

A BIT OF MAGIC

by Kathy Bayne

(from *Crystal Cavern Twelve*)

GOOD MORNING NEW YORK CITY.

IT'S 7AM ON WHAT PROMISES TO BE A GREAT FALL DAY

Catherine Chandler reached over and shut off the alarm. *Get up, Cathy. You have a busy day ahead.* The radio interrupted her thoughts.

OKAY, ALL YOU GHOST AND GOBLINS. GET READY FOR TRICK-OR-TREATING TONIGHT. HAPPY HALLOWEEN

The thought of Halloween brought a broad smile to Catherine's face; as a child, it had never been one of her favourite holidays. Being shy, she found it embarrassing to go door-to-door and beg candy from the neighbours, *(not to mention awkward)* But now it had become a wonderful day, when she and Vincent could be together without curious stares and questions.

Catherine continued to daydream. She was determined to make this day special for both of them.

"Oh, damn! Look at the time, taxi again today. One of these days I'll actually get on the subway."

"Good morning, Radcliffe." Joe Maxwell was disgustingly cheerful. Catherine walked over to the pot of fresh coffee.

"Please, Joe. Coffee."

"Ya know, Cath, It's going to be a major bust for this office to put Goodman away. He is one of the dirtiest guys on Wall Street." Joe took a sip of coffee. "We'll be just like Robin Hood and his merry men, Cathy, going through the world righting wrongs."

"Whoa, slow down, Joe. Next, we'll be jousting in the aisles."

"It doesn't hurt a guy to be romantic. Women like a certain sensitivity in their men. You should get yourself a knight in shining armour, Radcliffe."

"I'll take your advice under consideration. Right now, I'm off to do battle against an army of paperwork."

Catherine broke for lunch. The promise of a beautiful day had been fulfilled, and the sun felt good on her face. She wasn't sure what she was looking for, but would know it when she found it. Having no particular destination in mind, she wandered down a side street. Out of the corner of her eye, she

noticed an interesting store front, overcrowded with books and trinkets. Hesitantly, she pushed open the door.

"Good afternoon, anybody here?" No answer. "Hello?" Catherine started to leave.

"Good afternoon to you, beautiful lady. May I help you?" A small white-haired gentleman had appeared, seemingly from nowhere.

"I'm looking for a gift, something unique."

"Unique?" he spoke with a heavy Eastern European accent. "I can tell by the look in your eyes, this is for someone special."

"Very special," Catherine smiled slightly.

"I can always tell, the eyes are the mirror of the soul, they never lie."

She felt suddenly uncomfortable, and tried to change the subject. "I don't remember this store. Have you been here long?"

"Long, short, who counts time? I've been here, I've been there." He pulled a beat-up cardboard box out from behind the counter. "Now, for that gift. Now here is something nice." He handed her an ornate brooch. "A little tarnished, but full of character. It's quite old, a genuine antique."

Catherine thought to herself, *what an odd little man, but he was right about the brooch*. It was beautiful, dark unpolished silver with a perfect garnet in the centre.

"Men once wore these on the ruffles of their shirts, but nobody dresses that way any more. Still, it *is* unique." He looked up at Catherine.

"It's perfect. How much?"

"I could not sell this to just anyone. It comes with a bit of magic. The pin was part of a collection from an estate in Hungary. The owners were said to be sorcerers." The store owner looked up at Catherine.

"That's a very interesting story and perfect for Halloween. But I really don't believe in magic, and you've already made the sale. Just tell me how much."

The owner smiled at her. "Because you are such a down-to-earth lady, I'll just charge you for the pin. The magic will be on credit. You can pay me after it works?"

They negotiated for a few minutes but in the end both were satisfied. Catherine with her purchase and the owner with the price he received.

Catherine had rented a simple medieval costume in red and gold, and she was just combing her hair when there was a soft knock from the balcony door.

"Vincent!"

"Catherine, you look beautiful."

"You don't look so bad yourself."

He enfolded her in his arms. "You smell kind of nice too."

"It's cologne Mouse got on one of his adventures Above. Since we were going on a date, he said I should smell like I'm on a date, whatever that means." Catherine looked up and laughed.

"Mouse's logic is best understood by Mouse. Come in, I just have to get my wrap."

Vincent hesitated, then stepped through the door.

"I'm ready, let's go." She took Vincent's hand and headed for the front door.

"Catherine, I can't," his voice lowered.

"You don't expect me to climb over the balcony, do you? Look, it will be all right, trust me." She gave his hand a tug and this time he followed.

While waiting for the elevator, they ran into Cathy's neighbour, Mrs. Callie. Instinctively, Vincent hid his face.

"Not tonight, tonight the world is ours," she whispered to Vincent. "Mrs. Callie, allow me to introduce a special friend. "Vincent, Mrs. Callie - Mrs. Callie, Vincent."

"Pleased to meet you, Vincent. I hope you two have a lovely evening."

"The pleasure is mine, and thank you," came the deep guttural reply. Once inside the elevator, Vincent chided her. "How could you have done that to me?"

"Oh, lighten up! You know I believe you don't get out enough," Catherine giggled. Vincent couldn't help but join in her laughter.

