

FREE STORY

Kallysten

*Valentine's
Day Present*

Valentine's Day Present

by Kallysten

(This story is set in the same universe as the novel CheckMate and takes place a couple of months before the epilogue.)

The air between Vincent and Don seemed to shimmer with the spell before glitter-like dust settled on the map spread out in front of them. Vincent immediately leaned over it, holding his breath so he wouldn't disrupt the dust.

"Know where that is?" Don asked after a few seconds.

Looking up, Vincent nodded. "Nowhere near where she looked, which would explain why she didn't find anything. Are you sure..."

A rising eyebrow was daring Vincent to finish his question. Vincent held out his hands in front of him in an appeasing gesture and gave his friend a lopsided grin.

"Hey, just making sure. You know I don't mean anything by it."

Don's features softened slightly. It had been almost a year since his botched spell had caused Vincent to get closer to his fiercest enemy than he had ever expected to be, but despite the passage of time Don's magic remained a touchy subject.

"Thanks," Vincent added, indicating the map. "I owe you one for that."

"Actually, you owe me a bit more than that," Don said as he carefully swept the glittery dust into a small vial. "You don't have any idea how much those ingredients cost, do you? But don't worry, I'll send you the bill."

For a moment, Vincent thought that Don was serious, but his friend's serious façade soon cracked up in a grin. Before Vincent could call him on it though, the office door burst open and heart-shaped balloons filled the entrance.

"Happy Valentine's Day!"

The balloons parted to give way to Jeanie, and Vincent stepped aside to let Don and his soon to be wife embrace. The kiss that followed lasted long enough that he eventually felt it was necessary to remind the couple that they had company. He coughed discreetly and their mouths parted, although they kept their arms around each other.

"Hey Jeanie," Vincent said with a small smile. "Nice balloons."

"They came with the flowers," she replied a little breathlessly. Turning her face toward Don again, she beamed at him. "And the flowers were sumptuous. The whole department came to

see them at one time or another. All the women were jealous, and the men looked like they wished they had gotten their girls something half as nice."

It seemed that she would resume the kissing session, but abruptly her eyes returned to Vincent.

"You did buy something nice for Lilia, didn't you?" she asked pointedly.

"I'm not buying her anything," he said, amused.

Jeanie had never seemed all that interested in Lilia, except for repeated requests that she didn't let anyone know she was a vampire during the upcoming wedding. He had a feeling that she was only asking what he had gotten his Mate to make sure her own present was still the nicest.

"But you have to!" She sounded almost scandalized. Stepping away from Don, she stood in front of Vincent, hands on her hips, shaking her head reproachfully. "Let me guess. She said she didn't want anything, right?" On Vincent's slight nod, she rolled her eyes. "Men! You're all the same!"

Don started protesting at that, but she didn't stop to listen.

"Don't you get it? We never mean it when we say we don't want anything! It's just a way to test you, and see whether you really care! Just because she's a vampire doesn't mean that she's not playing the same games as the rest of us! You'd better get her something nice on your way home, Mister."

Behind Jeanie, Don's look was almost apologetic. It was all Vincent could do not to laugh aloud.

"I'll think about it," he assured Jeanie, his amusement rather obvious in his voice. "Thanks for the tip." His eyes shifted to meet Don's. "And thanks for the help."

He gave his goodbyes and left the office, making sure to lock the store's door behind him. He was chuckling by the time he reached his car, and wondering what Jeanie would have thought of what he intended to offer Lillia this night. He doubted that it would have qualified as an appropriate gift in her eyes, but then, she wasn't Lilia, she wasn't a vampire, and she wasn't his Mate.

~

It was early in the evening, barely an hour or so before night would fall, and still Lilia remained in bed. She had been awake for some time, now, but until sunset there really wasn't much of a point to getting up. Remaining between the sheets, cocooned in Vincent's scent if not in his warmth, was the best substitute she knew to having him next to her.

There was another reason for her to rest a little longer. She had spent the last eleven nights restlessly hunting from dusk until morning, and it left her exhausted in a way her regular hunts, at Vincent's side, never did. He was still healing from a wound that had been too much of a close call for Lilia's comfort, and she privately seethed that she still hadn't found the vampire who had hurt him. The whole situation angered her even more for the fact that she was in large part responsible for it.

She had distracted Vincent during a hunt at a moment when she shouldn't have, and his distraction had caused him to be sloppy and allow a vampire to use his own stake against him. The piece of wood sinking into his chest had been the most dreadful thing Lilia had ever witnessed, and she had roared in rage against the vampire who had dared to wound her Mate so. If she had listened to her instincts that night, she would have given chase to the vampire rather than taken care Vincent. Thankfully, she had better control over herself than that. She had compressed the wound, wincing at how close to his heart it was, merely a couple of inches too high, and taken him to the hospital.

