

TITLE: VANTAGE POINT

RATING: PG 13. LANGUAGE.

CLASSIFICATION: SND

SUMMARY:

AUTHOR'S NOTES: The story is told through three character's vantage points. For the purposes of this story Elliot did not help Vincent and is still alive. Diana did help Vincent and Jacob escape but did not kill Gabriel in the process. Gabriel is still at large. This story will be told in four parts.

VANTAGE POINT

PART TWO: CATHERINE

CHAPTER ONE

The first thing Catherine smelled when she woke up was rain. Slowly she opened her eyes and blinked a few times, trying to adjust to the light. She looked around the room, trying to figure out where she was. She was in a small white room, a hospital room she decided. She could see dark clouds out the window. Catherine struggled to sit up, her muscles felt weak. Sitting at the side of the bed, she closed her eyes, willing the dizziness to fade. She tried to search for a call bell to alert someone that she needed them but couldn't find one. She didn't feel confident standing on her own. She looked around the room, taking in her surroundings. The room was small and white. A bedside table and a chair were the only furniture in the room. A door was off to the side which she figured to be the washroom.

Catherine didn't know how long she sat on the bed when the door to her room open suddenly and a nurse entered looking down at a clipboard. When the nurse looked up she screamed at the sight of Catherine sitting up in bed and dropped the clipboard. "Oh my God, you're awake" the nurse said turning and running out of the room. A moment later the nurse returned followed by two orderlies and a man in a lab coat that looked to be a doctor. "Well, isn't this a pleasant surprise. Our resident sleeping beauty awakens" the doctor said, walking over to Catherine and began taking her vitals.

"Do you know your name my dear?"

Catherine stared at the doctor for a moment, trying to find her voice. Her throat was dry and scratchy, causing her to cough when she tried to talk. “Nurse, will you grab a glass of water please?” the doctor asked, briefly looking at the nurse before turning his attention back to Catherine, listening to her lungs. The nurse nodded and hurried to the washroom, returning with a glass of water. Catherine accepted it gratefully and took a few sips.

The doctor pulled the chair in front of Catherine and sat down.

“My name is Doctor Waterson. Do you know your name?”

“My name?” Catherine rasped, her voice weak from lack of use. “My name is Catherine. Where am I?”

“You’re in a long-term care facility. You’ve been asleep for a long time. You’re guardian placed you here after your accident.”

“My accident? My guardian? I don’t understand. What happen to me?”

“I don’t know all the particulars my dear. I haven’t been working here that long but Mr. Fallon and Mr. Cooper here have been seeing over your care since you were admitted four years ago.”

Catherine looked up at the men that stood behind the doctor. The one named Mr. Cooper stared at the ground, refusing to meet her eyes. The other, Mr. Fallon, stood with his arms crossed looking down at her with contempt.

“I’ve been here for four years. What about my family? My friends? How did I get here? My baby. Do you know anything about my baby?”

“All in good time my dear. How do you feel? Any dizziness?”

The doctor continued with his preliminary examination dictating information for the nurse to write down. When he finished he sat back in the chair and smiled at Catherine.

“Well, your vitals are good. Blood pressure is a little low, we’ll keep an eye on it. Mr. Cooper and Mr. Fallon here are going to be in charge of your care with the assistance of nursing. I’ll check in with you in few days.”

With that the doctor rose and started to walk out of the room. “Doctor wait, please” Catherine called out. “What happen to me? Does my family know that I’m here? You asked me my name. It’s Catherine Chandler. Catherine Chandler. I have

friends in New York City. You need to contact them. Surely their numbers are on my file.”

The doctor ignored her and left the room without another word. Fallon waited for the doctor to leave before stepping forward and grabbing Catherine by the chin.

“You’re name is not Catherine Chandler. It’s Cathy. Catherine Chandler is dead.”

Catherine shook her head, moving away from his grip.

“That’s ridiculous. I’m Catherine Chandler and I demand to know where I am.”

Fallon grinned wickedly at her and then without warning backhanded her.

“Catherine Chandler is dead. We were told you might believe that. I assure you, you are not her. Soon enough you’ll be shown prove. It would be wise of you to listen and obey our instructions.” Fallon looked at the nurse and motioned towards Catherine.

“Get her cleaned up. I need to make the call. Her therapy sessions start this evening.”

Fallon left the room without another word, closely followed by Cooper. The nurse nodded and left the room briefly, returning with some clean clothes and a wheelchair. “You’re going to need to learn to walk again. It should be relatively easy since your young and you were receiving therapy during your comatose state” the nurse said assisting Catherine into the chair. Tears streamed down Catherine’s cheeks. “Please, you have to help me. My name is Catherine Chandler. I work as an Assistant DA in New York. Contact Joe Maxwell at the DA’s office. He can vouch for who I am” she begged the nurse. The nurse looked down at her and simply said “Catherine Chandler is dead” and then pushed her towards the washroom.

CHAPTER TWO

Catherine found out she had been in a coma for just over four years. The last thing she remembered was being on the roof top with Vincent, telling him about their son, about how beautiful he was. At least that was what she thought. They told her she was in a car accident.

Every day for the past week since she woke, she was tied to a chair in a windowless white room for hours while the man she came to know as Fallon

drilled to her that Catherine Chandler was dead. He showed her news paper articles about Catherine Chandler's funeral.

"How can you be this Catherine Chandler when all the prove show's that she is dead? You share the same first name Cathy, but you are not Catherine Chandler. Catherine Chandler is dead." Fallon would rant over and over again. At first Catherine fought it, insisting that she knew who she was, that there was some terrible mistake.

"What is my last name then? I must have one. Who is it that you think I am?" she would yell back, fighting.

"Does it matter? You're guardian registered you under the name Cathy Geller. Geller, not Chandler."

"That's preposterous. There's been a terrible mistake."

"The only mistake is that you believe that your Catherine Chandler. Catherine Chandler is dead. Everything I've showed you proves this. You must give up this illusion; it's for your own good."

Fallon stood behind her. Leaning down he breathed into her ear.

"Come on Cathy, don't make this so hard on yourself. Tell me your name."

"My name is Catherine Chandler" she answered through clenched teeth. She refused to believe anything he told her. Fallon sighed and stood up. He placed a hand on her shoulder and squeezed tightly causing her to wince.

"I'm sorry to hear you say that Cathy. I guess we'll have to try harder to make you see reason."

It was then that the sleep deprivation began. She was barely asleep for an hour when Fallon would pull her out of her bed and drag her to the windowless room, yelling at her that Catherine Chandler was dead. Slowly breaking her spirit down. It went on for almost 48 hours before Catherine finally repeated the words.

Cooper, one of the men she met the first day was in charge of her physical therapy. He wasn't mean to her like the others, but he wasn't kind either. He had her up and walking short distances within a few days. One day when they were alone in the physio room walking around a small track he told her "Your guardian made sure you had physical therapy while you were asleep so when you did wake up your muscles would be exercised. Making learning to walk easier."

“Who is this guardian of mine? Why aren’t they here now that I’m awake?”

“Only Mr. Fallon knows who they are. It’s not information I need to know.”

“Could you find out for me please, Cooper? I promise to keep anything you tell me to myself.”

Both of them jumped as an angry voice yelled out from the doorway.

“He’ll find out nothing of the sort.”

Fallon stood there with his arms crossed, his usual intimidating pose. Cooper took a few steps away from Catherine as Fallon approached them. “Cathy, Cathy, Cathy. What are you trying to do now?” he asked brushing his knuckles across her cheek. Catherine turned her face away from his touch, repulsed. Fallon grabbed her chin and forced her to look at him.

“You really should learn to be kinder to me Cathy, I could help you. A shame really.”

He let go of her chin and grabbed her by her arm dragging her away towards the windowless white room.

“Come now darling, it’s our therapy time together.”

Hour’s later, after a particular grueling session, Fallon brought Catherine back to her room and pushed her onto her bed where she collapse, exhausted. “Till tomorrow darling” Fallon said patting her on the head then leaving the room, locking the door behind him. Catherine closed her eyes and curled up in a ball, rocking. Her head ached and she felt sick to her stomach. All she wanted to do was sleep but she knew it wouldn’t come. Hopelessness started to creep its way into her heart when she heard the first whisper.

“Mother?”

Catherine opened her eyes and glanced around the dark room, seeing nothing but white walls. She closed her eyes again and prayed for sleep to take her.

“Mother is that really you? It’s me, Jacob. I knew if I tried hard enough I could find you.”

Catherine eyes popped open again. She got out of the bed and searched the room for the source of the voice. Seeing nothing she whispered “Father? What’s happening?” The childish voice giggled at her response.

“No silly, not Grandfather. Jacob, your son. I miss you Mother. When are you coming home?”

“You’re my son? Where are you? Where’s your father?”

“Father is playing a game of chess with Grandfather. I’m waiting in my chamber for Father to tuck me in.”

“You live Below?”

“Yes. Father’s coming mother. I have to go. I’ll visit you again tomorrow. I love you.”

Catherine heard nothing after that. She sat down at the edge of the bed, contemplating what she just heard. It couldn’t be real, she told herself. It was just the stress from Fallon’s session. Still, something inside her said believe. Laying down once again, Catherine closed her eyes and envisioned what her son might look like today. Did he have Vincent’s eyes or hers? What colour was his hair. A shade of blond for certain since both she and Vincent both had blondish hair. He said his name was Jacob. After Vincent’s father, the patriarch of the Below community. Yes, that’s exactly what she would have named him. “Jacob, my son” she whispered to herself, falling into an uneasy sleep.

CHAPTER THREE

Once again Catherine sat in the windowless white room, restrained to a chair. She hated everything about this room. It’s plain whiteness, the lack of any furniture other than two chairs with a table separating them. The bright lights that hurt her eyes. Fallon stood behind her massaging her shoulders. Catherine stiffened at his touch, feeling repulsed. He was always touching her. The way he stared and smirk at her made her feel dirty. They had been in this room for over three hours.

“Let’s start again, shall we Cathy” Fallon said, whisper in her ear. “What’s your name?”

“Catherine” she whispered. Fallon squeezed her shoulders painfully. “What is your name?” he repeated, louder. Catherine didn’t answer. Fallon squeezed harder, his fingers digging into her clavicle, causing her to wince from the pain.

“What. Is. Your. Name?” he seethed, pronouncing each word separately.

“Cathy” Catherine cried, trying to pull away from him but Fallon held on.

“That’s right because Catherine Chandler is dead. You’re not her. You may think you were her, but you aren’t. Catherine Chandler is dead. Catherine Chandler is dead. Say the words Cathy. The sooner you start to believe that Catherine Chandler is dead, that you were never her, the sooner things will become easier for you.”

Fallon continued squeezing her shoulders painfully repeating the words, Catherine Chandler is dead, over and over until Catherine finally broke and cried out the words with him. “Catherine Chandler is dead” she sobbed, tears streamed down her cheeks. “Catherine Chandler is dead.” Fallon let go of her shoulders and sat down in the chair opposite her, smirking.

“You see how easy that was Cathy? Four simple words and everything stops. We all want to help you here Cathy, but you need to let us help you.”

Catherine sat with her head down, tears streaming down her cheeks. She felt so weak and confused. She wasn’t sure what to believe anymore. “Can I go back to my room please?” she asked quietly, trying to keep her tears at bay.

“You want to go back to your room? Then say the words Cathy and I’ll let you get some rest.”

Catherine closed her eyes, her head hanging in defeat. Just say the words she told herself, just say them it will be all over. “Catherine Chandler is dead” she whispered. Fallon smiled at her and stood. He walked over to her and released her restraints and pulled her up by her arm. He dragged her out of the room and down the empty hall to her room.

Catherine knew there were other patients in the building, she heard them when she was locked inside her room, but she never saw anyone. She was sequestered to her room when she wasn’t in therapy. All her meals were brought to her by the same handful of people in charge of her care.

She could hear distant chatter from what she thought to be a common room further down the hall but saw no one. She never did. Fallon stopped in front of her room, unlocking the door and pushing her inside.

“You did good today Cathy, perhaps I’ll bring you a little supper. You earned it.”

Catherine stood with her back to Fallon waiting to hear the door close and lock before she stumbled to her bed and laid down.

Fallon returned a short while later with a stale turkey sandwich and bottle of water, making her repeat the words, Catherine Chandler is dead, before leaving the food. Catherine didn't care and tore into the sandwich. It was the first food she had in two days. She made herself stop after eating half and hid the rest away in a drawer in case Fallon withheld any meals from her again.

