

NEW YORK MINI CON SURPRISE

by Allison

Becca had called Allison and told her that she and Roger were going to be in New York City on July 21st, and wanted to know if Allison would like to meet her for lunch while Roger was at a business meeting.

Allison told Becca "HELL YEAH", and also mentioned that as luck would have it, she was going to be meeting Abby, Enchanted and Nef, for the first time that same day. They were also going to meet up with Sonia and Jodie as well, since Jodie wanted to spend another day in the city before she went home to Australia.

Jodie had flown to New York to stay with her cousins after the 2010 San Diego con and had made arrangements to meet everyone July 21st for lunch. Allison had contacted Abby, Enchanted and Nef, who she had been corresponding with online, and invited them to join her. Sonia contacted Moira and got her to come too. Everyone was going to meet up at Grand Central Station, so Allison told Becca to meet them there at 11:00 that day and they would take things from there.

Allison, Sonia and Jodie had met the previous week for lunch for the first time and had a marvelous time. Allison arrived first, then spotted Becca and Roger near the information booth. Becca spotted Allison's black cowboy hat and waved. Roger wanted to make sure Becca met with her friends before his meeting (*what a thoughtful man*). The two gals hugged and waved Roger off. Moments later, Sonia and Jodie showed up and there were hugs all around.

Abby arrived a few minutes later after spotting the black hat as well. Abby was very surprised when she met Allison, realizing that she was one of the authors she enjoyed reading on the Tunnel Tales internet site. Enchanted and Nef arrived a few minutes later and introduced themselves as Kim and Kay. Moira called and said she was running late and that she would be there in half an hour, so everyone decided to go to TGI Fridays for a drink while they waited. The girls commented about the stained glass window the restaurant had and were enjoying themselves as Kay and Kim explained where their screen names Enchanted and Nefereu came from, when Moira arrived sooner than she thought.

Moira had offered to show them where the buildings were that were used on the show. She showed them Catherine's apartment building, Central Park, the crosswalk Catherine used in the opening credits and then proceeded downtown to show them where the D.A.'s building was.

Allison recalls what happened next:

Jodie and I bumped into two men as they rounded the corner near where the building used for

Elliot's office was. One man reached out to steady the other, "Are you all right, Mr. Burch?"

"Burch?" we all said at once, instantly recognizing the man but not believing what we heard.

"Yes, Elliot Burch," the bodyguard answered.

"Oh my God, you're real! You're really him, Elliot Burch?" Nef asked.

"Yes, why?" he inquired.

"Because the actor who portrayed you in a TV series we are huge fans of, died not too long ago and you look exactly like him. We thought Elliot Burch was just a character in the show," Becca explained.

"Ahh, Edward Albert Jr. Yes, I've often been mistaken for him over the years. I've met him and we can't believe the resemblance."

"Well, if you're real, then..." Abby stuttered and looked at the rest of us "Do you by any chance know someone named Catherine Chandler?"

"Yes, I know her. Do you?" he asked, surprised at the look on our faces.

"Nah, can't be," Jodie and Sonia said together, as the rest of us wondered. *If Elliot was real and Catherine was real, maybe...*

"Listen, why don't you ladies have lunch with me. I'll give Catherine a call and see if she can join us as well," Elliot offered. "Saunders, cancel my appointment with Donald Trump, tell him something came up and that my secretary will reschedule our meeting later this week.

Ladies..." Elliot raised his arm toward a black limo parked down the street.

We all looked at each other, unsure of what to do. Becca and I said, "What the hell..." The others grinned and followed Elliot to his car. When everyone was settled, the chauffer closed the door and climbed into the drivers' seat.

"Where to, Mr. Burch? Saunders said your meeting was cancelled with Mr. Trump. Do I need to cancel your luncheon reservation as well?" The chauffer asked as he started the car.

"No, James, just call them and tell them there will be 10:00 for lunch instead. It's not every day that I get the chance to have lunch with nine lovely ladies."

"Very good, sir." The chauffer quickly made the phone call as requested.

Elliot picked up the limo phone a few minutes later and dialed Catherine's number at the D.A.'s office.

