

# **“Trick or Treat”**

## **Judith Nolan**



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The sudden knocking on Catherine’s door was loudly impatient. Distracted from their shared meal, Vincent rose from his chair with the obvious intention of answering the abrupt summons.

“Don’t...” Catherine dropped her soup spoon, before reaching to detain him, as he passed her. “You’ll be seen.” She stood, moving in front of him. “Please, let me.”

“Please, Catherine, don’t worry...” Vincent removed her hand gently from his arm. “On this one night, when the walls between the worlds grow thin and spirits of the underworld walk the earth, surely even creatures such as I are safe from hate and harm?”

“Brigit...” Catherine nodded quickly. “A night of masks and baelfires, when anything is possible and nothing is quite as it seems...how could I forget?”

She shook her head. “I can’t believe that tonight will be our fifth Halloween night together.”

“And it will be as it is in the tunnels on this night. You will see.”

Vincent armed himself with the large bowl of sweet treats Catherine kept on the side-table, before he opened the door.

Holding the bowl behind his back, he didn’t speak, as he stood watching the disconcerted reaction of the cluster of Halloween-dressed children thronging the hallway beyond.

Calls of *\*trick or treat\** died on their lips. Several of the kids took a few moments to find their voices, and then they were brimful of wonder and marvel. They milled around, staring at him from all angles.

“Hey, man, great look!”

“Wow! Get a look at him!”

“Neat mask. I can’t even see where you end, and it begins. Gotta get me one of those.”

“You look so real...”

“Where’d ya buy that face?”

“Do ya do parties? My sister would really dig ya, man. She’s right into exotic looks.”

Vincent smiled, but he didn’t move or reply.

Suddenly, one voice, full of suspicion, cut loudly across the others. “Hey man, you got any treats for us?”

“Yeah...” The children crowded closer.

“Miss Catherine always has great stuff for us.” A small, indignant pirate forced his way through to the front of the mob. “I’ve not seen you here before.” He planted his balled fists on slim hips. “What’re you, then? Her boyfriend, or something?”

“He’s just a friend, Peter. Visiting from out of town.” Catherine appeared at Vincent’s side. She turned to him. “Stop teasing them, and give out the treats. I don’t want my front door egged.”

“Very well...” Vincent sighed, as he produced the bowl from behind his back.

There was a rustle of many bags being opened and held out. Vincent dropped a large fistful of sweets into every one, clearing the bowl.

“Thanks, Mister. You’re okay.” Peter nodded, as he peered into his laden bag with satisfaction. A quick frown creased his brow. “Say, you gonna be here again, next year?”

“I think that is up to Miss Catherine.” Vincent slanted her a questioning glance. “Am I?”

“Oh, I think that could be arranged,” Catherine replied to his look, with a loving smile.

“So, you say he’s not your boyfriend, huh?” Peter huffed his disbelief, looking from one to the other. “Yeah, right...”

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