Jenny filled Catherine in on the events of her weekend with Joe. Then, when the tale was told, Catherine sat back, nodding slowly.

"That's great, Jen. I'm so happy for ..." Before she could finish, a sharp pain struck her sides and she doubled over. At the same moment, Jacob let out a cry - for no reason - then started to whimper, as he also was in some pain.

"Cathy? What is it?" Jenny came around to help her friend. "Are you okay? What can I do?"

Catherine slowly pulled herself up and looked worried. She undid the safety harness to the high chair and lifted her son, who had his little arms outstretched, begging to be lifted into her arms. Looking at Jenny's worried face, she gave a quick brave smile as she lulled Jacob into quietness.

"I'm okay, I - I think it's Vincent!"

"Vincent?" Jen was whispering - her voice a little shaky.

Nodding, Catherine gathered their things. "He's been hurt somehow."

"You feel each other that much?"

"Yes, we feel each other that much!"

"You sure you're all right, Cath?"

"Yes, I'm sure," and checking that JJ was settled into his buggy added. "Would you tell Joe I won't be back today?"

"Well, I wasn't... Sure I will."

"Thanks, Jen. I'll keep in touch."

"You got it," and with a kiss to JJ, they parted company.

Jenny sighed as she stood and watched Cathy disappear into the surging crowd. Who would have thought it, Catherine Chandler, Assistant DA and now the wife and mother of two extraordinary beings.

Understanding the connection that she and Vincnet had was difficult enough, but it seemed that JJ had inherited this phenomenon too and was capable of feeling his father's emotions.

Looking around, Jenny pulled herself from her thoughts and headed back to her office to phone Joe. A warm feeling swept through her at the thought of him and she was looking forward to their meeting on Friday.

\*\*\*\*\*

Catherine returned to her apartment and put JJ down in his playpen while she showered and changed. She wasn't sure what had happened but her instincts and feelings told her that Vincent was hurt and in some pain - how badly she couldn't tell, but at least he was alive and perhaps on his way home.

She took JJ to the nursery first, as she was exhausted after his day's activities, then she went straight through to see Father.

"Catherine!" Father was surprised to see her and felt concerned. She looked very tired and she was very pale. "What's happened?"

She hugged him and frowned slightly as she relayed her afternoon over a cup of Father's best brew.

Shaking his head slowly, he took off his glasses and placed them on a pile of books in front of him.

"Catherine - you two are amazing," he sighed slowly. "Can you feel him now?" His voice was almost a whisper.

"Yes - he's hurt." There was a pause. "But not - no more than that."

Nodding, he gave her a reassuring smile. "If they are on their way they should be near the pipes soon and I'm sure they will send word to us!" He rose from his chair and came to stand beside her, leaning heavily on his walking stick. "Besides, they just may be home tonight as planned. So why don't you go and get some rest."

Letting out a deep breath, Catherine shut her eyes for a second, then rose from the large chair. "I'll be in our chamber if you hear anything, Father."

Laughing lightly, Father watched her for a moment then commented. "I dare say you just might know before I do!"

A smile spread over her tired face as she left, then nodding to herself she thought, *'I daresay I will!'*

Back in their chamber, Catherine threw herself onto the large cozy bed and wriggled around to get the most comfortable position, closing her eyes, her thoughts homed in on Vincent. As much as she wanted to go to him, she couldn't, as Vincent would be concerned, knowing she was wandering about the tunnels - besides, that was an area she had no knowledge of and would probably get lost.

Feeling drowsy, she turned her mind to their last visit to their Music chamber. Oh yes, they'd had a wonderful night. There had been a variety of chamber music from assorted artists and composers which had enhanced

the beauty of it all. It had been during the break in the '*Gabriel Trial*', when Vincent had surprised her with candles and wine and they had both settled down with this and the special love their feelings created. With these soothing thoughts, she drifted deeper into sleep.