"Cathy? Hi...It's Elliot. Look, I know it's short notice but would you be willing to have lunch with me? No, no, it's not like that. I ran into some people that I think you should meet. Thanks, Cathy. Meet us at *Tavern on the Green* in half an hour. Okay, bye." He turned to look at us. "She said she'd come."

During the limo ride, we speculated on the impossibility of running into Elliot Burch and then getting to meet Catherine Chandler. "Are we dreaming?" Becca asked, seated next to Elliot and staring at him.

"If we are dreaming, then to have lunch with you eight lovely ladies and Catherine is one dream I don't want to wake up from at the moment," Elliot commented with that killer smile of his.

Elliot slipped his arm over Becca's shoulder, leaned down and whispered something into her ear. Abby and I noticed Becca suddenly blush furiously and she ducked her head, trying to hide the blush. Elliot laughed, removed his arm and tried to hide the smile on his face.

Jodie leaned over and whispered, "What did he say?"

"I'll tell you later," Becca whispered, still trying to compose herself.

Elliot's limo pulled up outside *Tavern on the Green* and the valets helped everyone out of the limo while the driver opened the door for Elliot. Catherine arrived 20 minutes later. When we were all settled into the private room they gave us, Elliot made introductions for us to Catherine.

"Can someone tell me why you ladies wanted to meet me? Is there something I or the D.A.'s office can help you with?" Catherine inquired.

We all started to chuckle with laughter and sneak peeks at each other, trying to compose ourselves with little success. Catherine glanced at each of us with a curious look on her face. One of the waiters came up to take our order.

"Hello everyone, my name is John Pater and I will be your server this afternoon. Can I start you off with a cocktail or would you like to see our wine list?"

We stared at the waiter, startled to see someone who looked exactly like Tony Jay, who played Paracelsus on the show. He even had the same name as the character's original name. As we looked away and looked at each other, another waiter hovered by Elliot's elbow.

"Excuse me, sir, you have a phone call," he whispered into Elliot's ear.

"Sorry, ladies, will you excuse me?" Elliot nodded to the waiter and rose to his feet. "I will return shortly, enjoy yourselves," and slowly made his way to the front entrance.

"I'll come back when Mr. Burch returns," the waiter commented then moved off.

"How are we going to convince her we know what we know?" Becca whispered to me.

"Between all of us, we'll come up with something."

"Catherine, we need to show you some things and ask you something very... personal," Moira started.

"Okay..." Catherine said hesitantly.

I opened the brown suede pouch I was wearing and pulled out a white porcelain rose. Catherine's eyes widened at that and stared as Abby, Jodie, Sonia, Kim and Nef pulled exact copies of her pendant from under their shirts.

"Where did you get those? How...?" Catherine was shocked at seeing the precious items she and Vincent exchanged at their first anniversary, pulling her own crystal from beneath her blouse.

"Some of us got them at a Beauty and the Beast Convention, and others got them online," Kim started.

"Or from a friend." I glanced at Becca.

"These are copies of things you and a very '*special*' someone exchanged on the anniversary of how you met," Jodie explained.

"How do you know about that and him?" Catherine asked, a little frightened that someone found out her secret.

"We are huge fans of the TV show "*Beauty and the Beast*," I noted. "You and your '*special*' friend are characters on that show."

"I've never heard of that show." Catherine mentioned.

"Moira and I came here to meet up with our friends here," Sonia pointed to Allison, Abby, and the others, "and we literally bumped into Elliot – not thinking he was a real person, since he was a character on the show."

"Elliot's a character on that show too?" Catherine asked.

"Yes, he is," Moira tried to explain. "We started talking and we asked, thinking since he was real, if he knew you too. When Elliot stated he did know you -- we thought at first we were dreaming, then he invited us to lunch and said he would call you to join us."

"I don't know what to believe," Catherine said, trying to compose herself. Sonia and Moira pulled out pictures of Vincent and Catherine and handed them to her to look at.

Abby delicately inquired, "Since you and Elliot are real, are Vincent...Father...and the tunnels...are they real too?"