The lights in the rooms and hallways started to dim indicating it was time to go to sleep. Catherine washed and changed into the clean clothes that were left in the washroom for her. Always white. She was beginning to hate the colour white. She curled up in bed and closed her eyes, hoping sleep would come quickly. She was about to doze off when she heard the whisper again.

"Mother, I'm back."

Catherine opened her eyes. Lifting her head, she glanced around the room, seeing nothing. She laid down again and took a few deep breaths. "Mother, it's Jacob" a little boy whispered again. Catherine squeezed her eyes shut tightly, afraid to believe what she was hearing was real.

"Mother please, don't be scared. It's really me. Please talk to me."

Catherine fought herself, not wanting to give in to the illusion that this was real. That her son was really communicating with her. Tears escaped from her closed eyes.

"Mother, please don't be sad. Maybe I should read to you. When father reads to me it always makes me feel better. I have your doll mother. Father found it in your chest with all your special things. She has blond hair and a blue dress. I didn't know her name, so I called her Alice, like *Alice in Wonderland*. When I hold her and concentrate real hard I can come and see you."

Catherine slowly sat up at the boy's words, thinking. A chest with her special things and the doll with blond hair. She immediately thought of her hope chest that was in her closet back at her old apartment. The doll from her childhood was in there. The one her father bought her after her mother died. "Caroline" she whispered. "Her name is Caroline."

"Caroline. I like that name mother. What book do you want me to read? What's your favorite book when you were little?"

Catherine shook her head. She wanted to believe that this was really her son

talking to her somehow. That she wasn't imagining this. Everything in her heart told her to believe. To just let go and believe.

"My favourite book was *The Velveteen Rabbit*. My father use to read it to me when I was little. It helped me to sleep."

"That's one of my favourites to. I thought so mother. It was in your chest with Caroline. Father gave it to me for my bookshelf. Let me read it to you mother so you won't be sad."

Catherine nodded and smiled sadly laying down. She closed her eyes and let the soothing voice of her son reading lull her into a peaceful sleep.

CHAPTER FOUR

Everyday was the same for Catherine. In the morning, she would walk around the physio track for exercise. Then she was sequestered to her room until Fallon came for her mental health sessions as he called them. He was breaking her will. She felt it everyday; a part of her resolve was chipped away. Catherine began questioning herself. Wondering what was real and what was not. Jacob continued to visit her almost everyday. She wanted to question him about Vincent. Ask him how his father was but she was worried that it was all in her head. That Jacob was just her mind creating a defense mechanism to cope with the trauma she was experiencing. Still every time he came to her, she gave in and talked to him.

Jacob would tell her about his day. Everything he learned. He would ask her questions about herself. Asking when she was coming home. What was wrong with her that she had to be in the hospital. He even asked about her scar next to her left ear. She didn't know how to answer any of those questions. Not really sure of the answers herself anymore.

Fallon came for her that evening, frustration already evident in him. He grabbed her arm in a painful grip and dragged her to the windowless therapy room. He forced her into the chair, securing her down. He pushed the table away from her chair and without warning slapped her across the face. "I'm not in the mood for your defiance tonight Cathy" he yelled, standing in front of her. "Lets just get to the point. Catherine Chandler is dead. I've told you this numerous times. I showed you prove of this. Now say the words. Catherine Chandler is dead."

Catherine refused to look at him, remaining silent. She new her rebuttal made him even angrier.

“Say the words Cathy. I’m warning you.”

She remained silent. He placed his hands on either side of her chair and screamed in her face. “Say the f***ing Cathy! I swear to you if you don’t start complying you’ll regret it. Now say the words. Catherine Chandler is dead!” Fear gripped her heart but she still remained silent. Fallon waited a beat, his breathing laboured. When she still didn’t answer him, he released her from the chair and grabbed her by her hair, dragging her away. “Bring me the damn restraints” he yelled as he pulled her down the hall by her hair. She tried to remain on her feet, reaching up to his hands to try and relieve the tension he had on her hair but failed. Nurse Hathaway met them at her door, holding out the restraints. Fallon grabbed them as he entered the room. He pushed her down on the bed, kneeling on her stomach to hold her down. Catherine struggled, trying to fight him off. “Hold still damn you” he yelled trying to grab hold of one of her wrists. Then without warning Catherine felt a blow to her head. Her struggling stopped immediately as her vision swarmed. She wasn’t sure what she was hit with but she felt herself losing consciousness. She felt the restraints attach to her wrist and ankles and Fallon’s weight left her. The last thing she heard before she lost consciousness was Fallon’s voice. “He’s going to be here in five days and she’s still not ready. We need to up our game or it’s our heads on the line.”

It was still dark in the room when Catherine woke hours later, still restrained to the bed. She blinked a few times, trying to clear her head. Her head hurt where she was hit and the room spin when she opened her eyes. She pulled at the restraints at first but knew it was useless. Fallon always made sure they were secured tightly. Hopelessness filled her once again as she stared up at the ceiling. She was doubting everything about herself. Doubting who she really was. Where she was from, even doubting if she had anyone out there looking for her. Aside from this solitary guardian, who still hadn’t come to see her, whom she had no idea who they were, she had no one. She only saw four people since she awoke, Fallon, Cooper and Nurse Hathaway, the latter two who barely spoke two words to her. Doctor Waterson never showed up again.

She laid in the bed well into the next day. She watched the sunrise against the wall, unable to look out the window. She called out for help, having to use the rest room but no one came, forcing her to soil herself. She cried, ashamed of herself for an

hour before the door clicked opened, Cooper and Nurse Hathaway entering. Cooper carried with him toast and juice for her and the nurse clean clothes and linens. Catherine kept her eyes down cast, tears of humiliation threatening to fall, as Cooper placed the food down and released her restraints. He helped her to stand then walked over and stood near the door. The nurse handed her the clean clothes then immediately went about stripping and remaking the bed. Wordlessly, Catherine took the clothes and went to the washroom to wash and change. When she emerged both Cooper and the nurse were gone. Slowly she curled up on the chair next to her side table and nibbled on the cold toast left for her. Judging by the position of the sun she knew it must be well past noon which only meant that Fallon would be making his appearance soon. There was no doubt he would gloat about the condition she was found in. Just tell him what he wants to hear she told herself. Just say the words and he'll leave you be. Saying the words though were almost as painful as what would happen to her if she didn't comply. She knew she was losing her sense of herself. Periodically through out the day she would hear Jacob for a minute or two. The child wanting to check in with her as he went about his day. A part of her prayed that when she heard him it was real. Not just in her mind. Though the more Fallon drilled her, taunted her, she felt her grasp with reality slipping. She sat in the chair for the remainder of the day, rocking slightly, a motion that brought her comfort. The sun was setting when the door to her room clicked open again. She didn't need to look up to know who it was. "Good evening Cathy. I trust you had a pleasant sleep last night. How was your morning? Well rested I hope" Fallon said, strolling into the room, his voice condescending. Catherine closed her eyes and took a deep breath before rising to her feet. She stood before him, her head down, not wanting to give him a reason to lash out at her. Fallon walked up and stood closely in front of her. He leaned forward and whispered in her ear, the smell of his breath foul.

"Shall we get started? I'm a little late this evening for your session and we both know how important your therapy is to your well being."

He took a step to the side and held his arm out towards the door. Slowly Catherine walked out the door, Fallon only a step behind. He followed her down the empty hallways to the windowless room where she was once again strapped down in the chair.

The session carried out like most of the others did. Fallon standing behind her at first whispering in her ear the words Catherine Chandler is dead. Then when she

didn't respond and he would scream the words at her, causing her to flinch. It would go on and on until she broke and cried the words out herself. He forced her to say the words dozens of times until her throat started to feel raw. The fear of having a repeat of last night still in her head. She complied with his orders only to spare herself further pain. She still felt the effects of last night and now she wouldn't be able to take another night of it. After a couple of hours, Fallon brought her back to her room and even brought her another stale sandwich. Not feeling the hunger anymore but knowing she had to eat something, Catherine slowly ate the sandwich then curled up in her bed praying for sleep to take her soon.

CHAPTER FIVE

Catherine sat in bed one night, waiting for Jacob. She absentmindedly ran her finger up and down her scar. It gave her comfort, the feel of the slightly raised skin. The scar gave her a sense of hope that she wasn't crazy. That she was Catherine Chandler. She tried to hold on to that hope but it became harder each day.

She started to doze off when she heard Jacob's voice. "Sorry I'm late Mother, I fell asleep" he said. "I didn't know I could come to you in my dreams. Father talks about a bond that he has with me. Maybe you and I have the same thing mother." "I think you may be right Jacob" she told him smiling. "Your father and I use to share a bond a long time ago."

"Really? Why don't you anymore? Was it because you were sleeping for so long? I couldn't find you until you woke up. Father says that you're not real. He won't believe me when I say I can talk to you and see you."

Catherine chose not to respond to what Jacob told her. Her hope diminished more. If Vincent didn't believe Jacob then he must think her dead. Must think that Catherine Chandler was dead. If Catherine Chandler was dead then who was she?

"Are you okay mother? You look so sad?"

Catherine closed her eyes. "I'm okay sweetheart. I'm just tired. Why don't I sing you a lullaby. A lullaby from when I was your age."

"Yes please mother."

Softly Catherine began singing the lullaby from her childhood. She envisioned her son, curled up against her in bed. His head resting on her breasts, his fingers

playing with her hair. She was so absorbed in the moment that she failed to hear the door to her room open. “Cathy” she heard Fallon sing, walking into her room. Catherine jumped from the bed, backing up away from the door. “What are you doing Cathy? You were making such good progress. I know you’ve been talking to yourself. I’ve received reports. Now I caught you in the act. Do you have anything to say for yourself?” Catherine shook her head, afraid to say anything. She started to panic as Fallon slowly walked towards her, his hands behind his back.

“No Cathy? Nothing? Do you have nothing to say in your defense? Well, I’ll have to take that as an admittance of guilt.”

From behind his back Fallon pulled out the pair of restraints, holding them up for her to see.

“And with admitting that you are guilty comes punishment.”

He tossed the restraints on the bed and continued to advance towards her. Then, without warning, Fallon pounced. With the full force of his weight, and plowed his elbow into her midsection, forcing her to double over then grabbed her from behind, dragging her to the bed.

As Catherine struggled to get away she could hear Jacob begging for Fallon to leave her alone, to stop hurting her. She wanted to tell him that it was okay, to go back, to leave but she couldn’t get the words out. She continued to struggle to free herself but was abruptly stopped and Fallon backhanded her causing her head to spin. He backhanded her once more and the last thing she remembered before passing out was Jacob’s cries and the feeling of Fallon pushing her arms down on the bed and attaching the restraints to her wrists.

Catherine struggled at first after Fallon left the room, knowing it was useless. He always made sure she was secured down securely. She laid in bed for the night, unable to sleep, silent tears falling down her cheeks. She was so tired. Physically and emotionally. Her hope and sense of self diminished every day. Some days she found herself wishing that she would just fall back into her coma to escape the life she now lead.

Catherine knew she must have dozed off at some point because she awoke to sound of the locks clicking open on her door and Cooper walking in, carrying a breakfast tray. He set the tray on the bed side table then went about releasing her restraints. “There’s clean clothes in the washroom. I’ll be back in a few hours for your walk”

he said and left the room without another word. Catherine sat up and massaged her bruised wrists before rising and washing for the day. She ate her meager breakfast before sitting on her bed and pulling her legs tightly against her chest. She rested her head on her knees and stared towards the window watching early morning light stream through the window. She rocked slightly and hummed underneath her breath one of her favorite symphonies.

She stayed there for the better part of the morning when she heard the little boy's whisper once again. Jacob was talking to her. At first she tried to ignore it, knowing it was in her head, Fallon had drilled that into her last night, but the sweet little voice continued.

"Mother please! Father's here. Don't be afraid."

Catherine covered her ears with her hands and rocked frantically. No it can't be real and mumbled to herself, praying for the voice to go away yet hoping it would stay. Then suddenly she heard it. The voice she thought she never hear again whisper her name.

"Catherine?"

She stopped rocking and looked up towards the sound of the voices. Her eyes searched desperately for the source of the voice but saw nothing. Tears sprang to her eyes "Vincent! Vincent is it really you?"