*'Oh Vincent - this is wonderful.' She turned to face him and they lost each other in their eyes.*

*'You've been working so hard, Catherine. I felt a bit of relaxation was called for,' and he lowered his head for their lips to meet in a long lingering kiss.*

*When they came up for air, their love was floating around the small chamber like a swirling mist.*

*'Catherine, you are my life. Without you I am an empty soul; nothing can replace your love,' and he gathered her into his arms to cradle and feel her closeness.*

*'I love you, Vincent - I've loved you since our first meeting.' She paused. 'Only, I didn't know it then.'*

*He laughed softly and snuggled into her neck to cover it with tender, tantalizing kisses. 'You don't know what you did to me those first few months without you.' His breath was hot on her neck, but she didn't move as he went on. "I was changed forever, you were constantly in my thoughts." He sighed and pulled back to look into her lovely face. Lifting his hand, he gently caressed her cheek, before following her jaw line until he finally reached her lips.*

*Her eyes closed, Catherine's heartbeat fluttered. Being with Vincent had always given her emotions a field day, but at intimate times like this she was unable to control herself.*

*'Vincent.' His name was a whisper that was so quiet it was lost as their lips met once again.*

*The music floated through the grating to rest on their stretched out bodies as they made the most beautiful love. Their time in this chamber was always special to them. They had overcome many difficulties and emotional times here and this was just another in their union.*

Catherine was restless as she came out of the depths of her dream. "Vincent, Vincent." She was repeating his name over and over and was finding it difficult to pull herself out of her dream world and back to the real one. "Oh Vincent, please be well!" and she buried her face into the pillow.

Suddenly, her feelings of unrest were replaced by a lightheadedness that could only mean one thing!

Slowly, she turned from the pillow and lifted herself to look towards the chamber entrance and there, leaning against the archway holding onto his side, was her beautiful and magnificent Vincent.

"Vincent! Oh, Vincent!" And in one quick move she was in his arms.

He flinched slightly, but the pain was worth it, just to hold her close to smell her fragrance and feel her love.

"You knew?" His voice was like music to her ears. "You felt my pain?"

She sighed before she pulled back to look up into his powder blue eyes that showed signs of strain and lack of sleep.

"Yes - I felt your pain, but Vincent, so did Jacob."

He stepped into the chamber and sat on the side of the bed. "JJ?"

"Hmmm. He's your son in all ways, Vincent!" and Catherine knelt on the floor in front of him to rest her head on his lap.

They stayed that way for a few moments, then Vincent ran his hand through her hair.

"I must shower and get another bandage for these ribs."

"Does it hurt much?" She pulled herself up to kiss him and hold him close.

"Not now," and he smiled at her as he returned her attentions.

"Father will want to see you." She ran her hand down his neck.

"I'd better shower first," and getting up with great care, he took his towel and robe that Catherine offered. Her eyes twinkled with excitement. "You want me to scrub your... back?"

Head to one side and with a boyish grin, Vincent retorted. "You may have to, I'm not exactly flexible at the moment!" His whisper was pure temptation and as their eyes met, everything else was blocked out.

Catherine sighed. She knew that at this time, what they wanted the most, was impossible and their patience was once more being tested. Dropping her eyes, she walked with him to the shower and helped him remove his layers of clothes, before leaving him to soak away the discomfort of his fall and the travel of the last few days. They hugged and kissed with a tender movement, knowing that inside they were both harbouring stronger emotions.

"You'll be okay?" Her voice was a husky whisper.

"Oh, Catherine. If you don't go now, I'll never be able to recover!" His pain from his feelings and injury both showed through.

"I'll go for Father and collect JJ."

He sighed. "Yes, I'll be ready by the time you get back."

With a fleeting kiss and a loving smile, she was gone.

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"You look tired, Vincent. Perhaps you should rest now?" Father secured the strapping around his ribcage and stood back beside the bed, a hand on his shoulder. "We can talk tomorrow."

"I think you're right, Father," he nodded. "Thank you."

