

MITCH'S DECISION

by Allison

Steam, making a hissing sound, escaped from pipes in the warehouse where Mitch and his men were hiding. Ned checked his revolver as he stood watch. Mitch paced nervously next to him, smoking a cigarette.

"Mitch," Ned said, "relax, you're gonna have a heart attack."

Mitch moved along to the catwalk, high above the floor, where other men were stationed. Mitch approached one of the men standing guard.

"George, if anything moves, shoot it!"

Mitch walked to the other end to where another man was stationed, armed with a rifle.

"Anything?" Mitch asked.

The man shook his head no and Mitch walked back down to where Ned was waiting.

"What? You scared of this guy or something?" Ned noticed the jumpy way Mitch was acting. He'd never seen his boss this scared of anything before.

"You idiot! You don't know what we unleashed!" Mitch yelled as he grabbed Ned by the shirt.

"How do you know he's gonna come after you? Because you shot that woman?"

"He'll come."

"I still don't get it, who is he?"

"When he comes, you'll know who he is."

As Mitch walked away, he recollected what happened in the tunnels a long time ago.

Mitch and a few other of the older boys were making comments about the attention Lisa was giving Vincent during the Winterfest celebration.

"Lisa's been Above for over a year. You'd think she'd have gotten over her fascination with that freak," Sonny commented.

"I've heard tell she has had plenty of boyfriends Above. I've even heard she'd 'put out' for a few of them." Roger gave a sneer as he glanced over at Lisa.

"After that incident in the Great Hall, when Vincent went after Lisa, you'd think she'd leave him like a leper. She acting like nothing happened between them. We all saw Lisa's shoulder, what he did to her," Mitch commented.

"I've always wondered myself what she sees in Vincent. Sure he's bigger now than the rest of us but ... size isn't everything," Joseph chimed in.

"Do you know something we don't, Joe?" Mitch joked.

"Screw you, Denton," Joseph shot back.

"Maybe we should teach her a lesson," Sammy whispered.

"What did you have in mind?" Roger gave a dirty look in Lisa's direction.

"What are you two planning?" Mitch stepped closer, not sure he wanted to hear the answer.

"Since she 'puts out' for a freak like that, maybe we should try our hand," Sammy implied.

"What makes you think she and Vincent did the horizontal mambo?" Joe questioned.

"Why else would she be fawning all over him? Look!" Roger pointed across the room.

They all glanced over and saw Lisa give Vincent a kiss on his cheek. as she put her hand on his chest. They also saw the disapproving look Father gave the both of them.

"Father doesn't look like he likes the idea of them together again either. I heard tell he read the riot act to both of them after Vincent scratched Lisa. That he didn't want them seeing each other. Guess that fell on deaf ears." Joe poked Mitch in the stomach.

"Yeah, she sure looks 'chummy' with him. Maybe she'll do the same with us." Sammy grabbed his groin as he thought about the idea.

The others kept glancing over. They watched Vincent put his hand on Lisa's cheek and softly caress it.

"Hey, Lisa," Sammy called out, "why don't you spend some time with a real man?"

Vincent and Lisa looked up at the comment. Vincent then bowed his head and turned away. Lisa just gave a disgusted look at Sammy. She tried to turn Vincent back toward her but he resisted. She then excused herself as Vincent looked at her dejectedly.

Pascal and Winslow stepped up to speak to Vincent after Lisa walked away from him. While they were talking, they failed to notice that Lisa had left the chamber and that the group led by Sammy had followed her out the entrance.

As the group followed Lisa, they noticed that she was heading for the Chamber of the Falls. They also noticed that she didn't bother to look behind her to see if anyone was following her. Sammy glanced behind them as did Roger, to make sure Vincent hadn't decided to come after Lisa.

"No sign of that freak. The coast is clear. Now's our chance," Roger cooed.

"What are we gonna do if we get caught?" Joe asked.

"We won't get caught. Besides, she won't tell." Roger promised.

"How can you be so sure?" Joe persisted.

"Cause we threaten the freak's life. Tell Lisa we'll tell the cops all about that claw-wearing, joke of a man, if she squeals on us." Sammy rubbed his groin again.

Lisa wandered down the tunnel toward the Chamber of the Falls, not noticing the danger that followed. Her mind was too jumbled by the feelings she was experiencing.

She knew she was attracted to Vincent, but also knew the comments she'd probably get if she were to involve herself with him. Most of the Tunnel residents accepted and loved Vincent as a brother, confidante, but there were some like Sammy and others who only thought of him as a freak. She had her whole future to consider and she knew Dance would be a big part of it. In order to fulfill that dream, she knew she would have to leave Vincent behind.

While Lisa was trying to compose herself, Vincent made his way to the bridge over the Whispering Gallery, listening to his own jumbled mind. He knew that Lisa's future was Above, in the world of dance. He knew he had no right to try to confine Lisa to a world of darkness with him.

"It hurts," he said to himself.

Vincent knew Lisa's heart was as troubled as his own. He concentrated on his sense of Lisa. As with Father, Vincent had an empathic connection to those he cared about. His sense of them was stronger than with other people, not quite a bond, but he could ease their troubles with words they needed. Vincent was able to ease Lisa's feelings of the future by easing his own fears. He could feel a sense of calm come over her and knew she was nearby in the Chamber of the Falls. Suddenly, an uneasiness came over him.

Lisa finally noticed Mitch, Sammy, Joe and Roger, as they entered the chamber shortly after she did.

"Why are you following me?" Lisa demanded.

"We just wanna talk," Mitch told her.

"Yeah, talk," Sammy and Joe said together.

