

WORKING TOO HARD

OR

COME TO BED, DIANA

by Jackie Kapke

"Diana."

His soft, deep voice floated out from the bedroom.

"Oh, God," she rasped under her breath, cringing as she pulled her eyes from the computer screen to fasten them in disbelief on her wristwatch.

"3 AM. Damn!"

It hadn't seemed that long. Poor Vincent. He'd gone to bed hours ago, exhausted from a tedious day Below, still nursing a torn muscle in his shoulder from days earlier.

She'd told him *'just a few more minutes'* and that had been close to midnight. And now.... now he appeared in the shadowed doorway, his massive form filling the frame. The glorious disarray of his mane shown like blonde copper, his powerful body attired only in the aqua terrycloth bath wrap he often wore to bed after a much appreciated warm shower. The garment's color heartstoppingly accentuated the blue of his gentle eyes.

'God, he is beautiful,' she thought, her heart doing a flip-flop in her chest. *'How could she abandon him like this?'* She knew her absence from his side had awakened him.

"Come to bed," he said softly, never moving from where he stood. It was not a command, not really, more a gentle request, his voice rumbling deep within his broad chest.

'Who could say 'no' to such a sensual invitation?'

She smiled in his direction. *'How many years had she waited to hear those words? Dreamed of seeing him as he was now?'* It was still mind boggling to hear his voice, see him standing there, waiting.

"Coming," she replied, hitting the save button, parking the hard drive, and flipping off the screen. Diana rubbed eyes that until now, she hadn't realized were tired and swollen. She pushed back her chair and stood. *'Oh, her back was stiff!'* Taking a moment to stretch, she placed her hand to the small of her back, arching before coming to him.

"I'm sorry. I didn't realize how late it was getting. I...."

She didn't finish her apology, for he had taken her in his arms, chuckling softly as he drew her close, nuzzling the hair at the nape of her neck behind her ear.

'God, she loved it when he did that!' She became totally unhinged, forgetting everything, the world contracting to just the two of them. For a moment, she lost herself in him, melting into sweet oblivion.

She turned into him, wrapping her arms around his waist, laying her face upon his powerful breast, sliding her cheek slowly back and forth across the soft, golden curls. His understanding and quiet strength comforted her, soothed her and made her realize how very tired she really was.

He did truly understand her need to work on her cases to distraction; often becoming oblivious to all else, even him. It took all her strength, all her concentration. So often, she pushed herself beyond normal limits and, in this way, they were so much alike, for he also had been often guilty of being such a *'workaholic'*- something she couldn't deny within her as well.

Vincent worried over her. She had neglected herself and him for several days now and he had requested nothing of her, helping when and where he could, keeping out of the way, put from underfoot, seeing that she had food to eat and doing general clean-up and pick-up around the loft. He often held his tongue and would let her decide when to stop work for the night, but tonight he knew he must intervene, for he sensed her extreme weariness. He would insist that she get the rest she needed. He knew she would not be able to concentrate on her work any longer in the weary state she was in anyway.

He's witnessed Diana's gradual exhaustion from the last case she had investigated. She had hardly had enough time to recuperate from the stress of it when another gruesome murder case came to her desk from the DA's office.

He had seen, first hand, the toll her work had taken on her both physically and emotionally; the dark circles under her huge eyes, the weight loss, the listlessness. It had pained him to see her this way, it was like a knife blade slowly twisting in his heart. He feared for her sanity and, at times, even her life; for occasionally they shared dreams.

Her ability to actually go inside the minds of some of the criminals she investigated was beyond imagining. The disjointed thoughts and images in these men's brains was indeed terrifying. There were many nights they had both awakened in the throes of terror, perspiration coating their bodies as they had relived the terror of those dreams. They would tremble in each other's arms. Diana would apologize for what she had caused him to experience. He would tell her there was no need, that he was more than glad to be there for her and do anything he could to aid in the capture of the men she sought.

These were dangerous, ruthless beings, and he prayed that she would locate them with her mind from afar. He did not relish the thought of her face to face with such deranged persons, especially when she became tired and her reflexes sluggish. Diana was truly an amazing, dynamic person, her empathic abilities in these situations far surpassing his own. But he knew that even Diana had

her limits and he must insist that she take care of herself, if not for her own sake, then for him, and.... the more, most recent person in their lives.

He took her face in his hands, pulling back to study it momentarily before he placed a chaste kiss on her forehead, then her lips and throat, then turned her towards the bathroom.

He waited while she quickly took care of her personal needs, then returned to take his hand. He led her purposefully to the bed.

"Off," he ordered, taking the hem of her nightshirt and drawing it up her torso and off over her arms. He pulled her against him for a tender kiss, before gently lifting and placing her on the mattress. Silently, she slipped beneath the sheets as he joined her.