"You know about them?" Catherine looked at us in shock, glancing from one picture to another.

"As characters in a TV show, yes. We all dreamed about meeting Vincent one day and visiting the tunnels. Even after 20+ years the show still have mass appeal to a lot of its fans," Moira told her.

"Could we... possibly meet...maybe just him...if he would allow it? That would make the dream complete," Nef stated quietly.

Catherine nodded, finally convinced and offered to take us to her brownstone to meet Vincent. Elliot returned and with delightful conversation, we finished our lunch. Elliot offered the use of his limo to take us to our next destination. Catherine requested the limo take us to her brownstone so that she could show us something, and Elliot readily agreed but regretted he could not join us due to a client meeting he must attend. Catherine went to call Joe.

Vincent sensed her distress and quickly left the work site and headed for the surface. He couldn't sense any danger or fear from her, but something had upset Catherine greatly and he hoped she would come home so he could find out what disturbed her so. He entered their brownstone through the basement entrance and made his way to the kitchen. He felt Catherine calming and knew that she would return home to calm and reassure him that she was all right. He then started brewing tea for her arrival.

Catherine called Joe and said she needed to take the rest of the day off and that the two depositions she was scheduled to do were done and that she would have the breakdown on both of them for him by late tomorrow.

"Is everything all right, Cathy?" Joe inquired.

"Yes, Joe, I suddenly developed a massive headache and thought I would go home and lay down for awhile." Catherine explained.

"Okay, kiddo, just take care of yourself and get those depositions to me when you can. You don't need any more time, do you?" Joe asked, hoping she would say no.

"No, Joe, today should do the trick. I'll see you tomorrow."

"See you tomorrow, then." Joe said and quietly hung up.

Catherine returned a few minutes later and Elliot escorted everyone out the door to his waiting limo. "James, please take Miss Chandler and her friends to her brownstone and then come back for me."

"Very good, sir," James said as he opened the door for the group to enter the limo.

As the limo started for the brownstone, Catherine reached for the phone next to her and quickly dialed her home number. She could hear the phone ringing and then the answering machine picked up.

"Vincent...it's Catherine..." He looked at the machine and started to reach for the phone when she continued. "I'm on my way home and I'm bringing some people with me. I'm fine, don't worry. The people I'm with...they...they know about you...about me...and the tunnels."

Vincent stared in shock at the machine, listening to Catherine's voice and her feelings through the bond they shared.

"Elliot's limo will be arriving shortly and they can explain everything. I love you," she finished and disconnected the call.

Vincent's thoughts were in a whirlwind, *How could complete strangers know about me and the tunnels? How did they find out?* Vincent continued to wonder, as he waited for Catherine to arrive home with their unexpected guests. Fifteen minutes later, he heard a car pull up out front and he glanced out the upstairs window and saw Catherine exit the black car with eight other women, thanked the driver and headed for the front door.

He moved to the top of the stairs, still uncertain as to the intentions of the women and he was prepared to frighten them if they proved a threat to Catherine. He noticed no threatening movements from any of them and no one was holding a weapon or anything on Catherine. Aside from a little fear for what these women knew, Catherine was calm and poised as she led them into the brownstone.

Before she opened the door, Catherine turned towards the women following her. "As you heard, I warned Vincent about you coming home with me. I don't know if he will meet with you or not, I don't know what he will think of this situation. But I do believe you." She turned back to the door and unlocked it and escorted the women to the front living room area. "Wait here, I must find Vincent."

"I'm here," a voice came from above them. A large shadow appeared at the top of the stairs."

"Oh my God, that voice, they sound exactly alike!" Jodie exclaimed.

Catherine rushed toward the cloaked figure as he slowly made his way down the stairs. He pulled her into his protective embrace, growing calmer now that she was by his side. She whispered to him in soft urgent tones and then they made their way to the living room where the rest of us were waiting.

His massive frame filled the doorway and we stepped back in awe of him. I slowly approached him and removed the pouch from around my neck.