It had saved his life, probably, and hers as well, but it had allowed the vamp to run free. She had been hunting him ever since. She didn't think he was a Master, a Master would have finished the kill rather than scurried off in front of her anger, and not being able to find him after eleven nights was driving her crazy. On top of that, it was driving Vincent crazy too, because her over-protectiveness was stifling him. She had demanded that he remained home at night ever since returning from the hospital, and while he had indulged her so far, she knew he didn't like the confinement. She knew, also, that he was healed, both the doctors' help and their Mating bond having contributed to a fast recovery, but she couldn't bear the thought of him returning to the hunt while the vamp who had almost killed him still eluded her.

The car in the driveway was her first warning, the quiet click on the key in the lock the second. Pushing away a smile, she closed her eyes and pretended to sleep, focused on Vincent's progress across the apartment and toward her. His steps were quiet as he climbed the staircase to the mezzanine. When he reached it, perfect silence betrayed his stillness for a few seconds, and Lilia could easily see it in her mind's eye, watching her, tracing her body with his gaze as the sheet draped over her revealed as much as it hid. When he moved again, the soft sound of fabric sliding over skin made it clear that he was undressing, and Lilia was smiling by the time he climbed into bed next to her, his body immediately molding to hers as he wrapped her into his arms.

"Evening, my love," he whispered, trailed a kiss over her forehead. "Slept well?"

"Missed you," she replied, burrowing her face into the crook of his neck. "It's cold here without you."

Pressed as she was against him, she couldn't miss the scent of herbs that clung to him.

"How's Don?" she asked, more to show that she knew where he had been than because she really wanted to talk about Vincent's friend.

"Fine," he replied, sounding both amused and surprised. "How did you know—"

A single swipe of her tongue against the scars on his neck left him gasping.

"You smell like magic," she mumbled against his skin. "Taste like it, too."

That last claim might have been a slight exaggeration but Vincent didn't call her on it. Instead, he rolled onto his back, giving Lilia better access to his skin as she alternated trailing small licks, open mouth kisses and delicate bites over his shoulder then across his collarbone. She only stopped and drew back when getting close to his newest scar. He had taken off the bandage the previous morning, exposing an almost perfectly circle of pale flesh. Lilia could make it disappear by laying her thumb over it, but it wasn't comforting in the slightest, not when she was

rather certain that he would be marked so for the rest of his life. He probably didn't care much about it, but she was the one who would have to confront her guilt and his mortality every time she saw the scar.

She placed a trembling kiss, barely more than a caress, over the healed wound before continuing her journey down his body. Vincent was nearly trembling beneath her, his hands flying between her shoulders and her hair as though he wanted both to stop her and urge her on.

"Lilia, there's something... about that spell..."

"Shh..." She nipped at his abs to shush him. "Tell me later. I'm busy now."

He might have started to protest, but whatever objections passed his lips became incoherent when Lilia's lips first brushed against the head of his cock. Rock hard with want, his erection jutted slightly above his stomach. If experience was any guide, he had been hard since the moment he had started climbing the stairs, and Lilia loved that she could cause such a reaction in him before she even did anything.

Nudging his thighs apart, she shifted to a more comfortable kneeling position between them and curled her hand at the base of his cock. It felt as though it was burning against her cooler flesh, and Vincent gasped her name. She leaned forward and touched her tongue to the very tip of his dick, running it against the slit to taste the clear fluid there. Not as delicious as his blood, but good enough in its own way that she wanted more. She pumped her hand up his shaft, squeezing tight, at the same time as she took the head in her mouth and hummed lightly at the bead of flavor that blossomed on her tongue.

When she glanced up, she could see that Vincent's eyes were shut tight, as tightly as his fists grabbing the sheets on each side of him. She slid both her hand and mouth down his cock, and her slight grin made her teeth brush against the sensitive skin. Vincent arched into her touch with a grunt.

Had she been in a playing mood, she would have drawn back, chided him about letting her do this her own way, and teased him halfway to madness before giving him what he wanted – what he needed. But this was only a prelude and her own body demanded that she didn't take too much time to get to the part where her own needs would be satisfied. There would be other occasions to make things last.

Her hand, lips and tongue quickly found a nice rhythm, one that had Vincent writhing on the bed and begging incoherently in no time. She let him gradually thrust up into her mouth, relaxing her throat to allow him to slide as far as he could. Her hands playing over his body up and down in a soothing rhythm, she moved her head down still, taking his cock yet a little deeper before swallowing around him once, twice, three times.

He cried out at the sensation and she realized, from this instinctive knowledge born of hundreds of nights spent in his arms, that he was close, so very close to letting pleasure wash over him. The gentlest touch of her fingers against his sack was his undoing. Backing up so she could taste him on her tongue, she suckled gently around his pulsing cock until his body started calming down from his orgasm.

She lay down on her side next to him again and traced elaborate designs over his skin, starting with his thigh then up his belly and over his heart before ending on his right nipple, which she teased mercilessly.

“Lilia... that was...”

Breathless, he merely stared at her, his eyes wide and still a little glazed.

“I know,” she replied smugly. Taking hold of his slack hand, she led it to rest on her breast. “Feel free to reciprocate in any way you feel is appropriate.”

