

A Wonderful Life to Share

by Jackie Kapke

He'd only come to say goodnight to his little family and had almost reached the doorway leading to Vincent's chamber when he heard it.

Catching himself before he entered, a smile crossed his lips while he slowly shook his head. It was still difficult for him to discontinue referring to the room as '*Vincent's chamber*', when he knew with certainty that Vincent had shared it with Catherine for almost a year. Was it practically a year already? And, he reminded himself solemnly, their time of solitude was surely over for now they shared the chamber with yet another - their son Jacob slept in the cradle beside the big bed.

Jacob Wells laid his head against the rough rock wall outside the room and smiled. From within came the sweet, soft sound of music, a waltz, and he couldn't help but peek around the corner to get a look at what was going on inside.

Barefoot, Vincent led his Catherine through the steps of the dance, gazing down into her eyes with complete and utter love. Her blue nightgown swirled around her feet as they glided across the floor. In his matching cotton drawstring pajama bottoms, he led her with an unconscious grace the patriarch didn't realize he possessed.

Watching them in silence, Father became thoughtful. In the months since their marriage, he was forever astonished at the abatement of his son's modesty and was certain this was just another door Catherine had opened for him; the door to self-acceptance.

The writing table had been pushed against the wall and the other chair moved closer to the door so that the '*dance floor*' was as large as possible. Their son slept in blissful silence in the cradle at the head of the bed; only two candles had remained lit.

As he watched, Father could swear he had never seen Catherine look as radiant as she did now. Though it was hard to imagine, he believed she had become even more beautiful since marrying Vincent. Her eyes, always as green as sparkling emeralds, never strayed from those of her husband, and his, as blue as a summer sky, expressed such joy, such overwhelming happiness, that it brought a tear to Father's eye. Every look between them, every touch and movement spoke of their mutual adoration, their complete fulfillment.

With a sigh, Father closed his eyes. He was very thankful for this peace and completeness they had found. It had been so complicated during those first tumultuous years of their relationship, so filled with mindless pain. He had no doubts there would be

more trials for them to face, but he was confident that together they would endure it all. Their love had grown, survived the troubling times, encircling them both with joy. The bond they shared strengthened everything. Now, there was nothing but well-deserved rapture.

Opening his eyes, he smiled again. How beautiful they were together as they danced, moving as one body. Vincent held Catherine tightly against him, and she nestled her cheek against his bare chest. If there were really such a thing as true and absolute love, this must be it!

Turning, Jacob decided he would not disturb them tonight for they had so very little private time and he had many reports to review before the work details tomorrow. He chuckled to himself as he began the short trek to his chamber, thinking of little Jacob. They must find some time to be alone together after all!

When he was but halfway between the two chambers, the child in question emitted a sudden and furious bellow that would not be denied.

"Oh dear," he thought aloud to himself, "so much for romantic interludes tonight."

But, much to his surprise, the music never faltered and the barely perceptible brushing together of the couple's thighs and clothing continued. What surprised him even more was that the crying had entirely stopped.

His curiosity getting the better of him, Jacob moved back to the doorway and peered around the corner.

The couple moved around the floor in perfect unison, but between them now snuggled the little one, holding tightly to thick strands of his father's hair clutched in his tiny fists.

Jacob's namesake was cooing and giggling, as Vincent somehow managed with graceful ease to hold both his wife and his son close in his arms; not missing a step of the dance.

Father laughed softly as he heard Catherine's gay laughter along with Vincent's deep, hearty chuckles, chiming in with their son's happy noises, and realized that the baby had not interrupted, but simply demanded to be allowed to share in the frivolity.

A tender sigh escaped his lips as he turned once again toward his chamber. It was such a wonderful life to share; a life that he had once thought could never be.

"Well," he chuckled to himself, "I'm certainly gratified that, at least this once, they proved me wrong!"