

# Memories

by Joyce Murray

(from *DREAMS IN AMETHYST*)

The house looked large and forbidding in the moonlight. The high stone walls imprisoning the house and guarding its occupants from the world. Inside, Catherine Chandler sat at her desk. In her late fifties, she was still a beautiful woman. Now the time had come to copy down her story for posterity, for her children and for all the generations still to come.

Twenty five years had passed since that night - she smiled at the thought - the night she found Vincent. After writing a few lines she stopped, moved over to a shelf and pulled out a photograph album. She pondered over the photographs, endless snapshots of the children, both now at university. Jacob, so like his father in every way but looks and Ellen almost a cartoon copy of herself. Her birth left Vincent speechless of the beauty and perfection of their daughter. Tears of joy poured down his face, as he held the precious bundle for the first time. Their family now complete, no more children came along.

Then more photographs, Joe Maxwell - she hadn't seen him for years. After she had left the DA's office, they had kept up for a couple of years. Contact became less and less and eventually they lost touch altogether. She could still see Joe with his darts, his rubber bands and a smile that would have turned her head, had it not been for Vincent. She had read of his successes, first this promotion to DA, then the journey into the private practice he had so much wanted. She wondered if he had his china cups and his large office. Since he was no longer making the newspapers, she had lost track of what he was doing and where he was.

She had almost come to the end of the album when a photo of Jenny Aronson caught her eye. Her only regret in life was Jenny. She could remember that night as if it were yesterday. After she had discovered her pregnancy, the need to talk to someone had overtaken her. She had confided in Jenny.

*TWENTY TWO YEARS BEFORE.....*

It had taken a while for the implications to sink in. The words the nurse spoke repeated in her head. You're pregnant, you're pregnant. Vincent was in such a state of confusion, her courage had deserted her when she had visited him. She couldn't add to his worries, she just couldn't. That night she spent trying to think what to do. An abortion, Vincent would never agree to that. She didn't think she'd want to take that particular course of action either. That left either adoption, or for her to keep the baby herself. Adoption she dismissed immediately, as not an option. That left one course of action, she must keep the baby.

Catherine looked at the clock, it read ten minutes past nine. She simply had to talk to someone. For the sake of her sanity she had to talk to someone. Taking a deep breath, she

picked up the phone and dialed Jenny's number. Silently she repeated. be in, please be there. Luck was on Catherine's side and after a few seconds Jenny answered. Hearing her friend's distress, it took only minutes for Jenny to arrive out of breath at Catherine's front door. After a comforting embrace, both women smile. "Oh Jen," Catherine's voice betrayed her calm exterior. "I've got to talk to someone or I'll go mad."

Jenny looked at her friend. "How about coffee, or something stronger? Then you can tell all. Things are never as bad as they seem."

Catherine headed for the kitchen. "Better make it coffee." She returned with two mugs of coffee on a tray. Taking a few sips, she looked at her friend opposite. Could she trust her? Yet if not Jenny than who? Slowly she began.

"Jen, what I've got to tell you must never leave this room. On that I must have your solemn promise." She looked intently at Jenny and waited for her reply.

Jenny smiled broadly, put her mug down and placed her hand over her heart. "You got it. I'm intrigued."

Slowly Catherine began. "Jen, two years ago, when I had my accident, I met someone...."

A long time later, she finished.

"Now Peter has confirmed I'm pregnant. I haven't told Vincent. He's in no fit state. I'm just so confused."

Jenny's light-hearted mood of earlier had gone. A look of deadly earnest had covered her face. "God, Cath...." Jenny stood up and walked toward the balcony half-expecting Vincent to be there. "I'm.... speechless. First thing to do is, you've got to tell him. Let him help you in this."

Catherine rose from her seat and joined her friend at the balcony doors. She began to cry.

"I can't, Jen. I can't complicate his life any more. He's not well."

Jenny put her arms around her friend. "It's okay. We'll wait a bit. See how he is by the weekend. Look, take a few days off, I'll stay here with you."

Catherine smiled through her tears. "Please."

The next few days passed uneventfully and Catherine decided that she would visit Vincent again, and this time she would have to tell him and Father. When she got to Vincent's chamber, he was reading. Sensing someone watching him, he looked up. He was looking much stronger.

"How are you?" Catherine's determination was evident in her words, as she fought to keep her voice strong, so that he wouldn't suspect anything untoward.

"I'm much better, thank you. My memory is returning and Father has filled in the bits I have trouble with."