"Catherine, it's me. It's Vincent. I'm with Jacob. Catherine, where are you? Tell me where you are."

She breathed a sigh of relief. Maybe it wasn't all in her head. Catherine was about to respond when her room door opened suddenly, Fallon and Cooper entering. She jumped from the bed and backed into the corner of the room. "Cathy, you know what happens when you start talking to yourself" Fallon said slowly advancing towards her. She started to panic. She couldn't be restrained so soon again. She couldn't. She begged.

"No, please. I'm sorry. I won't do it again."

Her pleas fell on deaf ears as Fallon grabbed her and dragged her to her bed, kneeling on her chest again, making it difficult to breathe. He pinned her arms down to the bed, smiling sadistically down at her and Cooper restrained her wrists and ankles. She heard her son crying, begging his father to help her. She heard Vincent scream her name in agony.

"CATHERINE!"

Then there was nothing. The only sound was her gasps for breath and Fallon chuckle as her continued to kneel on her. “Cathy, why do continue to disobey?” Fallon asked before he stood up and stared down at her. He briefly looked up at Cooper.

“Leave us. She needs to learn that this behaviour will not be tolerated.”

“Fallon, I think she knows. Look at her. She’s terrified.”

“I said leave us!”

Catherine begged Cooper with her eyes not to leave her alone with Fallon. Cooper looked back and forth between the two then left, closing the door behind him. When the door clicked shut, Fallon sat down next to her on the bed, placing his hands on either side up her. His thumb stroked her side, just next to her right breast, causing Catherine to shiver and pull away.

“It’s such a shame that something that looks like you has to go to waste. You and I could have so much fun if you would just corporate. Of course, I get paid a lot to make sure you learned your place after you woke up. Your guardian is supposed to be here soon and if he comes and finds out your not ready, well that doesn’t bowed well for me. So, lets you and I come to an agreement. You start minding yourself and listening to me and I’ll take it easy on you until he comes. If you don’t, well you should know by now how bad things can get. So, what will it be Cathy? Easy or hard? Makes no difference to me.”

Catherine closed her eyes and turned her face away from him. She knew she wouldn’t be able to take much more of him, of his ways of persuasion. This guardian of hers was supposed to be coming. If this guardian ordered such treatment she was terrified to think of what kind of person he was. She was still unsure if she really heard Vincent’s voice. If it was real. Self preservation was kicking in. She had to do what ever she could to survive. Finally, after several minutes, Catherine open her eyes and looked back at Fallon. With one word her spirit finally broke.

“Easy”

Fallon smiled and patted her cheek.

“Good girl. Just the words I wanted hear. Now that we have that settle. Lets get on to some less savour items. You still need to be punished for your recent defiance. Hopefully you’ll keep your word and this will be the last time. I promise I’ll go easy on you.”

Fallon stood up again and looked down at her. After several blows to her face and one to her stomach. He stood straight and wiped the blood from her split lip on his shirt.

“I’ll send Cooper in here in an hour to take you for your walk. It’s been lovely Cathy. I look forward to our new understanding.”

Catherine was able to keep her sobs and bay until he left the room. It was the only thing that gave her some comfort, him not seeing her cry.

CHAPTER SIX

Catherine kept silent and docile for the remainder of the day. She took her walk around the track. When Fallon brought her to his therapy room she answered his questions with “Catherine Chandler is dead.” “Well done today Cathy” Fallon said, leading her back to her room after there short session. “You deserve a nice supper tonight. How about a nice warm bowl of soup and some tea? Would you like that?” Catherine nodded and sat down on her bed.

As promised, a nurse brought in the first warm meal she had since she woke up from her coma. She thanked her kindly then devoured the food. That night as she laid in bed, thinking of her son and Vincent. Wondering if they were just a dream that she imagined. Her heart told her it was real. That they were real and out there, waiting for return. Her mind though, hesitated. Fallon words were etched into her brain. With her spirit broke, she felt herself losing sight of everything she believed to be real. Losing sight of her true self. Sleep was close when she felt something move within her heart. A warm feeling over came her. A peaceful feeling filled her. Then, in her mind, she heard she heard the most beloved voice. “Catherine. Catherine, it’s Vincent. If you can hear me, know that I’m coming for you. Don’t let them know if you can hear me. Just whisper my name softly if you can. Please, Catherine, stay strong. I’ll be there soon.”

Catherine started to cry. The warm feeling of love filled her. She felt him, she felt Vincent’s love. The bond they shared, she never felt so strongly as she did at the moment. Her Vincent. Her Vincent was reaching out to her. Catherine closed her eyes and concentrated her love for her beloved. “Vincent, I love you” she sent back to him, the words spoken so soft, barely a whisper. She prayed that he heard them. That he felt the love she was willing back to him. A gently peace came over her, lulling her into the first restful sleep had in weeks.

For the next two days she kept her head down. She listened and obeyed every instruction, answered every question they way they wanted her to. On the night of

the second day since she heard Vincent, Catherine started to doubt that he may be coming for her. She had no idea where she was. Was she even in the state of New York anymore? Could he even reach her if he was coming? She hadn't heard from him or Jacob in days. Please be real she begged silently. This place was destroying her. Her so-called guardian would be here any day and then what. If he ordered the treatment she was receiving what kind of man was he? What would become of her if she was taken away? Anything would be better than this place she told herself. With all the questions and doubts floating through her head, Catherine eventually fell into an uneasy sleep.

Later that night she heard it. The familiar sound that would send her heart sorrowing back at her apartment. A light tapping on glass sound. Catherine quickly sat up and looked towards the window. There standing on the other side of the glass was Vincent. She closed her eyes for a brief moment praying that it wasn't an illusion. When she opened her eyes again he was still there. Slowly, she walked towards the window waiting for the vision of Vincent to disappear like a mirage in the desert. When finally, she stood in front of the window he was still there. "Vincent" she whisper reaching through the bars, wanting to touch him. All she could feel was the cold glass against her palm. He raised his palm to the window to reassure her that he was there. Catherine was locked in a daze, staring at Vincent her heart beating ferociously in her chest. She heard him order her to back away so he could break the glass. Quickly she did and hurried to put on the slippers that would be basically useless. She jumped as Vincent smashed through the window, the glass shattering all over the floor. Ignoring it, Catherine rushed to the window and pushed against the bar Vincent was trying to pull out. It was only a matter of seconds before Fallon would be at her door. She was right. She heard Fallon screaming at her to move away from the window. Threatening her. She knew if Fallon got through the door before Vincent could get to her the punishment would be nothing short of death. Vincent must have felt it as well for suddenly he roared and with strength that far exceeded his capabilities he ripped two of the bars clean of the cement and threw them away. Catherine didn't hesitate. Quickly she squeezed through the opening and launched herself into Vincent's arms, gripping on to him with all her might. Vincent returned her embrace, holding her tightly, even tighter when she begged him to. The loud clap of thunder and rain forced Vincent to lower her to her feet. She heard the door to her room open but before she could look back, Vincent grabbed her hand and started to pull her along and run into the darkness.

The rain poured down, soaking them both within seconds. Catherine held on to Vincent's hand as tightly as possible but with the wet grass and her useless slippers she fell to ground, losing her hold on Vincent. Within seconds, he had her in his

arms, running. They stopped in front of an open sewer grate. Catherine held onto Vincent from behind as he began descending the ladder. They were halfway down when they heard voices. It was Fallon and Cooper. Vincent froze on the ladder looking upwards. The sound of Fallon's voice brought terror to Catherine. She grasped Vincent tighter, hiding her face in his hair. She begged to whom ever may be listening for Vincent and her to remain undecked. Vincent felt her distress and placed a comforting hand on her arm. They listened to the two men talk, alerting another to watch the roads.

"Why all the fuss?" Cooper asked. "Cathy's harmless."

"Do you have any idea who she is?" Fallon asked angrily. Hearing no reply, he continued, "That's Burch's girl."

"Elliot Burch?" the other man asked, scared.

"Yes, you idiot. He was notified when she woke up four months ago. We were told to start on her, make sure she doesn't remember. He's been stuck in Russia for half a year with the big bosses. He's supposed to be here the day after tomorrow. If he comes and she's not here, we're dead. Let's go. We need to find her...now!"

Fallon and Cooper's voices faded away and Vincent continued their descent. Catherine though was shocked. Elliot. Was Elliot Burch her elusive guardian? She couldn't even begin to comprehend the implications of that when they reached the bottom of the ladder and Vincent gathered his supplies then took her hand once again and started to run through the drainage tunnels.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Vincent dragged Catherine along, running, for what felt like hours. The further they ran the darker it got and soon Catherine couldn't see anything around her. Her chest started to hurt as she struggled to breath. She knew Vincent was in survival mode, wanting to get them both as far away from the grate as possible. It was becoming to much. She couldn't keep up with him anymore. She pleaded with him "Vincent, I need to stop." Stopping, he let go of her hand. Catherine immediately fell against the wall, sliding to the ground, trying to breath. She vaguely heard Vincent trying to catch his breath before she felt him suddenly before her. He was holding her in his arms. Touching her face, her arms. She couldn't see him through the darkness but lifted her hands to feel the contours of his face. "It's too dark, Vincent, I can't see you!" she cried. She felt his arms leave her then soft glow of a lantern illuminated the tunnel around them. Catherine immediately began to cry at the sight of him. He stared at her for only a second

before taking her face between his hands and brushing her tears away from her cheeks. "You are my Catherine," he whispered.

She nodded at him, raising her own hands and gently placing them on his wrists. Then Vincent did something she only dreamed of. He pulled her close and gently kissed her. It was all to much. He started to pull away when Catherine launched herself into his lap, burying her face in his neck, crying hysterically. This can't be real, she thought. Any moment she was going to wake up in that dreadful hospital room alone.

"Please tell me this is real. That I'm not imagining this. Please tell me you're real, Vincent. I don't know anymore."

Vincent rubbed her back and held her tightly, whispering soothing sounds in her ear. "This is real, Catherine. I'm here. You're not imagining. I need you to try and calm yourself."

She couldn't stop sobbing and felt herself start to hyperventilate. Vincent rubbed her back and urged to breath, whispering words of comfort in her ear. When she finally managed to calm down, he handed her a canteen of water encouraging her to take small sips. He then started to run his hands over her arms and face again, examining her for any injuries.

"Are you hurt anywhere? Do you have any pain?"

"I'm okay. I'll be okay. Just tired," she told him, trying to reassure him.

"Are you able to walk a bit farther? I want to put as much distance between us and that place as possible."

Catherine nodded and let Vincent assisted her to her feet. He gathered their supplies and put an arm around her waist. "Lean on me, I won't let you fall."

She managed to walk for an hour before Vincent had to pick her up and carry her. "I'm sorry," she cried softly.

"Nonsense. Don't worry. You know how much I love having you in my arms. This just gives me a reason to hold you."

She smiled sadly at him and then rested her head against his chest. "You never need a reason. I welcome your arms always. I love you, Vincent," she whispered to him before drifting off to sleep.

When Catherine woke again she was lying in Vincent arms she looked up at him, trying to gauge if he was real or not. After his reassurances, she asked him about their son.

“Yes, his name is Jacob, and he’s beautiful. He’s so intelligent. He’s the one that showed me to you.”

Catherine relaxed in his arms and told him about when she first heard Jacob talking to her. The joy she felt hearing his voice. Then Vincent felt the anxiety and fear coming through the bond.

“Then the orderlies overheard me talking to him one day. They were already trying to manipulate me into believing I wasn’t who I thought I was. Telling me I wasn’t Catherine Chandler. That Catherine Chandler was dead. Over and over again they would say that. Catherine Chandler is dead. Catherine Chandler is dead. Then when they heard me talking to Jacob they would tie me down. Saying I was crazy. That it wasn’t real. That it was all in my head.”

Catherine felt his arms tighten around her, trying to comfort her as she told her story. “It was real,” he whispered in her ear. “You’re alive. Catherine Chandler is alive.”

“I’m alive?” she asked softly, looking for reassurance.

Vincent gently kissed her temple. “Yes. You’re alive. Catherine Chandler is alive and in my arms.”

Catherine tried to force herself to relax, down. Vincent was real and was holding her in his arms. She could feel him sending her his love. She could feel it through the bond they shared. Could feel it strongly.

