

NIGHT MUSIC

by Lorraine Cirelli Gupton

Vincent dropped his knapsack to the tunnel floor, and Catherine watched him gather a few stray pieces of wood to build them a fire. After positioning the timber in a steeped formation, with the flick of his wrist, the match came to life. Touching it to the dry kindling, it immediately burst into flame.

Catherine opened a large picnic basket and retrieved the wine and cheese she'd brought, placing them along with a few paper plates and cups on a blanket Vincent had taken from another sack. She smiled shyly when she noticed Vincent had unzipped their two sleeping bags to form one large, downy bed.

Though it was warm in the tunnels tonight, Catherine was acutely conscious of the shivering that spread throughout her body. Vincent sensed her skittishness and looked across the fire. Their gazes locked and Catherine almost cried out when she perceived the desire rampant in his sapphire eyes.

It had been building for days now, this need that neither one seemed able to quell. Catherine had given up fighting it hours ago, but knew Vincent was not yet ready to concede the battle.

Their relationship was now one that all loving couples shared, the barricades Vincent had set up long since torn down. Making love had become a integral part of their lives and this overnight picnic was to be nothing more than a getaway from the hustle and strife of everyday living.

Catherine had finished her most recent case Above and was ready to relax. She'd suggested they try and go somewhere to unwind, take some time off from their many obligations and spend it enjoying one another's company. Expecting him to turn the offer down, to her surprise, Vincent eagerly agreed.

He's been through much himself of late, having almost drowned when the East River broke through and flooded a maze of inhabited lower tunnels. Vincent had saved more than two dozen people from an icy grave before the gaping hole was dammed.

Though it seemed that he had escaped the ordeal without so much as a scratch, coming that close to death had changed him somehow. He grew withdrawn and quiet, keeping his distance from her.

As morning turned to night and they'd traveled deeper into the tunnels, Catherine could now feel their bond thrum with an uncontrollable urgency. It was almost palpable.

"Catherine," he whispered in a voice so quiet, it couldn't truly be classified as sound. That one word said everything and she moved nearer to him as he prodded the lazy fire to life.

Again their eyes met and she immediately knew what it was he wanted, what she must do to vanquish this ache burning inside him.

He had finally come back to her.

Unsure whether he reached for her or whether she moved in obedience to his silent command, Catherine's arms draped around his neck and with eyes closed, raised her mouth to his. When she did not feel the pressure of his lips in return, Catherine opened her eyes and watched in utter fascination at the battle raging within his own. Desire and fear ... which would triumph?

When she felt his hand slide up her arm, a soft moan escaped her and he answered it with a groan, for his need to hold and be held had long since vanished. He did not wish comfort or solace. He wished for

"Catherine."

This time she did not hesitate. Catherine had had enough of waiting. Opening her arms wide, she could almost feel the temporary defenses come crashing down as, with another ragged groan, Vincent claimed what she so willingly and freely offered. He was male; she was female. All other thoughts were slayed in that one declaration.

His strong arms gathered her in, the one now around her neck supporting her head as he bent her back onto the dirt floor. His mouth lowered to hers and she let out a cry of protest when it stopped inches from her own.

"Please," she begged just above a whisper.

It was all the urging he needed. Vincent's mouth closed down on hers and Catherine knew herself lost. Her mouth was eager and open to his inquisitive

tongue and by sheer instinct, Vincent took control. Plunging it deep inside, he sealed his conquest and her submission.

Conscious of the fact that he was so much larger than she, Vincent adjusted his massive frame so Catherine would not have to bear much of his weight. Then he continued his sensual exploration, seeking Catherine's softer, yielding flesh and hotter, sweeter depths.

He pinned her to the rough ground, lost for a moment in the pure ecstasy that was kissing her. If she was in any discomfort, Catherine did not voice it. Instead, she sifted her hands through his long hair as she strove to deepen the kiss.

Her mouth moved seductively under his, not frenzied but with a slow rhythm that barely capped his own hunger, drawing Vincent into a vortex of desire so fierce, it nearly robbed him of breath and sanity.

Falling victim to the wild cravings of his own body, Vincent fought to regain some semblance of control, struggling valiantly out of the whirlpool of pure, wanton desire and resurfacing in reluctant degrees, coming back to reality slowly as if in a trance.