Catherine moved over to the chair where he sat and knelt in front of him. "Good," she smiled up at him, glad that he was returning to his old self. Well almost - he hadn't mentioned the bond.

Catherine stood up. "Vincent, could we take a walk, maybe to the Chamber of the Falls? Do you feel strong enough?"

Vincent nodded, stood up and took her hand. They spent the time walking to the falls, talking of the days since they had last been together. Arriving at their destination, both sat by a large rock.

Cathrine took a deep breath, "Vincent, do you remember, leaving the tunnels to go below, to the cave. You didn't want to hurt anyone."

Vincent looked at her, wondering why she brought up that awful time. He started to speak, then changed his mind and merely nodded.

"Well, when you were in the cave..."

Vincent looked at her, pain etched all over his face, his eyes pleading with her to stop. He didn't want to remember the shame of that time, was it not bad enough she had witnessed it.

"I'm sorry, Vincent. I must continue." She seemed to read his thoughts.

Vincent managed to force out one word. "Yes."

"Vincent, I thought I was losing you. I thought you were dying. I didn't know what to do. Then I kissed you and I suddenly knew what I must do. Vincent, we loved. I'm carrying our child. Peter has confirmed it."

Vincent's face went pale, his mind raced. "I need time to think."

He got up and walked back and forth thinking of the baby Catherine carried. What if it carried his genes, could he condemn another to the life he had known? But then now she would have to come Below. He would take care of her and anyone else who came along. Never again would she be in danger. He could protect her, always. For as long as he could remember, he had denied himself the possibility of children, of physical love. Then he returned to Catherine, suddenly stronger and more confident.

"We must make plans, you must come Below. Until the baby's born and maybe longer."

Catherine threw her arms around him. "Oh, Vincent. I didn't know what you'd do or think." She placed her head on his chest. Suddenly she felt his hand on her chin, she felt his mouth press against hers. Gently at first, then with more pressure, then he pulled away from her.

"You saved my life, now you give me another life, a child. Did you really think I'd be anything other than overjoyed?"

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Father, shocked at first, had reluctantly accepted the situation. He began to organize the details of Catherine's move down, to begin her life Below.

Later that night, Catherine returned to tell Jenny the good news.

"Well, now that's just terrific," Jenny enthused. "When do I get to meet him?"

Catherine thought for a moment. "He'll be here tomorrow night, around 10. We'll have supper on the balcony."

Catherine spent all the next day in a state of expected excitement. The day stretched on interminably, but finally ten o'clock came and the familiar tap,tap made Catherine aware of Vincent's presence. Catherine turned to Jenny.

"Give me a few moments."

Jenny nodded.

After a few moments the balcony doors opened and Catherine led Vincent into the apartment. Jenny took a deep breath.

"Jen, this is Vincent."

Jenny stood looking ahead, not able to take in the night she saw in front of her.

"Well," she paused. "Hello. We meet at last."

"Hello, Jenny. I've heard a lot about you." Vincent smiled, not prepared to risk shaking hands with Catherine's friend so soon.

Catherine indicated to Vincent to sit at the small table which was set up for supper. She brought the food and returned to the kitchen for some wine. Catherine poured the wine and Vincent reached for his glass. Not quite believing what she saw, Jenny stared at the claws on Vincent's hands. A shudder ran through her. Catherine stared at her friend, somewhat disappointed. Jenny avoided Catherine's eyes.

The next hour passed pleasantly enough, until a noisy fight began on the landing outside Catherine's door. Suddenly the tremendous crash of a body falling against Catherine's door startled Vincent. Instinctively he stood up, his upper lip creased into a menacing growl. Jenny stared not quite believing what she saw. Catherine looked from Jenny to Vincent not knowing what to do.

Then; "Vincent, step out onto the balcony a moment."

After he was gone, Catherine opened the door of her apartment, four drunken party-goers were falling about. They then disappeared into the apartment opposite. Catherine's neighbour's apologetic face appeared at the door.

"Sorry, Catherine."

Catherine mumbled a response and went back inside locking the door behind her. Jenny sat on one of the couches and Vincent was still outside.

"Give me ten minutes."

Catherine disappeared onto the balcony. Jenny stood up and moved towards the open doors. There she stopped. Catherine stood in Vincent's arms, he bent his head and they kissed passionately. Jenny turned and returned to her seat.

Catherine re-entered the apartment, where she saw Jenny sitting on the edge of one of the couches, her fists gripping the cushions. Her face ashen and stony.

