

# *Hear the Magic*

**Season 3**

By Anne Alden-France



The baby kicked and cooed, and looked up with an interested expression. He recognized the woman staring into his crib. Though he sometimes didn't see her for days on end, he liked her shining red hair, and recognized it.

"Aaaahhh." It was a baby sound, and his arms reached up. "Duh-Da-Da!" Jacob blubbered, drooling on his chin as Diana scooped him up.

"No, not Dada. He's getting your bottle from the kitchen, from William," Diana corrected gently, brushing her sensitive nose across the soft, blonde hairs that covered the baby's head. He was nearly bald, save for a fine dusting of platinum silk that covered his crown.

*If you take after your father at all, that will change*, Diana thought, placing a soft kiss on the delicate top of his precious head.

"Dada!" Jacob squealed, arching his tiny back and throwing his arms wide. He patted her nose with a soft, open palm. Diana tightened her grip, to avoid dropping him. He was hungry and excited, and being very wiggly. "It's on the way, sport," Diana replied, loving the feeling of holding him close.

"You're getting stronger." She smiled, "catching" his fingers with her open lips.

He kept patting her. The fair woman with the beautiful blue eyes had helped take him out of the Bad Place and away from the Bad Man. She'd helped his unique father to do it. Jacob had no words for those things, but certain impressions were clear enough. The slender woman whose cheek he was now patting was "good."

“Dah!” Jacob insisted, planting a fist in his open mouth. He was starting to teethe early, and he was definitely hungry. Diana smiled, and he rewarded that by planting the wet fist on the side of her other cheek. Diana smiled at that, too. Any gesture of affection was a good one from Jacob, and this was definitely that.

*I love you*, Diana thought, and then, because she knew the words were too precious to be withheld from a child, she gave them to him, out loud. “I love you,” she whispered, not minding his slobber in the least.

“You are drooling everywhere! We better get you dry,” she said, using the edge of his blanket to wipe his mouth. If they didn’t keep him dry, he’d get a rash under his chin. He blew a spit bubble at her as he babbled, and followed the line of the blanket by turning his head. His still-toothless grin was enchanting.

“That’s a good boy. That’s a big boy. So big!” Diana sing-songed. Jacob giggled. “So big” was their game. It was good that he liked it, since it was the only one Diana knew.

“Ah bah. Ah bah. Da. Da. Da!” Jacob kicked the last monosyllable up half an octave, and wiggled again.

“Yes. You want a bottle and Daddy is coming. Hold on, big guy.” She laid him back down in the crib for safety’s sake, and leaned over him. A long lock of her bright hair fell over her shoulder, and brushed his cheek. She pulled it up as he reached for it, and he continued to smile up at her and kick his legs.

“Who’s a big guy?” she asked him.

“Gah!”

“Yes, you’re a big guy.” She applauded his attempt to repeat the word “guy.”

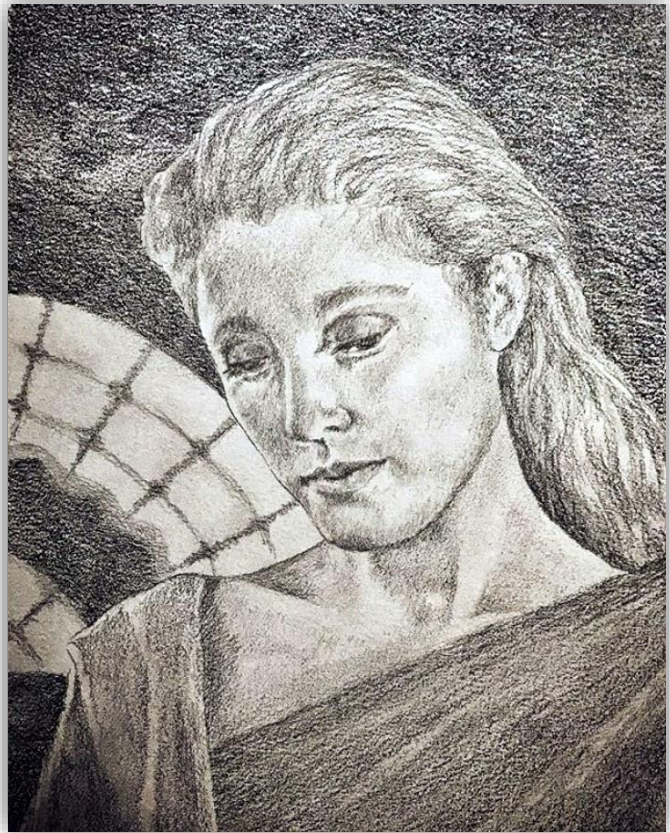
Over the months, she had learned how to “play” with him. It was a thing that was utterly foreign to her usual, serious nature. But it was also a thing she welcomed. *You may save us all yet*, she thought, appreciating the incredibly powerful magic of a child... any child, but especially this one.

She picked up his stuffed rabbit, and held it where he could see. “You want this?” She waved it so that the chenille ears flopped back and forth.