She wanted to know everything about Jacob. She didn’t even know what he looked like. The only time she saw him was just after his birth. Even then she wasn’t allowed to hold him.

“Tell me about him, Vincent. Tell me about our son.”

Vincent pulled out the suede pouch she gave to him for their first anniversary. It brought tears to her eyes to see he still carried it with him after all this time. Inside the pouch he pulled out the rose she had given him, her crystal pendant and most beautiful thing of all, a picture of Jacob. Taking the picture from him, Catherine stared at it in awe. Her son was beautiful. He was perfect. A spitting image of his mother Vincent told her though she had a hard time seeing it herself. Catherine leaned her head against Vincent’s chest and stared at the picture. Then suddenly panic started to rise in her. She remembered the early stages of her pregnancy and all the drugs Gabriel had the doctor inject her with.

“Is he healthy? I was so afraid. When Gabriel first kidnapped me, they injected me with drugs, trying to get me to tell them about a book Joe gave me. I told them I

was pregnant, but they didn't care. I was afraid that the drugs were going to harm the baby."

"He's perfectly healthy. In fact, that is one trait I passed to him. My immune system. I'm also beginning to believe he will have my strength. He's showing signs of it."

Catherine sighed in relief, knowing Vincent would not lie to her about something so important. She gazed lovingly at the picture of her son until Vincent suggested she eat something. Catherine nodded and made him promise to eat and rest as well. Reluctantly, Catherine handed Vincent the rose and pendant to put back in the pouch. With a kiss to the photo of Jacob, she handed that back as well. Then to her surprise, he placed the pouch around her neck, asking her to hold on to it for him until they reached home. Touched beyond words, Catherine nodded and squeezed the pouch gently.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Catherine tried to be strong for Vincent. She didn't want him to know how much the journey home was effecting her. She knew she was holding them back but couldn't help it. Each time she fell asleep she would dream of being back at the hospital with Fallon hovering over her. Taunting her. Touching her. Breaking her down until she was a shell of her former self. Vincent and the thought of holding her son in her arms was the only thing that kept her going. After days of traveling, Vincent finally pointed out the pipes. "Look, Catherine, we're almost home. I can send a message that we'll be home in a couple of hours."

Catherine leaned against the tunnel wall and slid to the ground, sighing in relief. She listen for Vincent tap out a message on the pipes. She closed her eyes and squeezed the suede pouch hanging around her neck. "Mother's coming, sweetheart" she whispered "Don't worry. I love you." It took a few minutes then she heard Jacob's voice in her mind. "I know Mother" the boy answered, his voice filled with joy. "I just heard the message on the pipes. Pascals been teaching me the codes. I'm going to meet you. I love you mother." Catherine smiled and let go of the pouch. Vincent finished his message then helped her to her feet. "Are you ready?" he asked her. She nodded and Vincent gathered her in his arms and started to run towards home.

The closer they got to home the more Catherine started to feel Jacob. It was a feeling that warmed heart. They came to a brick wall that looked like a dead end. Vincent set her down and pulled the lever that open a small entrance to Below

community. Warm torch lights lit their way as they walked towards the main hub. Two people came into view and Catherine new that one of them was Jacob. She stumbled forward a few steps then fell to her knees as Jacob ran into her open arms. She cried out his name and hugged him tightly to her. She then held his face between her hands. He was so beautiful, her son. Jacob gently traced her face with his own fingers. His touch was so soft. Jacob was saying something to her but she didn't hear all the words. She was taking in the sight of him, her heart swelling with love. Jacob then tugged on Catherine's hand, pulling her to her feet and down the tunnel.

"Come, Mother, I want to show you my chamber. Caroline is there and some of your old storybooks. Would you read to me before bed?"

Catherine would have fell to the tunnel floor if Vincent hadn't rushed forward and took her around the waist. Mary hurried up to them and pulled Jacob back, trying to explain to him that his parents needed to rest first. She then pulled Catherine into her arms and hugged her tightly, whispering in her ear and rubbed her back. Catherine couldn't find the words, crying in Mary arms. She hugged the old woman tightly. Mary held her face in her hands and kissed her face. She then turned to Vincent, hugging and thanking him for bringing Catherine back to them. Jacob held on to Catherine again before Mary convince him to lead them to the hospital chamber so his mother could be looked after.

Mary and Jacob left Vincent and Catherine at the entrance only after Catherine promised to come and tuck him into bed. Catherine watched Mary lead him away then let Vincent help her up and when exhaustion took over he carried her inside the chamber setting her down where Father instructed. Catherine sat on the gurney, tensed as Father did his examination. She new he wouldn't harm her but couldn't help feeling stressed. She couldn't help the trembling as Father continued his exam. Mary returned as Father started to explain his findings and concerns. Her blood pressure was low, she was aminic, dehydrated, boarder line malnourishment. Not surprisingly since hey barely gave me food she thought, but didn't want to say, knowing it would only distress Vincent even more. Then Father said he wanted to take some blood, to send off to the lab. Panic filled her at those words. Taking blood would mean a needle. Another needle. She knew it was years ago that she was stuck in the room, receiving injection after injection but to her it was like yesterday. Catherine tensed, a look of panic on her face.

Vincent stepped forward and sat down next to her, wrapping his arm around her shoulders. "Catherine," he whispered, "it's all right. You're safe. Father doesn't have to if you don't want him to, but it will help to make sure you get well. I'll stay with you. Will you let him?"

Catherine looked between the two men, shaking. I can do this, she told herself. I can do this for Vincent. I can do this for Jacob. Turning her head to Vincent for comfort, she held out her arm and allowed Father to draw the blood.

When finished Father took Catherine's hands in his own.

"My dear, I want you to go with Mary and get washed up. Vincent is going to help me bring the IV equipment to his chamber so we can get you resting."

At his words Catherine shook her head no, grasping onto Vincent's hand. "I can't. Please. I don't want to leave him," she pleaded, the panic evident in her voice.

"Catherine, listen to me," Father continued, "like Vincent said, you are safe. Nothing will harm you here. Please go with Mary and get cleaned up. I promise you it won't be more than ten minutes. Then you'll be back with Vincent in his chamber. I promise you he will not leave your sight until you allow him to."

"It's all right, Catherine", Vincent said, trying to comfort her. "Go with Mary. I need to help Father with the IV for you."

Catherine looked back and forth between everyone in the room before finally nodding. Vincent helped her down from the gurney and into Mary's waiting arms.

"Come, sweet girl, let's get you washed up and then into bed," Mary said softly, picking up the clean clothes and towels, slowly leading Catherine away to the hospital's bathing chamber. Catherine continued to look back at Vincent for reassurance. At his nod of encouragement, she followed Mary out of the chamber.

Mary held on to her arm and lead her down the hall. "Will go to Vincent's private bathing chamber. No one will bother us there."

"Thank you Mary. I'm sorry for my reaction. It's just been difficult lately."

"Not to worry Catherine. Everything will be all right. You're home now. We'll get you right as rain before you know it."

Once at the chamber, Mary sat Catherine down at a bench next to the bathing pool and started to gather soaps for her bath. Catherine watch her for a moment, trying to gather the courage to ask about Vincent. Mary returned and helped her undress and slide into the pool. "Mary" Catherine began, taking the washcloth from her.

"Has Vincent been okay Mary? I mean how has been since I've been missing?"

Catherine looked up at the older woman and could tell by the look on her face that the answer wasn't good. "He missed you a great deal" she answered.

“Yes, I imagine so but how is he? I know how sensitive he is and with the bond that we shared and the last moments that I remember us together. I’m just worried about him.”

Mary remained silent for a moment. She started washing Catherine’s hair before she answered.

“You are Vincent’s world. You have been since the moment he found you all those years ago. He was there for Jacob but only just. He went through the movements of life but only that.”

Catherine looked up at her and saw tears in Mary’s eyes.

“I fear Catherine, that this miracle we have all be given. The miracle of your return did not happen that we would have lost Vincent to his grief soon. He loves you so. You’re his soulmate. One cannot live when a piece of their soul is missing.”

Catherine started to cry once again at her words. She knew her disappearance, her death would have devastated Vincent. She knew that pain when she thought Vincent had died in her arms when they were alone in the cavern deep below. “Not without me” she had told him. “Not without me.” Then the chain of events after that night lead to her leaving him alone. Only he had to suffer the lost of her years. She made him come back to her but she couldn’t do the same for him. The thought of that broke her heart. She abandon him. Not of her own accord but still abandonment in her eyes. “How can he ever forgive me for leaving him Mary?” she cried. “I should have fought harder. Fought for him and Jacob when I was taken. If only I had fought then he wouldn’t have had to go through that.”

“Catherine, no. You mustn’t think like that”

Mary quickly rinsed Catherine hair then helped her from the pool and wrapped her in a towel then hugged her close.

“Catherine, what happen to you was in no way you fault. I know you. I know you must have fought like hell but the people you where up against were evil. Evil men whom no matter what you did you couldn’t win at the time. But think about it now Catherine. You did fight. Against all odds you fought and you survived. It took awhile but you fought your way back to Vincent. The love you have for each other prevailed against all odds. You both stood at deaths door and managed to fight your way back to each other.”

Mary cupped Catherine’s face between her hands, wiping the tears away with her thumbs. Catherine wanted to believe the words Mary had spoken but her self-confidence had disappeared. She no longer was the woman she was before her

kidnapping. Self doubts flooded her mind and her sense of self. Though Mary's words did give her a glimmer of hope.

"Come now sweet girl, lets get you dressed. Father's waiting for you in your and Vincent's chamber."

Catherine smiled. Vincent's and her chamber. She liked the sound of that. When she was dressed they made their way back to the chamber room. Mary was about to assist her getting in the bed when Vincent and Father entered. Vincent dropped what he was holding and hurried over to lift her into the bed himself. When she was settled he stroke her face, a gestured that such a calming effect on her.

"Are you feeling better now after your bath?" he asked her.

She smiled and took his hand in her own and kissed his fingers. "Yes. Thank you," she said. "Now you need to go get cleaned up. Quickly though, I like having you close."

She could see his hesitancy to leave her and evidently Father could as well.

"Go, Vincent. You're filthy and you smell. I don't think Catherine wants you sleeping next to her like that. Perhaps Mary can go grab you both something to eat from the kitchen. You both must be famished. Nothing too heavy for Catherine right now. Some soup and crackers I think are best. But for him, try to get as many sandwiches as William is willing to part with."

Mary happily obliged, smiling as she left the chamber.

"Now, Vincent," Father continued and walked over to the bed "If you would just bring the IV pole and bag of saline over to the bed, I can get Catherine's IV going while you're cleaning up."

"Will you be all right while I'm gone, Catherine?" he asked. Catherine smiled at his concern and nodded. Jacob, she thought. There would be no way Father would allow her to leave the chamber to go to her son but she needed to see once more. She promised him she would read to him.

"Yes, yes, just go. Don't worry. Will you bring Jacob with you when you return? I promised I'd tuck him in but maybe I can still read to him before he goes to sleep."

"Whatever you wish."

Catherine watched as Vincent rose from the bed and brought the supplies over to Father. She was distracted sightly when Father dragged a chair over to the bed and sat down, giving Vincent a shove. "Go, Vincent," he said. "The sooner you go, the sooner you can come back, and you won't have to leave again anytime soon."

With a kiss to her fingers, Vincent started to back away. Catherine followed him with her eyes, unable to turn away from the love he held in his eyes. His brilliant blue eyes where the never left hers as he slowly made his way to his wardrobe. They were lost in each other gaze when Father startled them both. “Vincent, go!” Father said loudly. Vincent jumped, making Catherine giggle then turned away smiling. She watched from the corner of her eye Vincent leave the chamber, then turned her attention back to Father.

“Now Catherine” Father began. “I’m going to have to insert an IV port in your hand. You’re in desperate need of fluids and this is the best way for you to get them. I’m going to clean the area and then I want you to relax and close your eyes. You’ll feel a small prick when I insert the needle but believe it or not, I have a knack for started IV’s.”

“I know this is necessary Father. It’s just that I’ve developed a fear of needles. There were so many when they held me captive. The doctor administrating them was none to kind about it. I know it’s an irrational fear but I can’t help it.”

“That nonsense Catherine. You have every right to feel the fear but it is important that you talk and not let it fester inside of you. Sit back now and close your eyes.”

