

# Lucchetti d'amore

by Ulrike

Joe arrived at Catherine's desk to discuss some details about the "Shoemaker" case. They were in full cry, debating the pro and cons of their arguments to expose the defendant's weak points.

"Radcliffe, you are the best prosecutor, I have ever known," Joe admitted.

"Thank you so much. I'll accept the compliment. You're welcome," Catherine responded.

"I need some caffeine. I'll be right back. Shall I bring a cup back for you, too?" Joe asked.

Catherine only made a face in response. So Joe rose, stretched, and walked to the coffee machine.

Catherine was smiling and floating her bond with Vincent with her pleasure, when Bennie came in.

"Hi gorgeous," Bennie greeted her.

"Hi Bennie, nice to meet you. Do you have a package for me?" Catherine asked.

"No, I'm sorry," he commented, remaining.

"Can I do anything for you?" she asked.

"Package for Mr. Joe Maxwell," he announced. "The secretary told me he would be with you."

"Yes, he was," Catherine nodded. "He left me temporarily. Can I accept the consignment for him? Just in case.... if you are in a hurry."

"Will he be long?" Bennie asked. "I need his signature as recipient."

"I see. He'll be coming right back," she answered, becoming curious.

Even as she said this, Joe entered her desk area, juggling cups full of hot coffee.

"Uh, you have a visitor," Joe stated.

"No, it's for you! Your signature is required for delivery," Catherine explained.

"Yes, it's personally addressed," Bennie added. "Will you please, sign here and here?"

Joe did as he was told and Bennie handed the package over to him.

"Now, I have to hurry up. Bye gorgeous, good bye Mr. Maxwell." Bennie gave Catherine a boyish smile, turned and left quickly.

"That boy was a little bit bold, wasn't he?" Joe remarked, trying to distract Catherine's attention.

"Why?" she asked amazed. "Don't you think I'm gorgeous?"

"Uh, of course," Joe hastened to add. "But to pronounce it so publicly ...."

"What's it with this mysterious package?" Catherine questioned lightly, changing the subject to avoid an awkward situation.

Joe handed her the little package.

"It's seems very heavy for its size, isn't it?" she stated. "Uh look, these wonderful stamps. It comes from a foreign land."

She turned the package, for deciphering the name of the country.

"I t a l y!" she decoded.

"Uh, you've got a package from your relatives," she summarized happily.

Looking up at Joe, she noticed that he looked abashed.

"Joe, what is it?" she asked, bewildered.

"Uh," he sighed. "It's from my bisnonna, my great-grandmother."

"Joe, I don't understand. What is so terrible about a package from your great-grandmother?" Catherine asked uncertain how to react.

"It's for Valentine's Day," Joe responded, annoyed.

Catherine shrugged her shoulders.

"In Italy, the whole Valentine's Day thing is about amore, amore," Joe grimaced.

She remained silent, looking interested to encourage him to continue.

"It's an Italian Valentine's custom. In bella Italia the couples meet on Valentine's Day at bridges or fences or on the promenade and hang a padlock on the desired place. It's a so-called "love lock" or "luchetti d'amore". The initials or the date are engraved. If both of the partners make a wish, the key is thrown into the water and they must not reveal their wish," he elaborated. He unwrapped the parcel and presented the contents to her.

"Uh Joe, what a wonderful idea!" Catherine exclaimed.

"What's wonderful about this idea? You know, I loathe all these special days and customs, and.... I don't know..... you always need a partner for those things," he ended sheepishly, his voice dropped to a whisper. He looked down, embarrassed.

"Uh, Joe! This day will come, so pack it away until then. You deserve someone very special," Catherine told him confidently.

Joe nodded, sighing.

"Let's get back to work," he suggested.

They continued on and made their case ironclad.

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The lock custom touched Catherine deeply. She kept it in mind for herself and Vincent. Their first love lock was installed on the iron gate of the tunnel entrance, followed by additional ones spread throughout Central Park. After they had reflected upon a wish, they smiled happily to one another, floating their bond with deep understanding. The keys were thrown into the lagoon during a nightly walk through Central Park.

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Epilogue

Catherine's forecast for Joe came true, finally. He found a woman, in some ways comparable to Catherine. Their love lock was placed at Greysheet Arc, Central Park. As he locked it, he noticed another nearby. This one bore the initials V.W. & C.C.



END