"Is your back still stiff?" he asked, as he stroked the obviously taut muscles there.

"A little," she replied wearily.

"Roll over," he whispered the request, his warm breath tickling her ear and causing goose-flesh down her arm. He drew the cover down past her hips and Diana rolled over onto her stomach. Carefully, he pulled her long red tresses aside, tucking them over her shoulder, taking a moment to kiss the base of her neck. Taking the hand lotion from the night stand, he poured the cool liquid between her shoulder blades and, placing one knee on either side of her hips, mounted her buttocks, carefully supporting the majority of his weight above her as he deeply, slowly, massaged her back and derriere.

He felt the tension ease from her muscles. Diana moaned contentedly from the glorious heat he created with the friction of his hands.

"Oh," she sighed, "that feels so.... so good!"

He smiled silently, for he could feel how very near sleep she was already becoming.

"There," he murmured and carefully rolled off her to lie at her side. He prepared to help her back into the nightshirt, but she gently pushed it away, shaking her head. She was too tired and deliciously comfortable just the way she was. He grinned and pulled the covers up over them both.

Diana turned over, pressing a kiss to his breast, as she snuggled close. "Vincent, thank you. I...."

"Sshhhhh," he whispered, placing a kiss on her mouth as she looked up at him with heavy eyelids. "Everything will wait until morning. Sleep now."

He pulled her back against his chest, nuzzling her head. She knew there was no use arguing with him, though she wanted to tell him how much he meant to her, how much she appreciated him.... how much she loved him.

She nestled against him, warm, and safe in the circle of his arms. Diana could feel his tenderness, his love for her, and as she drifted to sleep, murmured, "I love you, too."

He smiled, resting his head on hers, pleased that she was already asleep. He would make certain she caught up on her rest. How he cherished these moments when she lay in his arms! They were

far too few. Their time together was always so.... limited. It was always the same. His work would pull him away Below when they had made plans to be together, and just as often she would have to cancel due to some job commitment.

But, he had been formulating a plan and, once this current case was solved, it would be put into motion. He was taking Diana Below, physically, if necessary, away from the stresses of her life and career. He planned to have the others take over his duties. He needed the rest as well and he no longer denied it as he had in the past.

He realized that he was no different from anyone else in this respect. He knew Father and the others would agree with him wholeheartedly. They had all learned that his peace of mind and sanity were fragile things indeed. No one wanted to see him close to breakdown when the madness and loss of control won out. He was definitely due a break from his responsibilities. He had a growing son now, and Diana, and must take care of himself - must stay well for them all.

He would keep her there, Below, until she was rested and back to her energetic self. He would pamper her, feed her three square meals daily and they would make love as often as they pleased and they would probably start getting on one another's nerves, they would see so much of each other. Pondering that idea a moment, he felt such an occurrence highly doubtful.

When they tired of intrusions from the others, they would take a journey alone together, away from everyone and everything. Perhaps they could journey again to the Crystal Cavern. They had many things to consider, decisions to make for their future, important plans, and must take the time. He must also find a way to tell Diana of something she was yet unaware. It was a revelation that would change their lives.... forever.

He took a deep breath, then exhaled slowly as he allowed his head to drop back upon the pillow. Diana was so very warm and soft in his arms and soon his breathing became synchronous with hers. He took a moment to cast out the bond to his son. He sensed the boy Below, peaceful and soundly sleeping, as he now should be. All was well and finding he could not longer open his eyes nor organize his random thoughts, he too was soon asleep.

It was after eleven am and Diana hadn't stirred. Though his arm was asleep with painful pin-pricks beneath her head, and his injured shoulder was crying out to be repositioned, Vincent lay perfectly still. He would not risk any sound or movement that might possibly awaken her.

How her titian hair glowed in the pale morning light! She was so very beautiful, delicate seeming, her pale skin and its happy spattering of light freckles, those huge expressive eyes, still hidden by sleep-heavy lids. He quietly, carefully tilted his head back once more against the pillow, taking the luxury of drawing in the heady scent of her hair and skin. He closed his eyes in contented satisfaction.

He took a moment to drink in his surroundings; the old grandfather clock Diana had discovered in a bargain basement, ticking slowly in the entry way, the faint sound of the city's early morning traffic, the rich aroma of coffee steeping in the automatic maker, the deep, even rhythm of Diana's

breathing. So many wonderful things to experience, thanks to Diana.

He thought momentarily back upon the events that had shaped their lives together. She had been a strong force and indeed anchor in those terrible years after losing Catherine. She had saved so much more than his life the night she had discovered him, fallen and without hope across Catherine's grave, eager for death.... wanting only death.