Catherine nodded and laid back against the pillows, closing her eyes. She felt Father lift her hand gently and jumped when she felt him clean her hand with cotton and alcohol. “Relax Catherine” he reminded her and poke her hand looking for a vein. She nodded once again and bit her lip, knowing what was to come. A small prick then Father announced happily.

“You see there, all done. Not bad for an old doctor like me.”

She opened her eyes and saw Father securing the IV to her hand. It wasn’t as bad as she thought. He really did have a gift. He flushed the port and hook up the IV bag then held her hands in his own. He smiled at her but there were tears in his eyes.

“Father, what is it? Are you all right?”

“My dear Catherine” he said squeezing her hands gently. “I know you and I have not always seen eye to eye in the past but when you disappeared and then when we found out that you had passed I saw what it did to Vincent. I realized then, and at the time I thought it was to late, what you truly meant to my son, to our world. I was so wrong about you Catherine. My jealousy of your bond with Vincent blinded me. The guilt I felt of not be able to reconcile this with you tore at me; it still does. I guess what I’m trying to say Catherine, is that I love you like a

daughter and I want to thank you for the for all the happiness you brought my son back then and now. I hope you can forgive an old man for his foolishness.”

Catherine sat up and pulled Father into her arms in a fierce hug. She cried on his shoulder.

“I love you to Father. There’s nothing to forgive, I understand. If you must hear the words though, I do forgive you.”

She felt Father hug her tightly back, cradling her head in this hand.

“You’re the best thing that has ever happened to my son Catherine. Your return has proved that miracles can happen.”

After a few tender moments Father pulled away from her and packed away his things in his medical bag. He rose from the chair and pulled it back to Vincent writing desk. When he turned back he saw Catherine rising from the bed and immediately started to scold her.

“Catherine, I told you bedrest for the next few days. What are you doing? You are in no condition to up and about.”

He moved to help her back into the bed when she held her hand up.

“Please Father, I need to sit up. I promise to rest after a short time. Please, just for meals.”

“If I have your word that you will remain in bed and not get up without assistance for the next two days, I will allow you to have your meals at this desk with Vincent and Jacob. If I find out that you have that you have been up on your own, I will not hesitate to have you brought to the hospital chamber where you will remain until I say otherwise. Do we have an agreement?”

“Yes. I promise to stay in bed. I just would like to have some normalcy right now.”

“I will permit it then. Mark my words Catherine, you are very ill right now. You have just returned to us and I will not allow anything to jeopardize that.”

Father took her gently by the arm and helped her to a chair at the table then took a seat himself. A moment later Vincent walked into the chamber with Jacob in his arms. Catherine turned her head towards them and was about to speak when Jacob wiggled out of his father’s arms and bounded towards her and into her lap, hugging her fiercely. Her arms immediately went around him, holding him tight against her. It was the most wonderful feeling in the world, holding her son to her. Vincent rushed forward to remove him but Catherine held out her hand, stopping him.

“No, Vincent, it’s fine. I want to hug him,” she said and closed her eyes. This is what she dreamed of. Since she awoke she dreamt of her son. Not since the first day when she asked about her baby had anyone mentioned him. She began to think that he wasn’t real or that he hadn’t survived after his birth. Then she heard his voice. It warmed her heart. What she felt now was so much more. The bond between them was so intense. She could feel his heart beating next to her own. It was similar to what she felt with Vincent but with an overwhelming sense of possessiveness. Jacob was a part of her. He was hers and now that she held him in her arms she swore to herself that no one would take him away from her again.

Catherine vaguely heard Vincent protesting about her being out of bed but didn’t care at the moment. Jacob sat back in her lap and she immediately held on to him at the waist to prevent him from falling. She stared at her sons face as he traced her own with his soft fingers, running over her nose, her lips, even the scar on the left side of her face. She couldn’t hold back the tears that formed as she looked at him. She never saw something more beautiful in her life. A tear escaped and Jacob gently brushed it away. “Are these happy tears again, Mother?” he asked.

Catherine only managed to nod, more tears escaping. Then Jacob leaned forward and kissed both her cheeks. Catherine pulled him close again, whispering, “I love you, sweetheart. Thank you for helping your father bring me home. You are such a brave boy.”

Mary entered the chamber a few moments later carrying a tray of food and placed it on the table. Father rose from his chair. “Well, I think it is time for me to go to bed” he said, placing a hand on Catherine’s shoulder. Catherine looked up at him, smiling. “Remember your promise, my dear. You stay in that bed unless it is mealtime,” he told her sternly.

“I promise, Father. Thank you.”

Pointing to the soup on the tray, he told her, “Eat as much of that soup as you can. Slowly. Your stomach needs to adjust. If you eat too fast, you’ll get sick.” He then looked at Vincent. “See to it that she listens. Don’t let that pretty face of hers entice you.”

Catherine heard Vincent agree but paid no mind. Jacob was resting his head against her shoulder, playing with the suede pouch. She rested her cheek against his head and closed her eyes. Mary gave the both a kiss on the cheek before leaving with Father. Once they were gone Vincent approached them and tried to lift Jacob off of her lap.

“Come now, Jacob, your mother needs to eat some supper. Why don’t you sit on the bed and pick one of the books you brought for her to read?”

Jacob shook his head no and wrapped his arms around Catherine’s neck tightly. “Jacob,” Vincent repeated, tugging at the boy. “Let’s go now. I told you, your mother needs to have her supper.”

“No!” Jacob said, refusing to let go of her. Vincent was about to pull him away when Catherine looked up at him and held up one finger, silently asking him to wait a moment. She gently kissed Jacob head then took his face between her hands. “Jacob sweetheart” she whispered softly, stroking his cheeks with her thumbs.

“If you listen to your father now, I promise to read to you until you fall asleep. You and I can curl up on that bed, all warm under the covers, and read whatever story you wish. First, though, I promised Grandfather that I’d eat a little supper, and I can’t break a promise to Grandfather. So please, listen to your father and go sit on the bed and pick whatever book you wish. Will you do that for me, please?”

Jacob reluctantly agreed and climbed off her lap. He picked up his book bag then jump into the bed to wait for her. She looked up at Vincent and smiled as he looked back and forth between the two of them before kneeling down in front of her. They shared a silent moment together before he took her hands in his and kissed her fingers. “Are you all right? Are you in any pain?” he asked her, concern writing all over his face. Catherine smiled and nodded trying to assure him she was okay. She knew if she told him about the pain she felt in her chest or how exhausted she really was he’d have Father back in here in moment. All she wanted to do was to crawl into bed with Jacob and Vincent and try to forget all that happen in the last few weeks. She wanted to hold Jacob against her chest while he slept and listen to the sound of him breathing. She wanted to feel Vincent’s strong arms incircle both her and their son and feel his warmth and love envelope her. Feel the safety only Vincent could provide. She knew though that she had to eat a little something to lesson Vincent’s worries for her.

She could feel through their bond how scared he was for her. How worried. His face showed it but not to the depth that she felt through the bond. From their first touch when he pulled her through the broken window and into his arms she felt something explode inside of her. She felt Vincent’s essence fill her. It was nothing like before she was kidnapped. Back then she felt floating instances of Vincent but she hadn’t manage to learn how to center it. Now it was like a flood gate was opened. She could feel Vincent’s feelings, his love but was still trying to decipher those feelings.

She managed to eat half a bowl of broth which seemed to please Vincent. He then lifted her in his arms and carried her the few steps to the bed and tucked her in next to Jacob. She let Vincent rearrange the IV line, making sure it wouldn't snag on anything. Jacob noticed Vincent arrange the IV and asked about it. "It's called an IV line. It helps me get the medicine I need to get better," she told him. She noticed Jacob holding her old doll Caroline. She gently took the doll from Jacob and held it, smiling at the childhood memories the doll brought forward.

"My father gave me this doll when I was ten years old. I named her after my mother. I'm so glad she found her way to you, Jacob. She can be a good friend and never tells anyone any secrets you tell her."

"Can I keep her, Mother? I'll take good care of her."

"Of course you can keep her. That would make me happy"

She handed the doll back to Jacob and pulled him close.

"Now, which book did you pick?"

He proudly handed her The Velveteen Rabbit. "You said it was your favorite when you were little" he told her and snuggled up close to her.

"Will the two of you be okay for a few minutes while I take the supper dishes back to the kitchen?" Vincent asked them softly. Catherine smiled at him and nodded.

"Yes, we'll be okay," she told him, "but hurry back, we both want our goodnight kisses before we fall asleep."

"As you wish."

Catherine kissed Jacob's forehead then began reading him the book as Vincent gathered the dishes and left the chamber. She managed to finish most of the book before Jacob dozed off. She carefully set the book aside then stared at her son as he slept. She smiled at the content look he had on his face. She watched for a few moments. The rise and fall of his chest as he breathed. The sound of his small intake of breaths soon lulled her into a sleep of her own.

She knew she wasn't asleep for long when she felt Vincent climb into the bed and pull her against his chest. Catherine sighed happily and opened her eyes slightly, smiling at him. She turned her head slightly to look up at him, her eyes half closed. "Do I still get my goodnight kiss?" she asked softly.

"Of course, a night will never pass again that we don't share at least one kiss." Carefully, Vincent brushed her lips with his own.

Catherine smiled and closed her eyes. “May I have one more? You know, just in case. It’s good to have one in the bank.” Vincent obliged, giving her two more soft kisses. “There you go,” he whispered. “Have two. Go back to sleep and I promise that we’ll build that bank of kisses up so much in the coming days that you’ll be a wealthy woman.”

Feeling safe and at peace for the moment, Catherine let herself drift off sleep.

“Mother? Mother are you awake?”

Catherine slowly woke to the sound of Jacob’s whispers and his fingers softly stroking the bridge of her nose. She smiled and opened her eyes and saw Jacob smiling at her. “Good morning sweetheart” she whispered back and gently kissed his nose.

“I’m glad you’re home. I missed you. I always knew you would come home one day.”

“I missed you to, so much. I love you Jacob. Thank you for helping your father bring me home.”

Jacob smiled up at her but then suddenly frowned as he studied her face.

“Mother, are you going to be okay? You’ve been in the hospital a long time. Grandfather’s a doctor, he could have taken care of you,”

Catherine hesitated to answer. She knew he was an intelligent boy. The last thing she wanted was for him to worry. After a moment she smiled at him.

“I was asleep for a very long time. I only just woke up when you started to come and visit me. I’m sorry for what you had to see, Jacob. Those were bad men at the hospital. Your visits helped me, though. It was the only time I was happy.”

“Why did they hurt you, Mother?”

“I don’t know. Sometimes people do terrible things to others and we don’t know why.”

“Will they make you go back? Please don’t leave, Mother.”

The sadness she heard in her son’s voice made her want to cry. She was trying to formality a response when Vincent sat up in bed looking down them with a smile and reassured them.

“No one, and I mean no one, is ever going to take your mother away again. I won’t let them. I won’t let anyone hurt either of you” he told them confidently. “I know you won’t, Father,” Jacob said, sitting up in bed. “I’ll protect Mother, too. When you have to go and work in the tunnels, I’ll take care of her.” Catherine smiled looking between the two of them. They were her life. She wanted to cherish this moment for ever. Nature was calling though and she went to sit up at the side of the bed but found it a struggle to do so. Vincent noticed immediately and hurried out of the bed and assisted her to sit on the side. She sat still for a moment and tried to catch her breath. Vincent frowned and held on to her. She was glad he did, she didn’t feel confident that she could sit up on her own yet.

“Jacob, why don’t you go brush your teeth and get dressed? It’s almost breakfast, and it’s Thursday. You know what Thursday is” Vincent said, keeping his eyes on her.

“Pancake day!”

Jacob excitedly jumped from the bed and started to run for the door. He stopped though and turned back, running to give her a kiss. Catherine smiled at him as he begged Vincent to stay home from classes this morning. Yes! She new that answer before Vincent had a chance to reply. She wanted her son near to her for as long as possible. “That would be lovely, sweetheart,” Catherine answered before Vincent had a chance to oppose. “First, you must do as your Father tells you and wash up before breakfast. Though I’m sure he would want you to go to your afternoon classes.” Jacob jumped up and down, pleased with the answer then ran from the room. Catherine shook her head as she watch him, amazed by his energy.

Vincent was helping Catherine to her feet when Mary entered carrying clean clothes for Catherine. “How are you feeling today?” she asked Catherine as she approached the two of them.

“A little shaky but rested. I need to use the washroom though. Would you mind helping me?”

