

Diana's Halloween Night

by Mel

Diana Bennet opened the bag of popcorn, the buttery scent filling her nose. Whoever had designed microwave popcorn was a true genius.

Carefully, she tipped the bag and watched as the popped kernels fill the blue bowl. It had been an odd Christmas gift one year from her sister, Susan, the year she had been promoted to her new role within 210. Susan's comments on the gift were perhaps even more strange.

"I have only one request, this bowl is never used when you're on a grumose case. You need to have fun too."

Diana smiled at the memory. *Well Sus, I'm doing as you ordered.*

Taking the bowl, she turned and surveyed her loft from the kitchen island. She had done a deep clean only a day ago. Everything was where it should be. Her latest case file was already on her captain's desk and even the DA, Joe Maxwell, hadn't required her services of late, which was all just as well, especially tonight. Even up in her loft, Diana could hear and imagine the chaos of children running around the streets below in NYC and their parents trying to keep up with them as they raced from one apartment complex to another, their faces covered in masks.

Diana moved over to the couch with a sigh. Even as a child she had never understood the desire to dress up in scary costumes and the like; the parents would just give you candy anyway as long as you looked cute enough. While her parents had never discouraged Halloween, it was her grandmother's words of the specialness of the night that had stuck with a young Diana. All Hallow's Eve was a special time when the wall between life and death thinned, and the spirits of the departed could return. It was a sacred time, not one meant for silly outfits and sugar-hyped children.

Diana forced her eyes away from the cloth draped across her empty clipboard workstation. Sadly, masks were not only used by children on this night.

No... stop that thinking, she chastised herself. Tomorrow would bring the human darkness back into her life. Tonight, she could enjoy herself with popcorn and get lost in the silly fluff of Christmas films and other comfort films she enjoyed. Diana was already dressed in comfy sweats and an orange knitted sweater her aunt had made one year for her birthday.

She had just hit play when a tapping sound from the skylight caught her attention. Her eyebrows rose even as she glanced up. In past Halloweens, she had rarely seen Vincent or Jacob unless she happened to be Below, both enjoying the time spent together on the one night Vincent was able to walk freely Above even at ten years old. Had something happened?

But no, the knock hadn't been insistent enough, more akin to his usual announcing his presence before he entered the loft. Except he wasn't coming inside.

Curious now, Diana grabbed her coat and went up to meet him.

Opening in the door, Diana said, "I give you credit it seems you found the trick to get me answering the door, but I don't have any candy."

Half hidden beneath a dark hood, Vincent's stoic golden feline features could be difficult to read at times, but his blue eyes registered confusion.

"I mean..." Diana lightly clapped her hands together in the small awkward silence. "No other kids think to climb up here to see if I have any candy."

Vincent smiled. "You are fine, Diana. I gave all my candy to Jacob and the other kids."

Diana looked around. "Jake's not with you?"

"Not this time. It was getting late, so Jamie took him and the other kids back Below."

"Poor Jamie," Diana said with sympathy. "All those sugar crazy kids."

"The children know they can only have so many treats in one night."

Diana grinned to herself. "Good luck enforcing that, Babe."

Vincent smiled before he sniffed the air. "Popcorn?"

"Yum, hot out of the microwave," Diana whispered. "I don't tell William I prefer the store brand than from true scratch."

"Your secret is safe with me. I haven't interrupt you with something?"

"Just Billy Murry and I were going to see how faithful he was Dickens tale," Diana said with a shrug, his lips lifted into a smile. She had shown Vincent the film the previous year and it had both amused and baffled his classic literature heart.

"Ah... I believe you have the wrong holiday, Diana."

"Well it has ghosts in it so I think it counts."

Vincent nodded slightly, conceding the point.

"Do you want to come in? I hate to be annoying, but there is little worse than cold popcorn," Diana said, beckoning him to come inside.

"Nothing worse indeed," Vincent agreed as he followed her inside. Both knew the dark realities of the world; indeed their first meeting and journey together had been one in the cruelest way. Time and love had helped them push past the darkness of what the madman Gabriel had taken from Vincent and his son.

For Diana, given her line of work, the cruelty of humanity continued to gnaw at her. But like children in their scary masks combating the things they feared, for tonight Diana and Vincent could wrap themselves in the silliness and warmth of Christmas films and popcorn.

Sitting down on the couch, accepting the bowl of popcorn, Vincent watched Diana turn on the movie. The film played on for a while before Vincent asked, "Is this my treat?"

Diana took a handful of popcorn. "Unless you can think of something better?"

Vincent grinned. "I got Cullen and the others to fill in for me tomorrow and the next day."

Diana blinked and turned to look at him. "You're here all weekend. Is this a trick?"

"Do you prefer tricks, Diana?"

Diana leaned over, accidentally dumping the bowl of lukewarm popcorn over the floor and kissed him. "Oh, Vincent, I prefer treats."

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