

## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

By JoAnn Baca

*With thanks to CaroleW for the inspiration, incubated during a Daily Chat session, and written while sipping Writers' Tears whiskey...*

The UPS driver handed Catherine an electronic signature pad. "Gotta sign for it when it's booze," he informed her. Baffled, as she hadn't ordered any liquor, she scribbled her name with the stylus. The driver fled before she could ask him to help her move the big heavy box that he had deposited on the doorstep of the brownstone.

The April evening was lovely, the sun low but still shining. As she stood gazing at the quiet, tree-shaded street, she suppressed a slight twinge at the loss of the high-rise view she had once enjoyed. What she had traded it for – a lifetime with Vincent in this safe and sheltering home – made the memory of a better view pale into insignificance. Shrugging, Catherine manhandled the box into the front hall and shut the door behind her.

Vincent appeared once the front door was firmly locked. He had, of course, heard her conversation with the deliveryman. Surprised, he asked, "You ordered liquor?"

Their usual consumption was such that an occasional bottle of wine or fifth of bourbon lasted so long they could count on one hand the number of times they had purchased either in the past year.

"A case?!" She shook her head. "Somebody must have sent it." Since it was their 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, it was most likely a gift. But nobody they knew would have sent them this much liquor - at least, not someone who knew their drinking habits.

Bending to lift the heavy box, Vincent scrutinized the address label. "It's from a wine store here in Manhattan."

“Perhaps there’s a card inside,” Catherine suggested. She followed him into the kitchen and waited while he deftly slit open the box with his sharp claws.

A note lay atop a dozen bottles of wine.

Vincent reached for it and said, “I’ve got a good guess now.” He turned to her and they both said “Devin” simultaneously.

“But what was he thinking?” Catherine remarked. “This is easily several years’ worth of wine for us.”

Vincent read the note aloud.

*I trust this finds my favorite couple happily celebrating their 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary!  
Wish I could join you but you know how it is ~ commuting from Vienna isn’t possible, as I can’t be spared from work right now. [Don’t worry, I’m not doing anything that would have given the Old Man conniptions!]*

*Now, this box of wine comes with instructions. Start with the one on the bottom left (there should be a “1” written on the cap in Sharpie, or some store clerk owes me back my exorbitant tip!). Go across that row, then start at the second row from just above the “1” and so on until you reach the extreme right-hand bottle in the back row.*

*All will become clear as you go, I promise!*

*Sending all my love to you both.*

*Enjoy yourselves!*

*Devin*

Catherine and Vincent shared a quizzical look. “Do you want to do the honors, or shall I?” he asked her.

“He’s *your* brother so...please.” She waved one hand, indicating he should begin.

Following Devin’s instructions, Vincent lifted the first bottle.

The wine was a Cabernet Sauvignon. *True Myth* was the name on the label.

“This doesn’t signify anything to me,” Vincent admitted. “Did we serve this when Devin visited?”

“It doesn’t ring a bell,” she said, shaking her head. “But go on.”

Vincent pulled the second bottle out of the box.

*Thorny Rose*. Another cabernet.

“Still nothing. You?” she asked, and saw Vincent shake his head.

The name of the third wine was *Obsession*. This one was a white.

They both considered the three wines and once more shook their heads. Vincent set *Obsession* down and pulled out the fourth bottle: *Temptation*, a zinfandel.

“I don’t think the kind of wine has any bearing on the gift,” Catherine mused.

“I agree. I have an idea but...let’s see what the name of the next wine is.”

It was *Fervent*.

The lightbulb went off in Catherine’s head. “That little scamp,” she said, beginning to smile.

*Reckless Love* was followed by *Risque* and then *Wild Thing*.

Now Vincent was chuckling quietly as he pulled out *Momentous* and then *Encore*.

“I’m afraid to look at the last two!” Catherine admitted, laughing now.

Vincent peeked and then said, “I think you’ll...enjoy them. *Dusk to Dawn* is followed, at the last, by...*Bliss*.”

They collapsed against each other, laughing with delight at Devin's cheeky wine selections. "Do you suppose he thought that after 30 years we might need a little help in the romance department?" Catherine mused.

Vincent's azure eyes glittered. "If I know my brother, he understood exactly how we'd react. Just...like...this."

He took Catherine into arms still strong and capable after all the years that had passed, and kissed lips still delicious and desirable to him.

"Mmmm...kisses sweeter than wine." Catherine's heated gaze belied the humor of Devin's gift.

Then they moved straight to *Fervent* and kept going until the next morning's *Bliss*.