Turning onto his side to face her, Vincent kissed her fiercely, his mouth almost bruising as he pressed it to hers.

“I wish I could,” he murmured as he drew back. “But we’ve got to go.”

His words were so unexpected that it took Lilia a short moment to comprehend them. With a blink and a frown, she asked: “Go? Go where?”

“It’s a surprise. And I hate to stop playing now, but if we don’t we’ll be late.”

Already, he was sliding out of bed. Lilia glared at him. Her body was practically thrumming with need, and he wasn’t going to do anything about it?

“I’d rather keep playing, as you say, than get any kind of surprise. You’re really going to let me hang there?”

She could tell, from his rueful smile, that she was striking a chord, but he wasn’t wavering. Already, his jeans were back on and he was buttoning his shirt.

“Come on, Lilia,” he cajoled, coming to her for a brief kiss. “I promise you won’t regret it. Trust me?”

As much as she wanted to curse him and storm down to the shower to take care of her own needs since he obviously wasn’t going to oblige her, Lilia was also intrigued by his insistence. It had to be really important for him to persist in such a way after she had made it clear she wasn’t interested in whatever surprise he had planned.

Hoping – for Vincent’s sake – that it would truly be worth it, she climbed out of bed and slid on the clothes he was handing her. Underwear, tight leather pants and a dark blue shirt that she usually wore on the hunt.

What *did* he have in mind?

~

The sun, although low on the horizon, was still up when they walked out of the house, and having to hide beneath an oversized blanket until she could lie down on the back seat of the car did nothing to improve Lilia’s mood. All Vincent could do was hope she would agree that it had been worth it once she understood his motives.

She grumbled the whole way to the dilapidated neighborhood the glittery dust had indicated, and even when he stopped the car did she complain still as she carefully sat up.

“Why are we here? We could be in bed still and having much more fun—”

She stopped abruptly when he threw a stake into her lap. She frowned when she picked it up, and he knew that she could tell it was his blood that covered the first inch of it.

“What...” she started, but didn’t finish her question. A small flame in her eyes made it clear what she wanted to ask, though; made it clear that she had guessed right.

“In there,” he said, pointing out to the house in front of which he had parked the car. “Or at least, he was in there two hours ago. That’s why I wanted to be here before night fell, so he wouldn’t have time to get away.”

The flame in her eyes changed, suddenly burning with an anger that Vincent knew wasn’t directed toward him. It wasn’t the only change. He couldn’t have put his finger on what it was exactly, but seeing her like this, suddenly, reminded him of the vampiress he had once sworn to kill. He rarely got to see that part of her anymore, the part that, had he needed to, he would have called ‘the killer’. It sent a chill down his spine to see her return to this side of who she was so effortlessly; strangely enough, the feeling wasn’t unpleasant.

Her grin was almost feral as she wrenched the door open and stepped out, foregoing the blanket as the sun was practically disappearing behind the horizon. Vincent stepped out too, hurrying to catch up with her as she strode toward the house.

“You’re not coming in,” she said, glancing back at him. “You’re still not well enough to fight.”

Vincent let out a quiet laugh and kept walking, playing with the stake in his hand. Lilia stopped, standing in his way, and he looked at her steadily.

“If I can fuck, I can fight,” he challenged. “And you know I’m well enough to do both.”

When she said his name, it was a warning growl.

“And anyway,” he continued, unflinching, “you’re the one who’ll be fighting. I’m just here to watch you kick his ass.”

She was wavering, he was sure of it. That quick glance toward the house told of her impatience.

“Go ahead,” he urged her. “Take your revenge. You’re beautiful when you fight for me.”

He could remember a time when he had been unable to simply tell her she was beautiful, afraid that the feelings he wanted to deny would transpire through his words if he did. He had no such qualms anymore, not when he meant the words with everything that he was. And the smile she flashed him in return made him regret all the missed occasions to tell her how he felt about her, how he saw her; made him want to tell her every day for the rest of his life.

Lilia was all but bouncing as she stepped back into their home, grinning excitedly as she tried not to start rambling again. She had relived the fight twice in the car, describing it to Vincent, repeating herself and stammering at times over the thrill of it all. Vincent had seen it all, of course, and didn't need to be told about it, but he had let her talk, smiling slightly, glancing at her every now and then as he drove. She knew she was behaving like a child and that he was indulging her, but at that moment she didn't care. She had finally shoved a stake through the heart of the bastard who had injured her Mate, and that was all that mattered; that, and the fact that Vincent was fine.

"Something tells me you liked your Valentine's Day present," Vincent commented with a grin in his voice as he locked the door behind them.

Lilia froze in the middle of unbuttoning her shirt, eyebrows rising high in surprise.

"It's Valentine's Day?"

Vincent laughed and walked over to kiss her.

the end

Kallysten
2013

Valentine's Day Present, © Kallysten, February 2006
For more stories, visit <http://original.kallysten.net>