“Of course, my dear. Vincent, I’ll push the IV pole if you want to help Catherine walk. We’ll use the private wash chamber here. I imagine Vincent’s going to have to get used to sharing it now. Later on, I’ll bring some nice-smelling soaps and lotions, some flowers. Before you know it, we’ll turn it into a nice lady’s powder room.”

Catherine chuckled. Vincent’s going to love that she thought. She glanced around the room and thinking how the whole chamber could use a woman’s touch. Slowly the three of them made their way to the wash chamber where Vincent sat Catherine

down on a stool. He kissed her head and was about to leave when Catherine started to panic slightly. "Wait, come back," she said, grabbing his hand. Vincent went back to her and bent over to look her in the eye. She took him by the collar and pulled him towards her for a quick kiss. "You promised last night that we'd start banking kisses."

Vincent smiled and hugged her. "Don't worry my love" he whispered low enough that only she could hear him. "I'll return shortly and stay at your side for the rest of day." He stood then and looked to Mary.

"Call to me when you two are finished and I'll be right back to assist you."

Mary shooed him away with a towel.

"Of course. Go get changed yourself. We won't be that long. I asked William to have breakfast delivered to your chamber this morning. Father will be by shortly after to check on Catherine."

Once Vincent was gone, Mary helped Catherine to relieve herself then sat her in front of a wash basin to clean up. Mary hovered over her like a mother hen. Before Catherine would have found it annoying, always wanted her independence but now she found it comforting. Mary was surrogate mother to her.

"Thank you Mary, for all your help, you're heaven sent."

"Nonsense my sweet girl. You're family. That is what family's do."

"Regardless, thank you."

She looked up at Mary and started to cry once again.

"Thank you for all you did for Vincent and Jacob in my absence. I can never thank you enough for taking care of them."

At the sight of Catherine's tears Mary herself started to cry. Catherine sighed as Mary pulled her head against her chest in a hug and stroked her hair, comforting.

"Hush now. It was my honor to help them as it is now to help you."

Catherine tried to gather her composure but struggled to do so. A tightness started to form in her chest followed by a pain that made her wince. Mary felt her tense and pulled away looking down at her.

"What is it Catherine? Are you in pain?"

Catherine closed her eyes and unconsciously placed a hand over her heart. After a moment she shook her head. She opened her eyes again and smiled reassuringly.

“No. I’m fine Mary” she responded, guilty about lying to her friend. “I’m just want to be able to stop crying so much. I feel like such a baby.”

“It’s good for you to cry Catherine. Don’t hold in your feelings to spare us. You need to let it out.”

Catherine nodded, know what Mary said was true. Still, she didn’t want to have to burden everyone more then she already was. Mary had just finish assisting Catherine in a nightgown when they heard Vincent’s voice from outside of the wash chamber.

“I’ve returned. Are you ready for some breakfast and then bed Catherine?”

Catherine sighed, noticing how Vincent had to make sure he go the word bed in there before she called. She nodded to Mary, who helped her to her feet then answered.

“Yes you can come in.”

Vincent entered and frowned when he saw her already standing. Before she had a chance to object, he already stepped forward and picked her up. “Mary, would you please follow us with the IV pole” he asked and started his way to the main chamber. “Vincent, I can walk...” she started to say but stopped at the angry look he gave her. She knew she couldn’t fault him for being overprotective, not after everything they been through. If she thought he was overprotective before she knew that he would be in overdrive now. Her heart told her to let him. That he needed to be this way for his own peace of mind.

Gently, as if she was made of glass, he sat her in the chair at the writing desk where breakfast was waiting. He sat a plate with toast in front of her stood with his arms crossed until she picked up a piece and took a bite before he stood back a few inches. His arms remained crossed, his eyes never leaving her. Mary stood behind her and began to brush and braid her hair.

“Your hair has gotten so long. It’s beautiful. Do you plan on cutting it?” Mary asked, tying off the braid.

“I haven’t really thought about it. I’ve haven’t had it this long since I was a girl.”

“Vincent? Vincent, what do you think?” Mary asked him. When he didn’t answer both woman looked over at him. He was still starring at Catherine as he absentmindedly ate breakfast. Mary repeated his name a few more times before he finally acknowledged them, a confused look on his face. “What was that?” he mumbled.

“I asked whether you thought that Catherine’s longer hair suited her. I’ve been telling her how beautiful it is and we wanted your opinion.”

Catherine smiled as Vincent struggled to find any words before mumbling how lovely it was. He was saved from any further comment as a young Jacob and Father entered the chamber. Jacob immediately threw his schoolbooks aside and ran to Catherine jumping into her lap once again. Her arms went around him as she held her son against her tightly. Vincent rose quickly to stop him but Jacob returned his mother’s fierce hug, refusing to let go. Vincent went to pull Jacob off when Father interceded.

“Jacob, will you please pull a chair in front of your mother so I may sit and have a look at her?”

Catherine kissed Jacob’s cheek and whispered in his ear.

“Sweetheart, will you please do what Grandfather has requested. Then go and make your Father sit down and eat his breakfast. He knows how grumpy he gets if he doesn’t eat.”

Jacob giggled and returned his mother’s kiss for sliding off her lap. He pulled a chair over for Father then went over to Vincent and tugged at his hand. “Mother wants you to sit down and eat breakfast,” he said, then jumped on the bed to wait. Vincent looked at everyone around the room before he sulked over the chair next to Catherine and started to eat. Father sat down and began looking Catherine over. Taking her blood pressure and temperature. Listening to her heart. Examining the ugly bruises on her wrists.

“How did you sleep? Did you eat something? Are you in any pain?” He asked question after question, Mary making notes of each answer on a note pad from her apron. “I’m feeling better now that I’m home,” Catherine said after answering all his questions. “I am tired and I get a little winded when I walk, but I’m sure after a few days’ rest I’ll be able to move about more and help out where needed.” Father looked at her sternly over his glasses. “Hmmm, well, I’ll be the judge of that,” he said, packing up his medical bag.

“Peter will be back from vacation in two days, and I’ve made sure he’ll be made aware of all that has transpired down here.”

Catherine teared up at the mention of her godfather’s name. “Peter,” she whispered, smiling. “Make sure he’s below before you tell him, in case he needs assistance from the shock.”

“Of course, Catherine,” Father reassured her. “I’m also going to request he bring some equipment with him when he comes. There are just a few tests I want to perform on you.”

Catherine scrunch her face in concern as Father and Vincent looked at one another, silently communicating something between them.

“What sort of tests, Father?” she asked him, looking at him with concern.

Father smiled and patted her hand. “Just standard tests, my dear. We don’t have access to any of your medical records from the last four years, and from what we understand, you were in a coma for many years. I just want to make sure all is well.”

Catherine nodded and looked down at her hands. Something was wrong and no one was telling her. She felt the panic and anxiety building up. She tried to push it away; to hide it but she knew Vincent felt it immediately. He stood and quickly rounded the table so he could kneel next to her. “Catherine,” he said placing his hands over hers, “try not to worry yourself. All will be well. You’re safe here. Please remember that. Whatever happened back at that facility, whoever hurt you, they will not harm you again. This I promise.” She tried to fight the tears that threatened to fall but fail. Vincent pulled her to him in a tight hug. “Hush now, my love,” he whispered, rubbing her back. At the sight of her tears, Jacob cried out her name as he jumped from the bed running to hug her. Catherine quickly tried to compose herself. She didn’t want Jacob to be witness to her distress. She smiled at her son, hugging him back. “It’s all right, sweetheart,” she said, kissing the top of his head.

“All right, Catherine, back to bed,” Father said, standing up. “I want to check that IV before I head back to the library. Jacob, turn down the covers so your father can help your mother into bed.”

Once Catherine was settled in bed Jacob jumped in and snuggled up to her, hiding his face in her nightgown. Catherine smiled and stroked his head with her free hand as Father checked the IV in the other.

“All looks well. This bag should be empty by this afternoon. I’d like to run one more once it’s finished. Make sure your mother stays in bed, Jacob. I’m leaving you in charge,” Father said, patting his grandson on the head.

Jacob peeked up at his grandfather and smiled. “I will, Grandfather.”

Catherine thanked Father and watch as Vincent assisted him toward the chamber exit. Jacob crawled up so his head was under her chin. He held onto the strings of the suede pouch again, content to be in her arms.

After Father left Catherine watched as Vincent picked up Jacob's schoolbooks and placed them on the desk. He then walked over to the bed and quickly picked up Jacob and sat him in a chair at the desk before he could protest.

"Schoolwork now, Jacob. That was the agreement. You promised that if you stayed home from your morning classes you would work on your letters and phonics. If you don't, I will send you off to class."

"But I promised Grandfather I'd take care of Mother. How can I take care of her if I have to do schoolwork?"

"You make sure she stays in bed and sleeps. Keep quiet and let her rest. I'm going to work on my class lessons, as well. Now, enough, start your work. We'll wake your mother for lunch and then you go to your athletics and afternoon lessons."

Jacob pouted angrily and grabbed one of his workbooks and started his lessons. Vincent then sat at the edge of the bed and took Catherine's hands in his own. "Are you feeling okay, Catherine? Is there anything you need?" he asked, giving her hands a squeeze.

She shook her head and squeezed his hands back. "No. I'm okay, Vincent. I just need you close and need to know that Jacob is safe," she said, leaning back into the pillows.

"Close your eyes and get some sleep. Jacob and I are just a few feet away should you need anything," Vincent said, motioning towards the table. She nodded and smiled when Vincent kissed her hands before placing them on her stomach. They stared at each other for a few minutes before Vincent rose, gathered his own work and joined Jacob at the desk. Catherine stared at the two of them together, engraving the sight of them into her memory. After awhile she finally closed her eyes and let the sound of their quiet whispers lull her into a peaceful sleep.

CHAPTER TEN

Catherine obeyed Father's orders and stayed in bed for two days. Vincent rarely left her side and Jacob stayed with her from the moment he finished his afternoon classes till Vincent forced him off to bed in his own chamber. She wanted beg Vincent to allow Jacob to stay at night. She wanted her son close but knew it was best that Jacob kept his routine. She was glad though because Jacob wasn't there

to witness when she woke up screaming from the nightmares. Vincent would hold her, whisper to her, trying to comfort her. He wanted her to speak about the nightmares but she didn't want to upset him. Sometimes the nightmares were of what happen recently at the hospital. The psychological torture Fallon put her through. If he knew the full extent of what happen to her at the hospital she was sure it would send him into a rage. The worst dreams though were of the time she gave birth to Jacob and he was taken from her. She relived over and over Gabriel taking him right after the birth, barely letting her see him and refusing to let her hold him. She relived Gabriel ordering her death, the feel of the needle prick that was meant to kill her. Then perhaps the worst pain of all, she relived when she final made it to the roof and saw Vincent. She fought so hard to try and stay with him but knew it was inevitable. Vincent's face came in and out of focus. She barely was able to get out her final words to him. *Though lovers be lost love shall not*. It was after that she'd wake up. The feeling of lost and emptiness filled her until she realized where she was. She was in Vincent's arms. She was safe but remnants of her dream were still there when she closed her eyes again.

Two days after her return, she and Jacob cuddled in bed one morning after breakfast. Vincent was returning the dishes to the kitchen. When he returned she knew he would take Jacob off to his classes but she wanted a little private time to talk with Jacob. Jacob was holding onto Caroline, his eyes closed. She could here him talking with her with his mind. "Mother, I want to stay with you today. I miss you when I'm not here" he said sadly. Catherine herself was quickly learning how to communicate she same way with her son. She gripped the crystal pendant that hung around her neck once again. She had returned the suede pouch with the rose to Vincent but asked to keep the pendant and picture of Jacob. The latter which sat in book of sonnets that she kept at her bedside. When she held the pendant in her hand and closed her eyes, she found she could talk to Jacob the same way. "Sweetheart" she whispered in his mind. "You know you need to go to class. I'll be right here when you return but you must promise me something. This gift we share. The way we can talk to each other must only be used in emergencies or when were together in the same room."

"But how will I talk to you when where not together?"

Catherine opened her eyes and turned Jacob's head to face her. "Jacob, open your eyes" she said out loud. He looked up at her, confused.

"I know you want to be able to talk with me but until we both learn how to control our gift we have to be careful. Each night we'll practice before bed. We have to

learn how to knock first to respect each other's privacy. What happens if I come to say hi and you and Luck are sneaking cookies from the kitchen?"