"I'm sorry, Cathy, but you can't be serious. He seems nice enough but are you seriously going to live with him somewhere under this city?" Jenny stood up and walked towards the balcony doors. She gripped the door handles then turned. "You're expecting his child."

Catherine was dumbfounded at her friend's response.

***"You must be mad!"***

The words tore through Catherine like a knife. Hadn't she tried to explain about Vincent, about the special love they shared? Slowly Catherine stood up.

"He is the reason I exist. Try to understand that. Get to know him, Jenny, please."

Jenny stood up again.

"Let's sleep on it, eh. If you love him that much, maybe I should...." Jenny didn't finish her sentence. Catherine wrapped her arms around her friend and left for the bedroom. Slowly, Jenny made up her bed and began a sleepless night.

Next morning, Catherine got up early. She'd show Jenny Vincent's world, learn of his life, then she'd understand.

Jenny was already awake and making coffee when Catherine entered the kitchen.

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Jenny had toured the tunnel world, amazed at what she saw. Drinking in the beauty of the chambers and of the people she met there. Vincent had taken them back by a long, complicated route neither would remember, just in case. Before they made their way out into the park Vincent caught Catherine in a deep and tender embrace. Jenny looked then looked away, ashamed of the feelings of disgust she felt.

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Back at the apartment Catherine looked at her friend expectantly.

"I'm sorry, Cathy. It's an amazing place. The people, well, I admire them. I really do, but you can't be serious about going to live there."

Catherine looked at her friend with exasperation etched all over her face.

"I love him. I'm going to have his child. It's what I really want, more than anything."

Jenny sat on the couch, nervously fiddling with a pen which was lying on the table.

"Okay. Let's look at this from a different angle. If he is so important, why have you not moved there before? You are going to give up all you've ever known to go and live with Vincent in a cave in the ground. You're giving up everything. Cathy, you'll be insane within a year. I'm not going to let you do it."

Catherine sat on the couch opposite. "I'm *not* asking your permission, merely your understanding. You're wrong. I'll prove you wrong. I saw the way you looked at Vincent. Tell me you approve of our relationship. Tell me that it doesn't disgust you."

Jenny looked at her friend, tears filling her eyes. "I'm sorry, Cath. Maybe in time, I'll get used to it."

Sudden anger and disappointment filled Catherine. **"Don't bother, Jen. Maybe you should go home."**

Next morning Jenny left and a week later Catherine began her life with Vincent Below.

## TWENTY TWO YEARS LATER

Catherine took a deep breath. She had never seen Jenny again. At first, a few letters arrived via a Helper, then occasionally, then nothing. One thing Jenny had been correct about was that Catherine living in the tunnels hadn't worked out. When Ellen was five years old, they had bought the house. Catherine had found the tunnels suffocating and she had wanted Vincent to enjoy playing with his children in the sunshine. Father had fumed and fussed, but eventually understood. The house isolated them from the city, and had been connected by a specially designed tunnel of Mouse's.

Catherine took the photo of Jenny and returned it to the album. Suddenly, she felt two arms surround her and a kiss placed lightly on her head. She spun around and saw Vincent. She thought how he hadn't changed, well maybe a few grey hairs, but other than that he was the same as the day she first saw him so long ago.

"What were you doing?" Vincent continued to hold Catherine tightly.

"I was looking at photos. I found one of Jenny. I wish she'd understood."

Vincent nodded. "Tomorrow it's twenty-five years. This is my gift." Vincent handed Catherine an envelope.

Catherine giggled excitedly. "For me?"

Vincent nodded. The note read;

***Catherine Wells is invited to lunch  
at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel  
tomorrow April 12th at 2pm***

Catherine frowned. "This is *intriguing*. You taking me to lunch?"

"Not exactly," Vincent replied.

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The next day, Catherine had been through her wardrobe twice before settling on a simple black dress. As she walked up the stairs of the entrance, Catherine was nervous. Taking a deep breath, she entered the dining room. An elegantly-dressed waiter approached. Catherine smiled.

"Mrs. Wells. I'm expected."

"That's right, Mrs. Wells. This way please."

Catherine followed the waiter and then stopped. Her mouth opened to speak but no words came. Sitting at the table were Joe Maxwell and Jenny Aronson. The waiter handed Catherine an envelope. Opening the envelope Catherine found a beautiful card. It read;

***Dearest Catherine  
For all you gave up for us to be  
Hold your friends close, they're  
too precious to lose***

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Catherine grinned, opened her arms and welcomed her friends back into her life. Together they all sat down to lunch which lasted well into the evening. Driving home Catherine knew she'd never lose the friends again.

**END**