"Goodnight." He turned to Catherine. "You too are worn out and need a good sleep too, so don't be so stubborn and go to bed!" He was being stern, but his voice was full of love.

"I will," and she gave him a butterfly kiss on his cheek.

Even with his beard, Father was always a little flushed whenever Catherine kissed him. Her love for him was another side of her that he cherished with great affection.

"Yes! Well! Goodnight, my dear."

"Goodnight, Father." Catherine turned back into the chamber to tuck JJ in before joining Vincent.

She could feel him watching her every move and the warmth inside her had grown to a volcanic eruption by the time she lay beside him in the bed.

"I love you," were the only words spoken between them, as their feelings took over and guided them through the night, until exhaustion and Vincent's injury got the better of them.

\*\*\*\*\*

Catherine had wakened early and after a quiet but quick goodbye to Vincent, she had gone off to work. There was a lot to catch-up on after yesterday and with her not being at the apartment, Joe was probably a little concerned.

"Hey, Radcliffe. You okay?" Joe shouted through the empty office.

"Yeah, Joe. Everything's fine," and giving him a reassuring smile, she leaned against his open doorway. "Sorry about yesterday."

"Hey! It's okay, Jenny explained," and he looked up from his desk for only a fleeting glance, afraid his eyes

would give more away than he intended. "Vincent all right?"

"Ah-ha." She straightened up. "Cracked ribs and a few bruises, but he has great healing powers."

Joe laughed, relaxed with her now. "In more ways than one!"

"Oh you!" and she threw a knowing look in his direction before going to her own office.

'*Oh no!*' She looked at the pile of folders staring back at her from her desk. '*Joe?*' He'd added to the pile she had yesterday! '*I'll brain him,*' she thought, then just as she was about to start on reducing the demon files, her phone light flashed. With no one at the switchboard yet, she took the call direct.

"Catherine Wells' office."

"Thought you'd be in early." The voice of Greg Hughes came gently down the line.

"Hi, Greg - Something I can do for you?" She glanced through another file as she spoke.

"Don't know, maybe."

"What, Greg?"

"We had a bus crash yesterday on the interstate, just outside town; only one person was killed but most of the passengers were hurt."

"That's not our territory, Greg!" She continued to scan the files.

"Yes, I know that, but the dead man had a notebook on him with your name in it and Elliot Burch's." He sighed. "All the luggage was destroyed, so the only thing we have on him is his name and the notebook."

"The name, Greg. What was the name?" She stopped what she was doing to concentrate on his next words.

"Swain. Sean Swain." He paused. "I tried to get Elliot but he's away out of town on business for a couple of days, so I thought you ..."

"Yes, I know the name, but I never met the man!" She rested her forehead on her hands as she leaned forward over the desk. "Greg, I think we should talk about this."

"Is this some sort of investigation, Cathy?"

"No - no, nothing like that! Look, meet me for a coffee in about twenty minutes."

"Sure, twenty minutes, no problem."

She could almost hear him shrug his shoulders as she replaced the phone. Lifting the files she had completed the day before. Cathy went through to Joe's office and dumped them on his desk.

"What's the hurry?" He was snowed under himself by now and hardly lifted his head.

"Got an appointment, I'll be gone about an hour."

"Okay, Cathy. But I need those files today!"

"All right, Joe! You'll have them," she snapped at him before leaving.

Joe's head jerked up as he watched her almost run from the office. '*What now?*' he wondered.

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Catherine watched Greg Hughes as he stirred his coffee for the hundredth time.

"You want this report filed?"

"No, Greg. Can you do that for me?" She was once more calling in a favour.

"Hell, Cathy, why didn't you just tell me. I may have been able to help." His voice was quiet but he made his



point. They had been friends for a long time.

"Elliot said he'd deal with it so I ..."

"Elliot! There are always '*Elliot's*' in my life." His frustration was showing.

"I'm sorry, Greg. I should have told you, but you really couldn't have done anything."