“Da! Da-da-da!”

“Oh my, you want your Daddy today. Okay, big fella. So big!”

“He certainly is,” intoned a deeply familiar voice behind her.



by Rosemarie Hauer

Diana smiled and turned, setting the toy back down. She stepped away from the crib on instinct. Vincent always seemed to fill a space when he entered it, and it seemed instinctive to make room for him. He had a very clean, frayed hand towel over one arm and Jacob's warm bottle in his hand.

"He's definitely hungry," Diana reported, watching Vincent tenderly pick up his son as Diana wiped her damp cheek.

"Fa!" Jacob squealed, stopping to bump his very normal, childlike nose against Vincent's very feline one. The baby settled in Vincent's embrace, and began to drink, immediately and thirstily. This was now old hat, between father and son.

"Thank you for waiting with him. I'm afraid I'm going to need to go just a bit faster," Vincent said, finding comfort in embracing his greedily feeding son. *You're well. You're hungry, and active and well. There, there, my son. I have you. Your father has you. It's all right.*

Whatever terrible things had happened in Gabriel's clutches, and no matter how deeply that had marked Vincent, it seemed to him that Jacob, at least, behaved "normally," after their shared trauma. He was a bright, happy, charming five-month-old. One who was going to start transitioning to more solid foods soon, if the nubbins on his gums were any indication.

"It was my pleasure," Diana replied, watching contentedly, as Jacob attacked his lunch then slowed down, as the formula mixed with cereal began to hit his stomach. He fed a while longer, stopped to be burped, then finished off the last of it.

Vincent cradled Jacob over his shoulder and rubbed his back until another small burp passed. Jacob purposefully tangled his hands in Vincent's thick mane, grasping the golden tresses and holding onto them, as his tiny body began to settle down from both the feeding and the joyful familiarity of being held by his father.

Vincent shifted his son and cradled him, a lock of long hair still firmly held in the boy's tiny fist, as he now lay back in Vincent's sheltering arms. "Time for dreams," Vincent told the beloved boy, watching him start to drift.



As the baby began to relax, so did Vincent. As the blue infant eyes drifted closed, tension Vincent wasn't even aware he was holding eased, and lessened. His shoulders dropped, and he took on the side-to-side rocking motion instinctive to all parents, when they were cradling

calming infants. “There, there. We had a busy morning. Time for your nap. Sweet dreams, my son,” Vincent said to the half-sleeping child. The low voice, even while speaking, was having the effect of a sweet lullaby. The gentle, tinny sound of pipe noise completed the song.

“You should have heard him when you were getting his bottle. He was wiggling like a worm, calling for you,” Diana dropped her own voice to a stage whisper.

“Was he?” Vincent gently laid his drowsy son back down in his crib, adjusting the blanket so that he’d be warm enough. Jacob was a cover kicker. The tender father placed his son’s favorite stuffed rabbit close by.

“Yep. Da-da-da, over and over. Very excited. Very happy,” Diana replied, wanting to reach in to tuck Jacob in as well, just for the pleasure of touching the baby.

“Daah...” Jacob said dreamily, falling into slumber.

“There, you see? Like that. Calling for you,” she said. She knew Vincent would be pleased that Jacob had been calling for him. What parent didn’t want to hear their child say his “name?”

Vincent tucked a soft pillow near his son’s body, to prevent him from rolling over onto his stomach. He’d likely need to be changed after a while, Vincent knew, but for now, his son was warm, dry, fed, loved, and safe. All the things Vincent knew he could wish for him, for now.

He brushed a long, furred finger along his sweet son’s brow, and smiled a little, both at the baby and at Diana’s error.

“He wasn’t calling for me, Diana. He calls me ‘Father.’ Or ‘Fa,’ at least. I admit it might cause some confusion when he’s older, considering that is what all the rest of us call his grandfather.”

Vincent’s blue eyes lingered on his sleeping son. *Dream of great things. I swear I’ll do everything I can to see you to them,* he thought, knowing that without the exceptional woman beside him, no dream for Jacob would be possible.

“I think you’re wrong,” Diana whispered respectfully, sidling close. She too touched the beautiful boy, placing her fingertips over the soft rise and fall of his little chest. *So precious. So perfect.* “I heard him say Dada. Plain as day. Several times. Or just ‘Da,’”

They both lifted their hands away from Jacob. Vincent stepped away from the crib the same time Diana did, and they both continued to behold his amazing son.

“I’ve never taught him to say ‘Dada.’ As a name, ‘Daddy’ didn’t seem right, for me.” He turned to face Diana. Vincent’s warm blue eyes met her quizzical ones.

“I swear I heard it,” she insisted.

*Ah, Diana. You hear the sound, but you don’t hear the magic.* He gave her a knowing look, then glanced back toward his miracle child.

“For a detective, you may need to hone your skills,” he demurred, with a soft smile.

“Oh?”

“I don’t think he was trying to say my name, Diana... I think he was trying to say yours.”