Then their lips parted and Catherine willed herself to gaze up at him, the ravenous look in his eyes seeming to wrench a strangled gasp from her very soul. For a moment, poised there above her, he appeared so fierce, so dominant, so frighteningly masculine. Yet, when he nuzzled her cheek in the gentlest of caresses, she understood what it was he truly needed.

Catherine, too, found she also wanted more.

There was a wildness to him now, a wildness she somehow knew how to sate and Catherine tilted her head back to offer him the sensitive column of her bare neck. She felt the silky roughness of his beard against her skin, the hot drawing pressure of his mouth on her throat and his fangs as they nipped the taut tendons of her neck.

Catherine arched her back in response and a fireball of desire rolled over him. Shaken, Vincent caught her shuddering body and devoured her mouth again, understanding even through his haze of passion that he could never, ever slake his thirst for her.

To Vincent's relief, she began undoing the buttons on his shirt and then dealt quickly with unfastening his pants. There was an urgency in her movements as

she tugged his shirt free, an urgency echoed in the slight temors wracking his own body, vestiges he supposed of what was left of his self-control.

As he dispatched with the rest of his clothing, Catherine followed suit, undressing slowly and deliberately until the only article remaining was her silk shirt. The peaks of her unbound breasts were visible through the softness of the material as she teasingly opened the buttons one by one.

Raising her gaze to Vincent, she slowly let the blouse slip off her shoulders. It momentarily caught on her arms before falling unheeded to the ground in a silky whisper. When she stood naked before him, the look in his eyes would have unnerved her not so long ago. They flared with hunger, Vincent's breath coming forth in ragged, almost painful gasps, avowing his impatience to be one with her again.

Melding his mouth with hers, he sighed with pleasure when he felt her breasts nestle softly in the hair on his chest, her belly moving against him in a sinuous caress. When he groaned and shifted restlessly, seeking relief for the fire in his loins, she took his hand and led him to the sleeping bags.

As they lay together on the soft, feathery surface, Vincent exhaled loudly and closed his eyes, too steeped in passion to be self-conscious, even when Catherine raised her finger and with excruciating slowness, traced it down the center of his body from his throat to the golden hair just about his jutting erection.

Then she touched one delicate finger to his upper lip and whispered huskily, "Your mouth is so gentle, Vincent. I love your mouth."

With tears of overwhelming emotion springing from her green eyes, she then lifted herself blindly to him. There was so much more he wished to do, so many ways he wished to taste, touch and pleasure her. He longed to wallow in these rediscovered sensations until they stretched the very limits of his control.

At last, he sheathed himself inside her and Catherine's breathing changed from ragged sobs to cries of uninhibited pleasure as the heat of him spread throughout her belly. Their union was a culmination of weeks of restraint, days of agony, and turning them both, Vincent positioned Catherine on top, trustingly giving the reins back to her.

Catherine clenched convulsively around his length and she raked her fingers

through Vincent's glistening chest hair. Tilting her head back in pleasurable torment, an unexpected spasm flashed through her.

For a moment, lying under the threshold of her body, Vincent had the vague awareness of barriers being laid to waste, of things being altered forever. Now though, lost in the throes of passion, he could only revel in the feel of her body around him, of the maddening rhythm she was creating and the sounds of rapture emanating from them both. It was the most satisfying, intense experience of his life.

Catherine gave herself unselfishly to him, bringing Vincent right up to the moment of fulfillment, then torturing him to wait until he finally grabbed her wrists, rolled over and held her hands above her head in the most excruciating and fulfilling release he'd ever achieved.

Catherine's excitement at his climax brought another of her own, and they smothered each other's cries within an almost savage kiss of ultimate completion.

Their hearts still sang together as they drowned in the aftermath of their lovemaking, Catherine with her back to him and Vincent pressed against her. His hand slid over her shoulder and cupped the fullness of her breast, one long finger languidly stroking the nipple to eager life.

She murmured his name and adoringly kissed his hand, enraptured in the love that had erased all obstacles and taboos and made it not just a need for them to be together always, but destiny itself.

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