"Why don't you go away and leave me alone?" Lisa asked.

The boys walked to the chamber entrance and huddled together. Lisa thought they were leaving and settled herself on the big ledge overlooking the falls.

"Fellas, I don't think this is a good idea," Mitch began. "Lisa's always been a tease and you all know it."

"What, are you chicken, Denton? You've made some pretty lewd comments about that bitch," Joe commented.

"Yeah, it's strange hearing you having second thoughts about this," Roger stated.

"Well, if you don't want any part of that sweet dish, you can wait outside." Sammy shoved Mitch toward the chamber entrance. Mitch started to protest.

"Look, we've all seen Vincent and this strange empathic sense he has with certain people. If you do this, it might draw him and I wouldn't want him after us. We've all seen him get weird after the time David hit him with that rock, snarling and growling till Father was able to get him out of the chamber. We all seen how sweet he is on Lisa."

Sammy grabbed Mitch and pulled his pocket knife out of his pocket. Mitch made a grab for it and Sammy opened it and pointed it at Mitch.

"Say another word and it'll be your last. Go stand watch and steer anyone away." The others waved him off and Mitch reluctantly went to the entrance.

"Hey Lisa, you wanna party with us?" Sammy called, as he came closer with the others following.

"No, just leave me alone." Lisa said without turning around.

"Awww, come on, babe. it'll be fun," Joe crooned as he stroked her arm.

"I said, leave me alone." Lisa stood up and found her way blocked.

"No, sweetheart, I don't think we will." Sammy and Joe grabbed her arms as Roger seized her around the waist with one arm while pulling her face close to his with the other. Roger kissed her hard. Lisa tried to pull away but both boys maintained their grip.

"Don't do this."

"Don't do what? We're only getting our share of what the guys Above get from you," Roger whispered in her ear.

"I don't ..."

"Don't what? 'Put out?' I've heard different, Lisa. Why should that freak get your goodies and not us normal men?"

"Vincent and I never ..."

"Oh, come on. We've seen how you both make doe eyes at each other. Seen how you snuggle right next to him, like he's God's gift." Roger tried to kiss her again.

"Hey Roger, let me have a taste," Joe licked his lips.

Joe and Roger change places. Lisa tried to scream, but Joe's kiss drowned her voice. Sammy boldly put his hand on Lisa's breast then put his hand between her legs.

"Hey, whatta know. Me thinks the lady doth protest too much," Sammy crooned. His hand pressed deeper.

Vincent could hear her cry of terror so vividly, it was as if she were right beside him, screaming his name. Vincent let out a loud roar and raced off the bridge and into the tunnel beyond. Mitch heard the sound of pounding footsteps and shrank into the crawlspace just outside the chamber entrance. Mitch suddenly felt ashamed of what his friends were doing to Lisa and absolute terror and what Vincent might do when he arrived. Mitch ran to the nearest pipe and banged out an alarm, praying the others would arrive before Vincent, although Vincent was only seconds away. He went back to the crawlspace and waited for Hell to arrive.

Mitch heard Lisa scream before he heard the terrified screams coming from the chamber after Vincent burst through the entrance. He heard the voices of his friends begging for mercy amidst Vincent's roars and snarls. He also heard Lisa attempting to get Vincent to stop. Mitch peeked into the chamber. The vision was too horrible to contemplate, but knew he had to go in there, at least to pull Lisa out of harm's way.

Winslow, Kanin, Pascal, Matthew and Robert arrived at the chamber entrance. They could still hear Vincent's loud roars and snarls coming from inside. They entered and found Mitch standing next to Lisa. Vincent threw Sammy's lifeless body against the tunnel wall and then turned toward Mitch.

"Vincent, let us handle him," Winslow said, as they stepped in front of Mitch.

"He's gonna kill me," Mitch squeaked.

"Mitch, don't you move a muscle or we'll let Vincent finish what he started." Winslow threatened, pointing a finger at him.

They watched as Vincent wandered around the chamber, looking at the destruction he caused. Roger and Joe's broken bodies were not far from where Vincent was standing and Sammy's lay in the opposite corner.

"I never wanted any of this to happen," Mitch mumbled.

"You didn't do anything to stop it either," Pascal spat at him.

"I told them this was a bad idea and I wanted no part of it," Mitch tried to explain.

"So, what now?" Pascal questioned.

Vincent's rage was finally spent and as he started to sag toward the ground, Matthew and Robert grabbed an arm each.

"What have I done?"

"What was necessary, Vincent, nothing else," Matthew stated.

"Lisa?" Vincent managed to ask.

"Kanin is with her now and will escort her back to the home chambers," Pascal tried to reassure his friend.

"What about ..." Mitch shuddered at the thought of what happened to his three friends.

"You're gonna help us dispose of them," Pascal stated flatly, then threatened to hurt Mitch himself if he ever told what happened to them. Winslow looked at Pascal, startled at his outburst.

"We'll have to dump the bodies in the Abyss. Those three were always going off on their own anyway so if they suddenly disappeared, no one will be concerned," Winslow told the others.

One by one, the bodies were dumped into the Abyss. A silent prayer was offered as they disappeared into the dark. Vincent stood silently watching as the others did this for him.

"No one must know this happened. If the community ever found out, they'd banish Vincent for sure, even though he was sorta justified in what he did. They'd never trust him around anyone," Pascal warned the others. They all nodded their agreement with Pascal's comment.

Matthew and Robert grabbed Mitch and pulled him into the tunnel for the walk back. Vincent, Winslow and Pascal followed silently behind.

Mitch's thoughts returned to the present, as he realized that Hell had finally come for him and there was not a damned thing he could do about it.

END