

The Generous Heart

by Mary Page

It had been an awful day, even though they had wound up, at last, a most grueling case. The interviews with the very young victims had been sickening, the rest of her workload had been heavy and Catherine had worked late into the evening to finish. Her spirits had gradually lowered through the long day, but as she unlocked her apartment door, she felt a wave of anticipation for the comfort and uplifting she needed.

But the balcony was empty - was she really so late that she had missed Vincent altogether tonight? She'd felt so sure that he would be waiting for her. Her sheer disappointment, after such a bleak day, seemed too hard to bear and tears pricked her eyes.

'Enough of this,' she thought and mentally shook herself. *'What you need is a hot drink, some dinner and a warm shower. Maybe he'll come later.'* No arrangements had been made for that night and their meetings were often spontaneous. Still, she hoped he would come, but, as the evening drifted darkly into night, Catherine truly resigned herself to closing the day alone.

Just as she leaned to draw the drapes, the empty balcony beckoned to her. She stepped outside and her longing to see Vincent there was overwhelming. The hour was late, but she called out with her heart and mind to tentatively bond with his for a soothing moment before retiring for the night.

Not long after, she heard an urgent tapping on her bedroom window. *'Vincent!'* She flung the door open and joyfully rushed into his arms.

"What is it, Catherine? What's the matter? I heard your call," he asked, anxiously searching her face.

"Nothing is wrong, Vincent. I just longed to see you. I didn't realize you'd heard me." Her arms held him close.

His eyes were serious as he spoke. "Catherine, I always know what you are feeling and you seemed so desperate. I thought something was happening to you."

Vincent was still perturbed and she felt at once guilty, so she softly said,

"I'm sorry I made you worry. It has been such a lousy day and I was somehow expecting you to visit me this evening. When you didn't come, I felt so alone." She sighed and laid her head on his chest, loving having him so close.

Vincent stroked her hair as he said. "I was going to come tonight; but Father didn't seem too well today - only a slight cold, I think, nothing serious. I felt he needed a little cossetting and attention, so I've been playing chess with him all evening, to cheer him up."

Catherine raised her head, her eyes wide and stricken. She cried in anguish. "Oh, Vincent! How selfish I've been. I mustn't forget that there are others who need you, too! Father needed you most tonight and I, unthinkingly, called you away. Forgive me."

Vincent felt her jolt of inner pain and gently touched her cheek. He whispered, "Yes, I must sometimes care for others. But, don't you know that to me you are everything? And if you need me, for whatever reason, then I must come. For if you don't ever want me, then I am nothing."

Catherine wondered at his most generous heart and hugged him close in gratitude. No day for her could ever be bad again, knowing that she was not alone and so loved.

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