"Luke and I would get in trouble" Jacob answered out loud.

"Exactly. So, I suggest you leave Caroline with me every morning to watch over. She'll keep me company while you are away. Would that be all right?"

Jacob hugged Caroline tight for moment then shook his head yes. He knelt on the bed and placed Caroline on the shelf in front of the stained-glass window.

"I'll leave her right here. That way she can see the whole room and make sure you're okay."

Vincent returned then, carrying Jacob's school bag. "Time for class Jacob" he said, holding out the bag. "Tell your mother goodbye." Jacob gave her a hug and kiss.

"I love you Mother."

"I love you too sweetheart"

He then jump off the bed and ran up to his Vincent and took the bag. "Love you Father" he said and Vincent a quick hug before running from the room. They both smiled after him then Vincent walked over to the bed and climbed in next to her, pulling her into his arms.

"Father took the IV out last night Vincent. Do you think perhaps when can take a walk today? Just a small one to Father's library. He did say I can start moving about some. I can sit with him while you teach your literature class."

"So long as you tell me the moment you feel tired. Don't push yourself to hard yet."

She agreed, desperate to be out of this bed.

"All right then. I'll take you to Father later this morning. Perhaps it would be good so he can watch over you while I'm gone."

Catherine nodded then rested her head against his chest so she could listening to his heartbeat. The remained that way, content to be in each other's arms until it was time to leave.

Things continued that way until the night before Peter was scheduled to return Below. After a particularly bad nightmare Catherine awoke in a full-blown panic attack. Her heart hammered painfully in her chest as she struggled to catch her

breath. Vincent struggled to calm her. It was awhile before his words of comfort reach her. When she finally managed to calm herself, she burrowed close to Vincent, wanting him to hold her tight in his embrace. He did and rubbed her back, kissing her temple. "Talk to me, Catherine," Vincent whispered, trying to encourage her. "You mustn't keep this inside of you. It will help you to say what you are feeling. You yourself once encouraged me to do the same thing. Please, let me help you." Catherine shuddered in his arms, trying to sort out her thoughts. Tonight she dreamt about Elliot and his betrayal. The man whom she thought was her friend. Whom she thought cared about her was the one holding her in that awful place. "Why would Elliot be keeping me there all that time?" she finally said. "I thought he cared for me. I thought that we were able to move forward and be friends. But that man, Fallon, said Elliot was coming. Why would he betray me like that? First John Moreno then Elliot. Why?"

"I don't know, Catherine. I think John Moreno was so afraid of Gabriel that he was ready to sacrifice anyone to save himself. He ended up losing anyway. Joe made certain of that."

Catherine nodded at his words. She thought of her sweet Joe and Jenny and everyone else she was forced to leave behind. She was happy when Vincent told her of the lives they were leading now and hope one day she could be reunited with them.

"Elliot's betrayal hurts the most, Vincent. I'm sorry. I can't imagine the feelings you have towards him, but I just keep thinking that he cared for me."

She did feel bad for Vincent when she thought about Elliot. Vincent was the love of her life but Elliot and her had shared something in the beginning and then again on the docks when they almost died together. She had thought of Elliot as a dear friend. Someone who she considered asking to be her child's godfather back when she still held hope of being rescued while she was pregnant. She question now if he knew where she was all along. Did he take the black book knowing that if she had decoded it herself she'd find his name among others? The thought that he, along with John Moreno, were working with Gabriel all this time terrified her.

"He loved you, Catherine. Men will do almost anything for the woman they love. He may have thought he was saving you."

Vincent's words did have a ring of truth but it didn't lessen the pain she felt in her heart.

"Perhaps. It still hurts. Fallon said that Elliot told them to work on me. To make me forget who I was. Elliot ordered them to psychologically torture me. Why? If

he cared, how would doing that fit into his agenda? Fallon. That man is evil, Vincent. The things he did, the things he said. ‘Catherine Chandler is dead. Catherine Chandler is dead.’”

Panic started to rise in her again at those four words. She heard Fallon screaming them at her even now. Forcing her to repeat them. Hitting her. Restraining her to the bed. Then she saw herself back in the windowless room. Her wrists tied to the chair arms. Fallon was standing behind her, his putrid breath warm on the back of her neck. His hands touching her. She broke out in uncontrollable sobs. The memory was assaulting her mind. She started to hyperventilate, felt her heart rate accelerating. Vincent sat up in the bed and pulled her into his lap. Rocking her. Whispering in her ear. “Shhh, Catherine. You are all right. You are safe,” he said, trying to soothe her.

“Say the words with me. ‘I am safe. Catherine Chandler is alive.’ Come now, say the words with me. ‘I am safe. Catherine Chandler is alive.’”

He repeated the words in her ear over and over until she was finally able to whisper.

“I am safe. Catherine Chandler is alive.”

“Yes, Catherine. Say it again with me. ‘I am safe. Catherine Chandler is alive.’”

They repeat the words together over and over again until her sobs subsided. Vincent continued to whisper the words in her ear as she fell back into an uneasy sleep.

The next morning, Catherine sat in the hospital chamber with Father as they waiting for Vincent and Cullen to escort Peter Below with the medical equipment Father requested. Her eyes were cast down as she twisted a handkerchief in her hands nervously. “Father, do you think Peter will be all right? When he sees me I mean? I don’t want to burden him” she asked, her voice shaking as she struggled to control her emotions. Father rose and limped over to her, placing his hand gently on top of hers, topping her fidgeting. She looked up at him and Father smiled reassuringly.

“Catherine my dear, I think he is going to be perfectly all right. Overjoyed to see you. I admit it he will be shocked but when he feels your arms come around him in a hug that will pass quickly.”

Catherine gave a quick smile and nodded. The smile only lasted a second when she lowered her eyes once again and continued to fidget with the handkerchief. Father

rose and went back to his sit in the chamber when the pipes ringed out that Peter and his entourage were head in their direction.

“I don’t understand why you Father wanted me to bring this equipment down” they heard Peter say as he moved his way closer to the hospital chamber.

“It would have been easier to take whom ever was ill above to my clinic then to cart all this below.”

“You’ll see why soon Peter” Vincent’s voiced answered.

Catherine stood as they neared the chamber. Vincent and Cullen entered the room first, carting the equipment inside followed by Peter. Peter was staring down at the file he held in his hand when he entered the chamber “I swear Jacob, you better have a damn good reason for me” he started to say then when he looked up and saw Catherine his next words were lost. His mouth hung open as he stared at her standing there. “Hello Peter” Catherine whispered softly, offering him a shy smile.” “Cath...Cathy” he mumbled and took a hesitant step closer. She closed the distance as fast as she could between them and wrapped her arms around his neck in a hug.

“It’s really me Peter. I’m here”

Tentatively he raised his arms to hug her back. His hesitation was gone in a moment when he pulled her tightly against him and started to cry. “Cathy? How is possible?” he asked looking up at the other men in the room. Cullen quickly bowed out and left. A serious of emotions crossed Peter face a series of seconds ending in anger. “How long has she been here? Why wasn’t I notified sooner? How is she standing here now?” Peter demanded.

Vincent and Father both tried to explain to him what occurred in the last two weeks. Starting with Jacob making contact with Catherine when she awoke from her four-year coma to Vincent traveling across the state to rescue her from the hospital.

“No one must know that she is alive, Peter. There are people looking for her Above. It’s not safe,” Vincent told him. Peter held Catherine close, refusing to let her go yet. “I understand that, Vincent, but if what you say is true, I need to know the extent of the illness that kept her in a coma for four years.” He pulled Catherine away slightly so he could look at her face. “Cathy, I need to take you above to run some tests. A CT scan, an MRI.”

Before Catherine could respond, Peter looked back up at Vincent and Father his full of concern.

“Is Cathy the reason you wanted me to bring the EKG machine and holter monitor? Is it her bloodwork you had me pick up from the lab? If it is, I must say, I am very much concerned. I’ve read over the results of the blood work, Jacob. You and I need to have a consult immediately about her health.”

Catherine tugged on Peter sleeve getting him to look at her again. “Peter, I’m not leaving the tunnels,” she said, pulling away from him. “Whatever care I need, I will receive down here. I’m not leaving Vincent. I’m not leaving my son.”

“Cathy, be reasonable. You need specialized care that you can’t receive down here.”

Catherine felt the panic rising up again. She couldn’t leave when she just got back. She couldn’t leave Vincent. She couldn’t leave Jacob when she just got him back.

“I’m not leaving!” she cried out distraught. “Do you know what they did to me last time I was in a hospital, Peter?! I’m not going back Above ever!”

The air was leaving her lungs and room started to spin. If Vincent hadn’t come to her and brought her over to the gurney to sit she knew she would have fell to the floor. He wrapped an arm around her shoulders and whispered in her ear.

“No one is going to force you to do anything you don’t want to do,”

He encouraged her to take deep breaths and rubbed her back but all Catherine could think of was being taken away again. Being torn away from her family. “They’ll find me if I leave here, Vincent,” she cried, hugging her legs against her chest, and started to rock back and forth. “Elliot will have someone on every corner of the city looking for me, let alone the hospitals. He’ll have them take me again. They’ll take me away from you and Jacob.”

Father sat down on the other side of the gurney next to her. “My dear, neither Peter nor I will make you leave. Will we, Peter?”

Peter walked up to Catherine and placed his hands on her shoulders. “Cathy, sweetheart, I won’t make you leave, but I’m going to need you to follow Father’s and my instructions without any argument. Whatever it is that happened to you while you were missing has had some lasting effects. With Father’s observations and the results of your blood work, I’m concerned you may have a type of arrhythmia. That is why I brought down the EKG and heart monitor.”

Catherine stopped rocking and looked at Peter, a panicked look in her eyes. Why was she just hearing about this now. “Is there something wrong with my heart?”

“We don’t know anything for sure until we run a few tests. If it is arrhythmia, it is a very treatable disorder. The most important thing is for you to keep yourself calm. Keep your stress level low. Light physical activity. Take Jacob for a walk after dinner each night. We’ll run the EKG today and have you wear the monitor for a week. Then we’ll go from there.”

Catherine buried her face between her knees, hugging her legs tighter. No. This could not be happening she thought. She just found her way back to Vincent and Jacob and now this. The thought of leaving was too much to bare. Vincent, God bless him, continued to whisper words of reassurance in her ear.

“Let them run their tests. There’s a concert in the park tonight. It’s not exactly classical. Highlights from the composer John Williams. I hear he is a talented movie score composer. I’m sure Father and Peter will not object if you and I go to our special place and listen. Some of the adults are taking the children above, including Jacob, to listen.”

“That sounds like a lovely idea, Vincent,” Father said, trying to sound cheerful. “Mary has this beautiful gown that she just finished sewing. I’m sure you’d look splendid in it.”

Catherine remained silent to a minute, trying to get her emotions intact. She tried to focus on Vincent’s words. A concert in the park. Their special place underneath the bandstand. She concentrated on the composer, remembering some of the movies he wrote the scores for. Then she remembered one from her teen years. “*Jaws*,” Catherine whispered softly. Her words were muffled and Vincent asked her to repeat herself. “*Jaws*,” she said again, looking up at Vincent. “He composed the music for *Jaws*. I saw the movie back in the ‘70’s. I refused to go in the ocean for the entire summer after seeing it.”

She felt herself begin to relax again and gave Vincent a small smile. She rested her cheek on her knees, facing him. “Well, it’s settled then,” Peter said, walking over to the EKG machine and wheeling it back to the gurney. “Let’s get this out of the way so Catherine can get some rest before her and Vincent’s concert date.”

Both men stood up from the gurney and Vincent helped Catherine to lay down. She involuntarily flinched when Peter started to attach the electrodes to her. She hated this. This chamber. It reminded her too much of back at the facility. Vincent must have sensed her discomfort. He leaned down on the gurney and held one of her hands and stroked her face throughout the test. Catherine kept her eyes closed. She didn’t want to see Peter or Father’s face as the preliminary results came through.

The test was over quickly and she was allowed to sit up. Peter then hooked up the small monitor to her. “Press this button when over you feel any chest pain or shortness of breath” he said pointing to a blue button on the monitor. “It will record your heartbeat. It doesn’t matter how many times you push it. Father has the equipment to download and reset the monitor each day. I want you to wear this for a week and then I’ll bring the results above to have a cartologist look at.” He then took her face between his hands and drew her close so he could kiss her forehead. “Try no to worry yourself Cathy. You’re in good hands. Now go rest for a while and give that son of yours a hug for me.”

