

FULFILLMENT

by Barbara Gipson

Brought to life by dawn's first radiance, the sound of a city coming alive floated upward and through the open French doors of the Park Avenue apartment.

Stretching luxuriously on her back, Catherine reached over an arm to touch his side of the bed. It was cold and uninviting. He was gone. Hearing the city sounds and seeing the morning rays, she knew he would have left while darkness still covered his passage. She had a distant memory of his leaning over her in the darkness, fully dressed and waking her by brushing the hair from her face to whisper softly that he had to leave. Her body sated, she had never fully awakened, but snuggled further into the covers. But it was now time for her to start her own day and she rolled to her side to leave the bed herself. She felt then the sticky wetness between her thighs and she sighed.

"Ah, Vincent...." She was so filled with love that it now flowed from her onto the sheets and her waking thoughts immediately returned to the night just passed. Sitting up on her side of the bed, she smiled as the memories flitted across her mind. Vividly recalling every single erotic sensation caused a rush of warmth to spread through her and, again, a happy sigh escaped her lips.

In the tunnels below the city, the morning hours brought a stillness. Even Pascal's pipe messages were silent. Striding through the hazy light, his cape floating about him, Vincent headed toward the main chamber and home. With the empathic bond now heightened as never before, senses at full awareness, Vincent froze in mid-stride. He threw back his tawny-maned head, a sharp cry - half pain, half ecstasy - on his lips.

"Catherine!" he moaned.

His neck muscles straining, his fists clenched, he was aware of what she was doing. He knew she was fully awake, her mind and body active. Closing his eyes, he kept them shut until he felt the tension drain out of him then, composing himself, he continued his passage through the tunnel corridor, his mind's eye replaying the night's fulfillment of love's gift shared.

He had gone to the apartment to spend some much-needed time with Catherine. They had been apart for several weeks as the *'tunnel fever'* had raged its war Below. To protect her, Vincent had made sure she did not visit, and his own time had been filled helping Father. Now that the danger of infection was eased, he had left the tunnels to share the evening with her. And she undoubtedly missed him also.

Catherine had waited on the patio, clothed in one of her silken robes. It had been like fire to her soul to embrace him, as the robe was the only covering against her body. She leaned against his shirted chest, her hands straying to loosen the shirt at his waist. Moving her hands under his clothing, she caressed the firm muscles of his back and then the furry expanse of his chest, feeling the heavy thud of his heartbeat.

Releasing a sigh as he placed his cheek against her head, Vincent let her hands stray where they pleased. He kept his eyes closed as he fought his control, not wanting to make any move that might cause her to pull away from him.

Her hands moved around him and dropped to the small of his back. As she pulled herself against the full length of him, his arousal was evident.

His body shuddered and she tilted her head back to look at him. Her eyes met his with open invitation. Then she nestled closer in his all-encompassing arms.

"Stay with me, Vincent. I need you." Her words were soft against him.

Vincent's breath came in short gasps before he could find his voice. "Catherine.... I...." He paused.

"Look inside, Vincent." she said, gesturing to the dimly lit bedroom. She pulled back slightly in his arms and the belt of her robe slipped. Only the pressure of her lower body against him kept the robe from falling open.

He tore his eyes from hers to look inside the open French doors. The breeze was toying with the curtains, and he could glimpse the few lit candles and the large bed.

"That is our world, Vincent, where nothing can disturb us. It's our time to share every moment, measure every minute. Come inside." And catching her robe together with one hand, Catherine pulled at his arm with the other.

He hesitated, fighting his own instincts, his body unable to move. To believe.

Never taking her gaze from his, Catherine stepped over the threshold and parted the curtains, letting bright moonlight stream through the opening, tightening the room until all was visible.

"Come inside, Vincent," she urged, smiling.

His heart won and he stepped into the room behind her. Still needing to touch, to believe, to feel the warmth of his dreams, Vincent gathered her to him again.

Catherine could sense his reluctance, his hesitation and she looked up at him; his blue eyes were translucent in the ghostly moonlight, his leonine features starkly etched. She reached up and removed the dark cape, draping it over a chair back, then she reached to remove the white silken scarf from around his neck. Her every move parted the front of her robe. He was mesmerized as he watched her body revealed in small glimpses.

Catherine slowly continued to unbutton his ruffled shirt front to reveal his furred chest, finally pushing the shirt from his massive shoulders.

Vincent tensed as his upper body was completely revealed to her eyes. Now she would be repulsed, turn away. His dreams would dissolve. Why had he ever let it go this far? Daringly, his heart thudding, tension straining, he met her gaze.

"You are magnificent, Vincent!" Her voice was low and soft, her smile pure warmth. She moved her hands up his arms, across his shoulders, and placed them lightly on his neck. Rising on her toes, she placed her lips on his, her own body trembling with passion.

Finding the courage, Vincent slid her robe off her arms and let it drop to the floor. The moonlight bathed them both; in the room, dancing light was the only movement. They were now in a world alone, apart from the outside world. Two beings blending together, loving in their own world,

measuring their own time.

Lifting and placing Catherine on the bed, Vincent lay beside her, caressing the silky smoothness of her bare shoulder, running his fingers through the shining darkness of her hair.

The soothing caress awoke tingling awareness all through Catherine and she sighed his name in a soft, drowsy breath.

He rose above her slightly, laying an arm along her back, nuzzling his nose in the hair above her ear, his lips moving against it. Then he lowered his mouth to hers and their lips blended with impatient urgency. His whiskered mouth rasped her skin, but she took no notice. Instead, she placed her fingers in the waistband of his trousers and tugged.

"Forget something, Vincent?" she whispered against his lips.

"No," he replied. "At the moment, they are my only means of control. My body needs you, but your pleasure comes first." He told her, his sensitivity to her needs his only concern. Knowing his taloned fingers and hard whiskered mouth would mar her soft skin, he let his tongue work his magic for him.

Finally, Catherine could tolerate the fiery sensations no longer. Pulling at his trousers, she urged. "Now, Vincent! Please."

As he sat on the edge of the bed to remove his boots, his back was revealed to her. Where his mane hung down his back, it blended with the slightly darker hair that covered his spine and disappeared below his waistband. Part of his sides and upper arms were only sparsely covered with light fur, as the friction of body and clothing retarded its growth. Catherine placed her hand against the softness of his body hair, her fingers tracing his backbone.

Vincent straightened and rose to remove his trousers, exposing for a moment the extra vertebrae of his tailbone. Placing clothing on boots, he turned to lay beside her again and she slid her arms around his neck as they were locked in each other's embrace. Differences made no difference. They were caught up in the fierce tide of passion, two beings wrapped in the pure bliss of their union, giving all to the other and, in return, finding everything and more.

Vincent's thoughts returned to the present. He marveled at the peace of contentment he felt. How many nights of torture had he endured when he had not been able to rid his mind of her vision? Now he would welcome the vision, knowing there was a fulfillment, a completion to their love.