



The Letter to the Roo

by JessicaRae

Dedicated to Skippy, the one who showed me the way down

He walked the streets in silence, his hunched shoulders allowing his cloak's ample hood to hide his regal face, drawn in thought. The barely audible whisper of the falling flakes of snow touching the ground easily reached his sensitive ears. In the distance, there rose the faint notes of Christmas music pouring from the loudspeakers in the city square. A dim glow of myriad colors rose from the center of life where the city folk milled and rushed in the hurry of the holidays. There was laughter, there was chaos, there was the crumpling of shopping bags clashing into each other as busy shoppers rushed past each other in the subway. There was smiling, there was singing, there was joy.

But only a few blocks away, the gaiety was dimming. Greyness hung over the streets as a blanket of dismal longing. The snow his only companion, he plodded on, alone, a mere shadow in the falling flakes.

"Every snowflake is unique, you see," Father's voice trailed into his memories from so many years ago, when he had been a child, a mere child with the dreams of the future bright ahead of him. *"They are perfectly symmetrical. Can anyone tell me what that means?"* Several young hands flew up, and Vincent smiled as he saw in his mind's eye, Devin, smiling with delight as Father nodded his direction.

*“That means they have an even number of sides, no matter which way you were to cut them.”
Devin nearly shouted in childish glee.*

*“But you can’t cut a snowflake, Devin,” one of the other children countered, and Father
chuckled.*

*“Maybe not, but Devin is correct. You see snowflakes are all different, but yet they are all
symmetrical. Has anyone here drawn a snowflake.....”*

The voices faded as Vincent returned his thoughts to the present and made his way below, leaving the chill of the snowstorm behind. He only had one wish for this Christmas. For her. For Catherine. But that was foolish. He had not heard from her since she had gone back above, recovered from her injuries, to find her place in her world again. Their bond remained behind however, to torment and tease him through the long, dark nights of Winter. He felt the longing she felt, but for what? Certainly not for him. How could she long for him, a monster of whom she truly knew little?

He entered the candlelit library, where Father sat at his desk, pen in hand, reading something written on the card he held with his other hand.

“Father, are the Christmas cards completed?” Vincent seated himself across from Jacob Wells, the tunnel patriarch, and cast a kind smile at the weary older man. “You look exhausted, Father.” He took up a half-folded card laying on the table and read it, a patient smile on his lion-like face.

Dearest Skippy,

We haven’t heard from you in a while, and we hope all is well. Your presence at Winterfest is a great honor, and we are hopeful that you will be among us on our journey to the Great Hall this year.

Below, we have not felt the horrors of the world Above as much as we are sure that you and your world have, and for that we offer the sincerest tunnel hugs. There has been sickness, and trouble, but nothing severe and for that we are thankful. The children wish to see more kangaroo pictures if possible, and Rebecca has asked for another fireman calendar, whatever that is. She said you would know.

Word has also reached us that you are having trouble with a ‘box of bolts’. Mouse has declared that he has exactly what you need to repair this problem, although the exact issue we have not been able to determine. If possible, bring it with you, if you dare, and Mouse may do his worst. I daresay that it will possibly be his worst!

As the winter comes upon us here, I know that you will be entering the springtime in your world, a time of joy and rebirth. I pray that it is everything you hoped for, and that the coming years brings you the boldest dreams you dare to dream.

Merry Christmas to the Roo,

Father

Jacob tossed down the pen and leaned back in the chair, stretching slightly. "Vincent, I feel that if I have to write out any more Christmas cards to the helpers, my hand will freeze up and fall off. I think I have the beginnings of carpal tunnel already." He experimentally flexed his writing hand, wincing, and Vincent chuckled.

"I am sure it cannot be that bad, Father. Shall I finish for you?"

"Please," he nodded, reaching over to shove the pen so that it rolled Vincent's direction. "I have helped the children with unboxing the garland, it is all ready for you to help them hang tomorrow. I oversaw the kitchen preparations, then Mary pushed me out and took charge. Mouse invented some kind of gadget that strings lights on the green garland more quickly, and that worked until it completely fell apart after a mere five minutes, then he went off to work on it, claiming it needed more welding, and I had to help them finish stringing the lights because he never came back. My hands have had as much as they can take!"

Vincent smiled kindly, lovingly reaching his larger hand across the table to lay it over the older man's still clenched fist. "Do not worry Father, I will finish these. How many do you have left?"

"Only a few. I will go get some tea from the kitchen. Chess afterwards?"

Vincent nodded, and the older man looked significantly cheered up as he exited the warm room. The longing in his heart was a pain nearly impossible to stand, and in the silent library, he determined to record it, even if the words were never seen by anyone other than the books that surrounded the walls of the library.

Taking up the pen, Vincent began to write.

Dearest Catherine.....