He looked up at her, nodding slowly, knowing only too well that she was right. "Yes, I know," he sighed. "Okay, I'll deal with it off the record."

"Thanks, Greg."

"You got it."

They parted with a smile, their friendship still intact.

Feeling sorry for the man who had come to find out about a dead brother and who had ended up dead himself, she returned to work and the pile of files that always seemed to grow every time she moved out of the office!

Catherine didn't stop until she was finished at six-thirty and was relieved to hand over all the completed files. "I'm out of here, Joe! I'll see you tomorrow."

"Okay, Radcliffe, and thanks."

With a wave of her hand, Catherine left the office, her mind full of warming thoughts and anticipation knowing she would soon be with her family.

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Father had been up early that morning to test the water Vincent had brought back from their trip. He was very pleased with the results and was impatient to tell the others.

He didn't have long to wait as Vincent arrived with Pascal and Mouse, who in turn were closely followed by John and Alex.

"Good morning, Father." Vincent seemed to have no visual effect from his adventure.

"Ah, Vincent! Everyone - please come in," and he scattered some books to make room on the desk for the new plans and maps. "My goodness, you have been busy!" He turned to the men.

"We couldn't sleep, Father. We had to get down what we found on paper while it was fresh in our minds," and Alex placed a friendly arm around a beaming Mouse.

"Yes, it was important that we did, Father." John had come forward first. "I've been working with Pascal on the new pipes and it seems re-directing the water flow isn't going to be a problem." He was very pleased with the system they had designed. He spread the large plan across the desk. Mouse came forward and showed Father how they were also going to place some more '*message pipes*' down, which could be used as a standby system if anything should go wrong.

"That's truly wonderful." Father was beaming at them all. "You have done an excellent job, but I suspect that now you should rest."

"How are you feeling today, Vincent?" Father surveyed his son with doctor's eyes, seeing he was uncomfortable, sitting for any length of time.

"Much improved, thank you," and he adjusted his position once more in the large chair.

Father frowned, but said nothing more on the subject, then he turned his attention to Alex. "You have something of interest to show me?"

"Well, it's not complete yet and I hope to find out more on my next trip, but I thought you might like to see

this," and with eager hands, placed his assorted sketches in front of them.

"Where did these come from?" Father asked as he replaced his glasses on the end of his nose.

"Most of them from inside the main chamber, but this one.... and these two, came from around the archway and the well - what was left of them."

"And is there some significance to all this?" Father looked over them again. "I'm afraid I'm not into history of this kind!"

"As I said, there is still a lot to copy down yet, but what I've come up with is this," and pulling his chair closer he laid the sketches out in order. "Right, it seems that whoever these people were, they appear to be descendants of the three main sixteenth century Mexican tribes - The Maya, the Toltec and the Aztec." He stopped for breath and frowned with concentration. "To keep things short, Father, they must have fled this far north to escape the growing unrest at the time. Anyway, basically what we have found was one of a series of honeycombed rooms that most have been covered in by one means or another over the years." Leaning slowly back, he accepted the tea Vincent had made during the explanations to Father.

"Now the one Mouse found is the washing chamber. The well being the main source of water supply, it was used not only for the washing of clothes, but also for the people to wash themselves - a sort of community bath house!"

Alex looked at Vincent and then back at Father.

"Then you feel that somewhere down there, there may be more of these chambers?"

Vincent was now standing as he asked this question, due to some discomfort. "Hmmm - yes I do, but they are probably well and truly buried by now!"

"Extraordinary!" Father took off his glasses and shook his head. "We have found some amazing things Below, but I think this will take some beating!"

"Well done, Alex." Vincent patted his shoulder. "You have worked hard on this."

"Vincent, it's a great challenge to me and gives me great pleasure." He rose from his chair. "But it's getting late and I should be going."

"Thank you, Alex." Father was indeed pleased as he had more to put into his record books.

When they were alone, Vincent and Father talked of many things, but mostly of Catherine and the encounter with Spirko's brother.