Catherine flipped on the light as they entered the apartment. "Make yourself comfortable. I'll get your gift."

"Catherine, I really should be going." He turned toward the balcony, determined to leave. Catherine emerged from the bedroom carrying a brightly-wrapped box.

"Here, for you, with love from me." She pushed a box into his hands. Vincent read the attached card out loud.

'To my knight in shining armour, now and for always. I love you, Catherine.'

"Open the box." He unwrapped the gift and held the pin in his hand.

"Do you like it, Vincent?"

"It's beautiful and precious, just like you." Vincent lost himself in a private moment.

Catherine slipped her arms around his waist. "A penny for your thoughts."

Vincent looked at her. "I was just thinking how much my life has been enriched since I met you."

Catherine looked in his eyes, so clear and blue, behind them so many unfulfilled dreams and desires. She thought about the store owner and what he had said about the eyes being the windows to the soul.

"Vincent, what is your hearts' desire?" He tightened his grip on Catherine, and looked away from her.

"To love you," he said, in a voice barely audible.

They stood together for what seemed like an eternity. Then very slowly Vincent bent his head towards Catherine and kissed her. He was shy and hesitant at first, but as the kiss deepened, his passion rose and he held her tighter.

Catherine was breathless as Vincent stepped back to look into her eyes. "Vincent, I love you so much."

"Catherine, forgive me for lack of self-control, but when I looked at you standing there so beautiful." His words were cut short by Catherine's kiss.

"I have waited so long for that kiss, and it was more wonderful than I could have imagined."

"Catherine, I must go."

"No. Vincent, you must stay."

Catherine looked out at the morning sun and then over to the figure sleeping next to her.

"Good morning, Vincent. Sleep well?"

"I had the sweetest dreams. Then I awoke to find they were not dreams, but reality."

"It has been like magic, being here with you." Catherine leaned over to him and gave him a kiss.

Later in the week, Catherine was working at her desk when Joe interrupted.

"Hey Cathy, didn't you say you got some gifts at a shop on Houston and Fourteenth Street?"

"Yes, on Halloween. Why?"

"Well, either you've lost all sense of direction, or you were hallucinating."

Cathy gave him a puzzled look. "What are you talking about?"

"There are no stores there, the whole block was razed last month to make way for another parking lot." He handed her a newspaper clipping, which she read aloud.

"WORKMEN MADE A GRUESOME DISCOVERY YESTERDAY WHEN A BLOCK, CONSISTING OF HOUSES AND SMALL SHOPS, WAS BROUGHT DOWN TO MAKE WAY FOR A MUNICIPAL PARKING LOT. SEVERAL SKELETONS, INCLUDING THOSE OF THREE CHILDREN, WERE FOUND IN THE BASEMENT OF ONE OF THE BUILDINGS.

AFTER AN INVESTIGATION THAT INCLUDED DNA TESTING, IT WAS DETERMINED THAT THE BONES WERE THOSE OF THE DANUBA FAMILY, A BRANCH OF THE HUNGARIAN ROYAL FAMILY. THE DANUBA FAMILY HAD MOVED TO NEW YORK CITY IN THE 1800'S, AFTER BEING ASKED TO LEAVE THEIR FAMILY HOMELAND. IT SEEMS THAT THE FAMILY WAS ACCUSED OF PRACTICING WITCHCRAFT.

THEY CAME TO AMERICA AND OPENED A SMALL ANTIQUE SHOP SELLING OFF THEIR FAMILY TREASURES. BUT THE RUMOURS OF THEIR FORMER LIFE FOLLOWED THEM TO AMERICA, AND THE BIRTH OF THEIR SON, A CHILD WHO HAD ALMOST FELINE FEATURES, WAS PROOF ENOUGH TO THE ALREADY SKEPTICAL NEIGHBOURS THAT MAGIC WAS AFOOT.

THE POLICE BELIEVE THAT THEIR HOUSE AND SHOP WERE SET AFIRE DELIBERATELY, BUT AFTER ALL THIS TIME THERE IS NO CONCRETE PROOF. ALSO DISCOVERED WITH THE BODIES, WAS AN OLD SAFE THAT HOUSED WHAT WAS LEFT OF THEIR FAMILY'S LEGACY. AFTER CHECKING A VERY DETAILED INVENTORY, THE ONLY PIECE MISSING WAS A SILVER

AND GARNET BROOCH. THE REMAINS AND INVENTORY ARE BEING RETURNED TO THE SURVIVING FAMILY IN ROMANIA."

Catherine stood mesmerized by what she had read. "Where did you get this, Joe?"

"It came across my desk today, just to be filed, the case is closed. Shame to have come all the way to America and this happens." Joe stood looking at the paper. "So anyway, you see Radcliffe, you could not have been shopping in that area."

Cathy was still dazed and mumbled a polite "I guess you are right, Joe."

Below, later that evening as Catherine was relaying the newspaper story to Vincent. She told him how sorry she was that she had not got back to the store owner to thank him for his bit of magic.

"Catherine, these people are long gone from this planet, and watch us from another. If all that you say is true, then our happiness and our love are all the thanks they need."

"I suppose you are right, Vincent." She took his hand and slowly walked into his chamber.

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