

The Proposal

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As we celebrate thirty years of fandom, we have filled our conzine with fanfic, art and poetry by current writers and artists, and those who contributed to Keeping the Dream Alive during the intervening years. We thought it would be fitting to also present the very first story written by one of our newest-to-fandom members, Joani! The Dream continues!

Monday. Rained all day. Five o'clock and it's still coming down. Catherine has had a long day, is exhausted and ready to go home.

Waterlogged, she arrives at her apartment. Finally.

She opens the door and is putting her umbrella away when she notices an envelope on the floor with "Catherine" written on the outside.

She anxiously opens it. A note reads, "Children's concert Friday night – 7:00 p.m. Please come if you don't have other plans. Meet me at the threshold at 6:30 p.m. (P.S. Wear comfortable shoes. Going for a walk after.) – Vincent"

Other plans? she thinks! *Vincent! He is so considerate.* There's nowhere she'd rather be than with him.

What a pleasant thing to come home to after such a busy and rainy Monday! She cannot help but daydream about what it would be like to be with Vincent all the time – not having to keep the secret – but she stops herself. No sad thoughts. She resolves to just enjoy what time she can have with him. She has Friday night to look forward to all week!



Friday. After much anticipation, it's *finally* here!! She gets home a little early and anxiously chooses her outfit, complete with comfortable shoes (per Vincent's request), then jumps into the shower.



She arrives at the threshold precisely at 6:30 p.m., where she sees Vincent waiting and looking –well, he just... takes your breath.

Vincent gazes at Catherine. She looks stunning in her midnight blue silk outfit. He is mesmerized by her elegance.

He takes her hand and they stroll silently together toward the chamber where the concert will be taking place. Catherine senses that Vincent seems more affectionate than usual. She doesn't try to figure it out, she just enjoys it.

All eyes are on them as they arrive. Catherine looks absolutely breathtaking. Vincent absorbs the attention over Catherine with pride.

They take their seats at the concert. After the beautiful chamber music starts, Vincent reaches over and takes Catherine's hand in his. Her heart skips a beat. He has never done that before at a concert, especially in front of others. She closes her eyes and quietly sighs, wishing she could feel this way for the rest of her life.

The concert, as usual, is wonderful but she is concentrating on Vincent's strong hand holding hers. She feels so protected and loved by him.

After the concert, they mingle with everyone for a while and then Vincent leans over and whispers in her ear that he would like to show her something in the tunnels that he thinks she will enjoy.

Again, he takes her hand, and they begin their journey.

She has never been in this part of the Tunnels before. Just when she thinks she cannot be further mystified, Vincent leads her into yet another magical place. There is a small waterfall and what resembles a mountain stream. There is a sort of mist in the air, which glistens by the glow of the many lighted candles which Vincent had arranged for earlier.

Vincent leads Catherine to a place to sit. They don't speak for several minutes, both enjoying the ambiance of the place and the moment.

Then Vincent begins to speak. "Catherine, I just cannot continue to live so much apart from you." His heavenly blue eyes gaze deeply into her own. "I have been trying to figure out a way we can spend more time together than just an evening here and there without you having to give up your life Above. And... I have an idea."

Catherine eagerly anticipates each word from Vincent.

Vincent continues, "My plan allows us to be together every weekend, here Below, when you can arrange it." He squeezes her shoulder and adds, "You wouldn't be obligated to stay Below every weekend, especially if you have plans with Jenny or want to travel to Connecticut, or elsewhere. You can keep your job, your apartment, and your life Above... but have a complete life Below, as well." Vincent takes a deep breath before saying, "One thing I would ask you, though, is to please seriously consider not taking on any more potentially life-threatening, dangerous cases."

Catherine is looking perplexed when Vincent takes her hands in his and helps her as they both stand up. Then he kneels down on one knee and says, “Catherine, will you marry me?”

Temporarily unable to speak, and with tears streaming from her eyes, she replies, “Oh, yes, Vincent!”

Still on his knee, he reaches into a pocket and pulls out a soft cloth, unfolds it, and offers a ring to Catherine. “These beautiful jewels came from the Crystal Cavern, where the crystal in your necklace came from, and Mouse made the ring.” He tilts his head slightly, acknowledging he is asking her to be circumspect. “Please, wear it on your right hand – somewhere other than your ring finger, so no questions will be asked Above.” Vincent stands and, as Catherine admires the ring, he explains, “The ring has three stones – birthstones – yours, your mother’s, and your father’s.”

Catherine looks up at Vincent with tears streaming down her face. She is speechless. Before she can come up with some words, Vincent very slowly leans over and kisses her lightly on the mouth. Catherine is beyond belief now. This is something she’s longed for – for such a long time – for him to kiss her.

Just as she is hoping that Vincent is not going to stop, he pulls her tight to him and kisses Catherine in a way that she’s never been kissed before. A slow, deep kiss that seems to go on forever.

After, Vincent looks into her eyes and says, “I belong to you, and I’ll love you forever.”


Catherine is in a daze. She is thinking, *Please, God, don’t let this be a dream.*



On the way back to his chamber, Catherine takes his arm. Something else she has never done – well, not quite in this manner. He pulls her close as they walk. She can feel his strength.

Hearing Vincent suggest, “Shall we share the news with Father?” she happily agrees.

After hearing the news, Father gets tears in his eyes and hugs them both at the same time. Vincent tells him, “All the marriage ceremony arrangements will be up to Catherine,” and Father nods. “I will help with anything you may need, Catherine.”

Vincent looks at Catherine.  Smiling, he admits, “I wish the ceremony could be tomorrow, so you could stay this weekend!” He and Catherine stare into each other’s eyes for a long time after he says that.

Father is in about the same daze as Catherine.



As Vincent walks Catherine back to the threshold, he suggests, “We could have the ceremony in the Great Hall, if you want to, and also could invite the Helpers, but only if you want to.” He smiles after making the suggestions, and adds, “It’s all up to you and, of course, I’ll do anything you wish to help you.”

Then, when they arrive at the threshold, remembering watching how Catherine had hesitated when she put flowers on Kanin and Olivia’s bed when she had helped Vincent set up their chamber, he takes her face in his huge hands and says, “We can use the chamber we set up together for Kanin and Olivia a while back with flowers and candles for our honeymoon. They won’t mind moving out of their chambers for a few days... for us!” Then he kisses her again, with a slow, gentle and deep kiss.

As difficult as it is, Catherine turns to return to her apartment as Vincent watches her. He is thinking of how he longs to walk her to this point after having spent the entire weekend with her. She is thinking about all the fun arrangements she needs to make: her dress, the ceremony – and about his kiss –

– and about that first night in the honeymoon chamber...