"Do you think he's truly gone, Father?" Vincent's sigh was a tired one.

Father nodded at his son. "Yes." He put an arm around his shoulder. "I'm sure of it, he won't be back."

"I do hope not, Father." Slowly he rose and headed off to his own chamber.

Watching him leave, Father was glad that Catherine would be home soon, his son was not as well as he led them to believe.

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Vincent was stretched out on the bed with Jacob beside him when Catherine came in. She sensed he wasn't feeling too well, or he would have come to meet her at the basement entrance. Coming over to sit beside them, she kissed his tired features and lifted their son.

"Mmmm," Jacob giggled and wanted only to be put on the floor to explore the tables and chairs. Giving him his wish, Catherine watched, keeping one eye on him all the time.

"He's growing so quickly, Vincent," she sighed. "And his connection to you, too."

Vincent pulled himself up on the bed and took her gently into his arms. "Our connection, Catherine," he corrected, kissing her head. "He is part of us both!"

Looking over at their son, they smiled as he sat in the middle of a rug with a book, talking to the pictures - by his way of things.

"Has he eaten?" Catherine's voice was a whisper.

"Yes. Mary gave him supper earlier."

"Right, a bath, then bed for you, young man!" and leaving Vincent, she lifted up the happy little bundle and prepared him for the night ahead. "What about you, Vincent, have you had anything yet?"

"No. I was waiting for you to come home."

"Hmmm, I thought as much." She smiled at him. "There's chicken salad in that carrier," she glanced over her shoulder. "Can you get it ready?"

He nodded, and by the time JJ was in bed for the night, they were ready to sit down and eat. They talked as they ate, but Catherine was aware that Vincent was still feeling the effects of yesterday's accident.

"Go to bed, Vincent. I'll clear up here." Her eyes told him everything he needed to know and he kissed her tenderly before undressing.

Stretching out, he watched her as she checked their son before snubbing out the candles; all but the one that glowed above their bed.

"Catherine." He whispered her name as she gently joined him in their bed.

"Hmmm."

"I love you, Catherine," and they kissed a tender, fleeting light kiss. "I missed you so much today."

"I know," she sighed. "I felt that you did."

Leaning back on her elbow to look into his clouded blue eyes, she ran her fingers over his face.

"I missed you too."

Vincent reached out and caressed her face and neck before he pulled her towards him. They kissed a long passionate kiss that normally would have led instantly to other things, but tonight they had to be content to take a low profile on their love.

With a deep sigh, Catherine snuggled as close as she could to him, without putting any pressure on his tender areas, or cause him any discomfort. The warmth of his nearness and the softness of his beautiful velvet voice was too much for her and slowly but cautiously she pulled herself up level with him.

"Vincent?" Her voice was husky with emotion as she ran her hands over his chest. With his free hand he covered hers, then he lifted it to his lips, no words were spoken as he moved to her neck and then her lips and soon time had no meaning as they became one in body and spirit.

Finally, the day took its toll and Vincent held them close as he fell into a deep contented sleep. Catherine soon drifted off to join this special person in his dreams, but not before she had one last look at the man who was not only her love, but her life. Without him, she was nothing! She sighed and cuddled closer before her eyes shut out the reality, but not her visions.

It seemed that when they found each other, they also set each other free - free to live and love always.

### ***EPILOGUE***

The phone in Catherine's apartment rang seconds after she left to go Below. Telling Vincent about Swain's death would help give some relief, as he was concerned that she would be subjected to more visits.

The answerphone clicked into action and the caller waited for the pips.

"Cathy -it's Greg. I thought you should know we found something else on your man, Swain. May not mean anything, but thought you'd like to know. Tucked inside the notebook was a gold coin; damaged - but a real gold coin. Seemed funny - a man with no money having that on him.... Yeah, well, call me!"

The pips went again as he hung up and the dark apartment took on an air of mystery and unanswered questions waiting for its owner to return.

END