Catherine nodded and stood from the gurney, tucking the monitor in her pocket. Vincent was quickly at her side taking her arm. She sighed at his attentiveness. She appreciated his concern but wish he wouldn’t worry so much. She needed to start doing things on her own if she wanted to regain her strength but she knew Vincent wouldn’t hear of it. He’s need to protect her wouldn’t allow him. Slowly she allowed him to guide her out of the hospital chamber and towards their own. When she stumbled over her own feet halfway there Vincent automatically went to lift her in his arms but she sidestep away from him.

“Vincent no. I need to walk. How am I to regain any strength if you carry me everywhere?”

From the look on his face, Vincent was about to protest when she continued.

“They did give me some physical therapy while I was at that hospital. Cooper, the therapist, was good about that. I walked a track once a day. The problems with my breathing and tiredness started after I awoke and the journey through the tunnels home did not help either of us, however necessary it was.”

He looked away from her to spot in the distance, guilt filled his eyes.

“I shouldn’t have pushed you so hard. I could very well have worsen your condition.”

“Vincent no. Don’t think that way.”

She took his face between her hands, forcing him to look down at her. She gently stroked his checks with her thumbs and smiled.

“You saved me Vincent. Who knows where I would be now if you hadn’t come for me when you did. I love you. Please believe me when I say that you in no way brought harm to me. My God Vincent, you carried me for a great deal of the journey. If anything, it was I that brought harm to you. That was not easy for you and I am so grateful that you did that.”

She held his face until she saw a flicker of believe in his eyes. Vincent looked down at her then pulled her close and buried his face in her hair.

“I love you to Catherine. If I’m to believe you then I ask you to believe me that I will always come for you. Wherever you may be, I would make that journey a thousand times over if it meant you would be safe in my arms at the end.”

“Then we are in agreement that we will believe in each other, always.”

Vincent nodded then pulled away slightly so he could look in her eyes. He then very slowly placed a soft, gentle, lingering kiss on her lips. Catherine closed her eyes and sighed in content at the warmth that filled her. When they parted, Vincent held one of her hands in his own and pulled it up so it rested between them then leaned his forehead against her own. She could feel the love radiating from him through the bond.

They stood like that for a few minutes before Vincent whispered. “We should head back to our chamber so you can rest before the concert.” Catherine nodded and linked her arm through his and let him guide her through the tunnels.

Catherine found the concert amazing. The music was fantastic but the company made the night extortionary. She still remembered Vincent’s face when she walked out in the dress Mary had made her. It was an empire waist, floor length gown with short sleeves and a matching shall. The dress in earth tone green and brown tunnel colours. She left her hair down but had it pulled it away from her face with a simple hairband. Vincent’s mouth hung open slightly when she approached him twirled around once. “How do I look?” she asked him, though she was pretty sure she already new the answer.

“You’re a vision of beauty” he answered, gently brushing finger down her bare arm. “You would have put Helen of Troy to shame.”

“Hardly I think but thank you for the compliment all the same.”

They made there way to their special spot for the concert where Vincent had set up the pillows and blankets for them to sit on. There was even a small spread of refreshments for them to enjoy. As the concert started they sat as they usually did. Curled up next to each other but then shortly after Vincent lend down and kissed her. Not once. Not twice but many times. She soon found herself laying down. Vincent’s hand in her hair as he kissed her lips, her face, even her neck. Her small moans of pleasure must have given him courage because soon his hand was skimming up and down her sides before it landing on bare skin of her chest that the dress didn’t cover.

Catherine returned his kisses with the same enthusiasm, sneaking her hands in between the folds of his shirt so she could feel his skin. “Catherine” Vincent whispered as he kissed his way from her lips down her neck and throat. She arch her head back as his mouth traveled further down and placed kisses along her chest and then finally between the valley of her breasts. His hands traveled up again, intent on moving the fabric away that stop his mouth from further exploration when a voice called out to them from the grate above.

“Mother? Father? Are you still there?”

They both jumped, startled at the sound of their son’s voice calling down to them. Vincent sigh in frustration before rising and walking over to the grate so he could see his son and Luke smiling down at him. “Jacob” he hissed, shaking his head at his son. “You know you shouldn’t be talking through the grate. Someone will see you.” “No one is looking Vincent” Luke said. Catherine rose and walked over to stand next to Vincent. “Sweetheart, listening to your father. Go and join the others. You’re suppose to have ice cream after the performance.” Jacob and Luke looked at each other and smiled. “Love you Mother” Jacob yelled down then both boys jumped up and ran off.

Vincent wrapped his arm around her and led her back towards the blankets. “I think it’s time we head back” he told her sadly. Catherine nodded and moved to start clean up but Vincent pulled her back.

“No Catherine, I’ll come back later. Let’s enjoy our walk back.”

Vincent took her hand and kissed her knuckles, then still holding her hand started to led her away.

“You know Vincent” she began, leaning into him as they walked. “Perhaps you should leave the blankets and pillows for awhile. I’d like to come back here soon so we continue are endeavours that are son and Luke interrupted.” Vincent chuckled and leaned over and kissed her temple.

“That, my Catherine, is the best idea I have heard in a long time.”

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Time passed quickly for Catherine since her return. Peter came Below with her test results and diagnosed her with tachycardia arrhythmia. A heart condition brought on by what he and Father could only assume from the extreme stress she was under from time she awoke and perhaps whatever she went though before Jacob’s birth.

Catherine spent a good deal of time in the library when she found out her diagnosis combing through Father's medical textbooks, trying to find out whatever she could about her condition and what she could do prevent it from worsening. The treatment plan she was prescribed was working but she still worried.

The more time she spent with Father in his library the more she come to realize how disorganized it was. "Father" she said one day as she sat at his reading table with him. "You really should let me help you organize this place. I could create a card catalogue that could cross reference subject, genre and author. As part of my law degree, I did have courses in Taxonomy and Ontology. With a little hard work, I could have this place running like the Stephen A. Schwarzman Building."

Father lowered his book and looked at her over his glasses with a frown.

"Are you trying to tell me Catherine that you take issue with my style of organization?"

"Not at all Father. All I'm saying is that perhaps with my help we can make it a little more user friendly."

She stared at him with these and such seriousness that his frown broke into a smile.

"Of course, Cathy. It would be an honor work with a woman of your education to get this place up to shape and running more smoothly. I direst say that even I at times can't find the book that need."

"It's settle then. Tomorrow I can start and going through the books. Maybe we can recruit one of the older children to help with the lifting at times."

She sat aside the medical text she was reading and pulled her writing pad forward and started to write down the things she would need to start her new project.

Later that night, after she tucked Jacob into bed she returned to her and Vincent's chamber to find it sparsely lite with the soft glow of the candlelight. Vincent stood near the bed dressed in only his sleeping bottoms and no top holding a rose in his hand. A flutter went through her heart at sight of his naked chest. This was the last thing she expected to see when she entered their chamber. I was so out of character of him to be standing there so exposed that she hesitated at the entrance. She stood statue still has he, if she dare say, sauntered towards her and stopped in front of her, handing her the rose. "Good evening Catherine" he whispered in her ear then brushed pass her to place a lantern in the doorway and lower the tapestry to close off the entrance. He returned to stand in front of her and took her hand.

"Would you care to join me by the bed my Catherine?"

Catherine simply nodded and let him pull her across the room. They stopped just short of the bed. "Vincent, what is all this?" she asked him. He cupped her face between his hands and smiled nervously.

"Catherine, I've been doing a lot of thinking as of late. We've been given a second chance and I don't want to waste it any longer."

She felt his hands shaking as he held her face. Fear along with love filled his eyes. She lifted her hands and gently gripped his wrists in encouragement. "Catherine" he began again. "I want to be with you. I want to love you the way a man loves a woman. I'm scared though Catherine. I don't want to disappoint you and most of all I don't want to hurt you."

"You could never hurt me Vincent. We promised each other that we would always believe one another. I'm asking you to believe me now. There is nothing you could do that would hurt me. This I'm certain of."

She let go of his wrists then each behind and unclasped her dress, letting it fall to her feet. She stood in front of him clad in only underwear and bra. "Don't be afraid Vincent" she whispered then unclasp her bra and let that to fall to the floor.

"Don't be afraid to love me and don't be afraid to let me love you back."

With those words she removed that last remainder of her clothing and stood before him. Vincent stared at her, the expression on his face unreadable. Catherine slowly walked to the bed and turned down the covers. She hopped into the bed and pushed back until she leaned against the pillows and held her hand out to him, beckoning him to join her. When he took her hand and pulled him to her and onto the bed.

"I love you Vincent."

With those words she pulled lips down to hers and kissed him. Her kiss seemed to release him from whatever was holding him back soon they were joined in a lover's embrace. The bond they shared exploded in passion and love, rippling throughout both their bodies leaving them both breathless and satiate.

Afterwards, as they laid in bed together, fingers entwined. Catherine rested her head on his chest so she could listen to his heartbeat. She felt his fingers making small circles on her bare shoulder. "Will you marry me?" he asked and kissed the top of her head.

Catherine raised her head and rested her chin on his shoulder, smiling at him.

"You're asking me this after we made love? Are those endorphins wreaking havoc on your brain?" she teased.

“Perhaps,” he said, a smile crossing his face. “Or perhaps I wanted to find the perfect moment to ask you, and how more perfect can the moment be than after we’ve expressed our love to each other to such a degree that, if the world would end now, I would be content because I have you in my arms for my final journey.”

Catherine smiled. He could be such a romantic. His timing was questionable but her answer would be the same regardless of when he asked her.

“Well, when you put it that way, it would be the greatest honor, consenting to be your wife.”

With a smile that reached his eyes he flipped her to her back, kissed her passionately. “I haven’t a ring to give to you, only my heart,” he whispered, trailing kisses along her face. Her sweet Vincent. Didn’t he know that something as simple as a ring meant nothing. His heart was the only thing she wanted and that he gave her without restrictions. “Your heart is the only thing I desire,” she whispered back, giving him kisses of her own. “Plus, I already consider my crystal my engagement ring. So, all is well.”

Vincent left the crystal that hung around her neck so it dangled between them. It was the first symbol of their love that he had given her and in her mind binding them together the moment he hung it around her neck. “I think I like the thought of that” he said and kissed her.

“Then it’s settled. Come. It’s time to sleep. You have a busy day in the lower tunnels, and I promised Father I’d help him start to categorize the library. You’ve seen the library, Vincent, there is absolutely no system in there. I have my work cut out for me.” She pushed him onto his back and rested her head against his shoulder once more, closing her eyes. Her sleep was peaceful. Nightmares didn’t fill her dreams. Her dreams were filled of Vincent, their love for each other.

Like Vincent though, she had no idea that while she slept in the arms of the man she loved with every ounce of her heart. Another man from her past was lurking around the Central Park tunnel entrance.

Three men walked around the entrance, one snapping pictures of the iron gate and everything else around. “She let me out through this gate” Elliot said. “There was some kind of lever on the other side she pulled to open the wall. There must be a similar lever on this side.” He circled the room looking for anything out of the ordinary. He and Cleon stopped in front of the smaller gate. Slowly he opened it and

examined what was on the other side. It look similar to a fuse box. Many switches and levers were enclosed. "It must be one of these" Cleon said looking at it. He lifted his hand to pull one when Elliot grabbed his wrist to stop him. "No" Elliot said. "Reconnaissance only. We can't alert anyone that were here." He looked at the man with the camera. "Take pictures of this Brad" he said then went to stood in front of the gate once again. He reached through the bars and pressed his hand against the stone on the other side. Cathy was somewhere on the other side of this wall.

He worked so hard to try and protect her. To hide her away so Gabriel wouldn't find her. He sold his soul to the bastard in effort to keep her safe and for what? So that beast could spirit her away from him. No. That was unexpected. Her place was at his side. Only he could protect her and keep her safe. "I'm coming for you Cathy" he whispered. "Stay strong. Soon you'll be safe and in my arms and I'll never let anyone harm you again." With a finally look at the barrier that separated him from the woman he loved and turned away and made his way out the tunnel entrance flank by his two accomplices.

COMING SOON

PART THREE: ELLIOT