Without her aid, he would never have regained his son, nor had found Father when he had been buried alive and left for dead. Repeatedly, she had shown him that life was still worth living, that one could still go on despite seemingly insurmountable pain and tragic loss. She had given him the strength to endure, the will to live and the time to heal.

And he was healed. Oh, he would forever mourn the loss of Catherine, forever feel the pain of it burning in his heart and soul, but he had found room there to let love back in.... and life. His son, now six, was a constant wonder and joy to him and dearly loved Diana. Vincent could once more find the beauty in the world and appreciate its pleasures.

Vincent, aroused from his reverie, smiling as he sensed Diana waking. Opening her eyes, she stretched luxuriously, but stiffened as she noted the bright sunlight through the glass brick windows. Twisting to look at the bedside clock, she gasped when she saw the lateness of the hour and the phone receiver sitting off its cradle.

"All right, big guy, You've got some explaining to do," she said, annoyance in her voice, turning back to Vincent who only now took the time to stretch and rub the soreness from his stiff arm muscles.

He maintained an incredibly enigmatic and smug expression on his face. "Your rest was more important," he stated simply.

She knew, without a doubt, that he was right, Why else would she have slept so late? Her anger faded. How could anyone stay away with Vincent? He was the most considerate, thoughtful, kind and gentle soul there had ever been.

She nodded in agreement as she stroked his velvet beard, noting distractedly that it never grew, always remained the same soft length.

"Are you rested?" he asked, kissing the fingers that caressed his face.

"Yes," she whispered, unable to resist pressing her lips to his intriguing mouth.

"Good," he replied when their lips parted, "for it is even more important.... now."

"Now?" she asked, excited anticipation rising in her breast, her heartbeat quickening slightly in response.

He nodded, studying her questioning eyes, sensing her anticipation. He could keep the secret no longer, deciding that this was as good a time as any to tell her.

He looked down momentarily, breaking eye contact, then blinking softly peered intently into their

questioning depths, as he placed his hand against her cheek. "You carry our child, Diana."

She blinked rapidly as she let out the breath she'd been holding. *'Well, how about that? They were going to have a baby! A baby!'*

She had no doubt that Vincent knew, he would certainly not make up such a thing. His incredible abilities and intuition were something she had never doubted. But, she had only been off the birth control pills for a little over a month and it was very unusual for a woman to become pregnant that quickly after discontinuing their use. But then again, Vincent was an incredible man, wasn't he?

"Oh, Vincent," was all she could muster, as she fell into his embrace.

He sighed as he sensed her joy and elation. At first a little worried over her initial reaction. She was happy, pleased and he hoped with all his might that they had made the right decision in creating this new life together. It had taken almost two years of Diana's gentle persuasion for him to even consider it.

"Even now, I sense this tiny being within your womb. It is very beautiful," he sighed.

Diana looked up into his face, her eyes shining with happy tears as she nodded, holding his huge face between her hands. Then, with all her might, she hugged him fiercely.

They lay quietly a while and he sensed the change in her, noted the slight pout forming on her lips.

"What is it?" he asked softly, pressing his mouth to her throat.

She dismissed the thought, shaking her head. "It's just that, well, usually it's the wife that breaks the news to her husband."

"Would you rather I had waited until you could tell me?"

She laughed softly. "Not on your life!" and squeezed him.

"But, maybe next time," she added as a coy afterthought.

"Next time?" He queried in disbelief.

"I like children. If they are all like Jacob, well.... Maybe I'll want a big family. Would you deny me that?"

One more child besides Jacob was truly all he intended, and her request was a bit shocking to say the least. But, he had to admit that it was becoming more difficult with each passing year to deny her anything.

"I can only say that we'll see."

"Oh, we will, will we? Is that the best you can do, mister?"

She sensually moved across him, lying over his chest and pressed provocative little kisses to his face, throat, pulled back his mane to reach his earlobe, then moved to place pressure on his chest with the palms of her hands, slowly moving down his torso to the waistband of his terry wrap.

He watched as her hands unfastened the two snaps, slowly opening the sides of the wrap to reveal his body. He raised his eyebrows to better study her reaction as her wide-eyed stare rolled from his thighs to his face, for he was indeed, swollen and ready for her at that very moment.

'My, but she had a devilish smile on her face now.' She lay back over him, forcing a groan of pleasure from his lips. "Well," she purred sensually, "I can see that I won't be getting much more work done this morning."

His laughter rumbled from deep within his chest as he moved, pinning her carefully beneath him, kissing her face and throat, before he drew back to peer down into her face. "And is that so very terrible, my wife?"

"No," she sighed, moving her hands to his shoulders in anticipation of the loving to come. "No. Not at all."

END