

SLOT A INTO HOLE B
(OR: HOW TO RUIN A LAZY SUNDAY)

by Trisha Kehoe

Sitting on the edge of the bed, Vincent stared resignedly out of the terrace window towards a hefty carton containing the varied pieces of a new chaise lounge - with rockers. Framed in silhouette by early morning light, it seemed even larger now than it had the previous evening. To his surprise, Catherine had presented him with this gift, saying now that her terrace was latticed in on two sides, it would be safe - or safer - for them to enjoy it in the daytime. The only drawback to this gift was that it had to be assembled.

Vincent eyed the carton again. Although he'd built many things in his time, and successfully, this was something new and remarkably different from any previous task. Closing his eyes, he conjured up the seven(*seven!*) pages of instructions that went with his present and groaned audibly.

Hearing him, Catherine shifted in the bed, then settled down again with one hand on his back.

"Is anything wrong?" she mumbled, still half asleep.

"No. Shhh, go back to sleep. It's barely dawn."

"Why are you up so early? Aren't you staying for the day?"

"Yes, but I promised to put the lounge together so we could enjoy it after lunch. Remember?"

"Oh yeah..." Snuggling down into the covers, Catherine rolled over onto her tummy. "Have fun..."

Fun? He sneered disdainfully. This was not his idea of fun. Sliding his feet into leather slippers, Vincent stumbled toward the bathroom. Oh, he hated mornings - especially those that dragged him not only from his bed, but from Catherine. Still grumbling to himself, he turned on the shower, then proceeded to strip down to his fuzzy frame.

"Oh, BLAST!"

Catherine nearly fell out of the bed as angry bellows wafted in from the terrace. "Where in the name of Holy Mother Church is that WRETCHED pair of pliers! I just had them a moment ago!"

Peeking through the curtains, she put one hand firmly over her mouth, stifling the peals of laughter that threatened to burst forth. Oh, what a mess! Vincent was sitting yoga fashion with his back up against the terrace wall. Spread out before him were various lengths of PVC pipe, springs, nuts, bolts, cushions, canopy, her tool set and the instruction booklet from the chaise. He looked upset. She peeked again. He looked ready to chuck the whole carton over the side of the terrace wall and, as the saying went, look out below!

Pulling on her robe, she stepped out to greet her beloved and the beautiful summer day.

"Are you having... difficulties?"

Twin pools of blue drilled her. "You might say that." Vincent held up a length of pipe in one hand and one of the how to pages in the other. "This page explains that slot A should go into hole B."

"And?" she prompted.

"The paper lies. I found hole A and hole C. In fact, I found every hole all the way through the alphabet to the letter Z..." His lower lip curled into a decided sneer. "And there is no hole B - anywhere."

"Oh."

Now, this was not a stupid woman, but at times, questions could be asked - in all innocence - that were not the right questions for that particular moment.

"Are you going to make the holes you need, then?"

The tone of voice he used, and the look on Vincent's face as he eyed the chaise, made her decide to get breakfast started.

"Oh, never fear, the proper hole alignment will be established... with my **teeth** if necessary."

As she read the Sunday funnies aloud, Catherine rocked the lounge gently back and forth. Laying the paper aside for a moment, she dropped a kiss to the exact center of Vincent's damp forehead. Poor dear, he'd worked so hard.

"Comfortable?"

Shifting to his right hip, Vincent pressed his head back against her stomach. "HmMMM, very."

"You did a good job on the swing."

"Thank you." He patted the side of a cushion. "I assure you, it was the act of a desperate man in a desperate situation."

"It was?" Catherine smiled at his choice of words, always delighted when he felt comfortable enough to call himself a man. "How so?"

"I promised you that we'd use this today." Chuckling, Vincent glanced skyward. "It's nearly dark. I admit, but it is still today."

"How are your fingers?"

He wriggled the bandaged hand. "Throbbing nicely..."

Poking him lightly on the bridge of the nose, she teased. "I read the instructions. They said slot A into hole B. There was nothing written about shoving A and B together with your fingers in the line of fire."

He eyed her over his shoulder. "Yes there was. That was the part written in Sanskrit. I don't **read** Sanskrit."

"You speak it though." At his puzzled look, she went on. "Wasn't that Sanskrit you were snarling in when you waved your **wound** in my direction?"

"No, that was ordinary, everyday cursing." He eyed her. "You know, the same words that you used the time you pricked your finger on the rosebush."

Flushing, Catherine began rocking the swing harder and faster. "So, you did hear me then. I thought

as much."

"Who did you think I learned such language *from*?"

He was about to say something else, but suddenly his stomach... turned... queasy.

She rocked faster. "You didn't learn it from me. Maybe Father...."

"Catherine," he interrupted. "Please stop."

She gave the swing another feverish push. "Stop what?"

"*That*." He put one foot on the floor to impede her hectic pace. "Stop... swinging... so... vigorously."

"What's the matter?" Peering over his shoulder, she gave him a puzzled look. "Vincent, are you all right? You're turning green!"

He sat up and wiped his forehead. "Am I?"

"Yes." Concerned, she touched his arm and sat up with him. "Maybe you shouldn't have eaten so many french fries for lunch, or finished off a whole quart of ice cream and two pieces of cake, all at once."

He gulped. "Don't... mention... food again, please."

She patted his back sympathetically. "Poor you. This whole day's been the pits, hasn't it?"

Pits? Apples had those. Dates had those. So did lemons, oranges, cherries, and...

"Ohhh..." Lurching to his feet, Vincent clapped one hand over his mouth, gave Catherine a look of utter distress, and raced for the bathroom.

Folding up the Sunday funnies, she followed him quickly inside, hoping that he'd managed to put slot A - him, in the vicinity of hole B - the *facilities* in time.

WHOOPS

END