"Vincent, we are fans of a TV show called '*Beauty and the Beast*'. You and Catherine were characters on that show. We had no idea that either of you were real. Your characters were played by two actors, Ron Perlman and Linda Hamilton." She opened the pouch and pulled out the porcelain rose. Vincent stared at it in shock as he clutched his own pouch in response.

Becca added, " Here is a picture of Ron Perlman in his costume of you." Vincent and Catherine both stared at the picture of what they thought was Vincent in the library with Father. "That's the actor Roy Dotrice who played the character of Father."

"This is a television show?" Vincent asked.

They brought out other pictures of Ron Perlman and of Linda Hamilton. Catherine and Vincent quickly noticed the resemblance between Catherine and the actress who played her in the TV show.

"Can I borrow your CD player?" I asked. When they nodded, I quickly went there and put on a CD I was carrying. After listening to the theme music, Vincent's voice came out of the speakers reciting "Acquainted With The Night" by Robert Frost.

"Oh my God, that could be you reading that poem to me," Catherine commented after listening to the CD.

"Yes, he certainly does sound like me," Vincent agreed.

"I know you are certainly overwhelmed by all this," Kim began.

"And we certainly don't mean to expose the tunnels or you," Nef added. "We just wanted to see if the '*dream*' really was a reality. Meeting the two of you has confirmed that."

Jodie asked what everyone else was thinking, "Do you think maybe one day next year, we could come back and see you again? Maybe meet Father and the others?"

"Anything is possible," Vincent smiled at each of us in turn.

"Well, we better be going. Some of us have trains to catch to get home ourselves." Moira said as she grabbed at our stuff lying on the couch. Suddenly they heard a horn blowing outside the brownstone.

"What in the world...." Catherine exclaimed as she went toward the window. "Ohhh, look who decided to breeze into town without warning as usual?"

"I know I don't need any guesses on this one, it's Devin, isn't it?"

"Your brother certainly knows how to make an entrance," she laughed as she went to the front door. Opening the door as Devin approached, Catherine smiled and waved him inside.

Nef and Kim look at each other. "D...De...Devin's real too?" they both asked at the same time. As they stared in shocked silence with the others looking on, Devin strolled into the living room. Just like his counterpart on the show, Devin could be the twin of Bruce Abbott.

"And who could these lovely ladies be?" Devin asked with his devil-may-care attitude, smiling at each one in turn.

"We...ummm...we're..." Nef started to say.

"They're special friends of ours that we've met in the last few weeks. You've been traveling and changing addresses so much, it's hard to get a message to you sometimes. I would have told you eventually when one of my letters finally caught up with you."

Vincent put his arm around his brother. The little white lie wouldn't hurt anyone and it would keep his brother from worrying for the time being till he could tell him privately about their new friends and what they told him and Catherine.

"Hey, I remember that show," Devin exclaimed, pointing to the t-shirts Jodie and Kim were wearing. "I was in LA during that time. I was working as an actor on a TV movie called "Out of Time". One day I wandered over to the set where the first season of the show was being filmed and couldn't help but notice how accurate the show was. After the shoot ended for the day, I talked to the producer and he told me he was intrigued by the scars on my cheek. Said I would be perfect for a character he had in mind for the show. So I did the "Promises of Someday" episode and I kept wondering where he got the idea for the show. When he asked me back for the "Brothers" episode, I asked him and he told me he made the whole story and characters up. After that, the jobs started coming in faster and I decided to stay with the character name and acting."

"You knew about this show?" Catherine asked. "And that Vincent and I were mentioned?"

"Yeah, but I knew they weren't talking about you two. Everyone thought it was a fantasy, not a real life situation. Boy, if they had only known..." Devin quipped.

"Fans on the internet are still talking about it, writing stories about it, meeting other people in celebration of it. It still has a very strong following. Devin's right, if they had only known," Becca commented.

"You have our word, we will not say anything about meeting you. Your secret is safe with us, we would never betray your trust," I swore, as the others nodded their heads in agreement.

"We can at least tell our friends we met Bruce Abbott, can't we?" Sonia asked

"Certainly, it would be my honor," Devin nodded in agreement. "Say, can I give you ladies a lift somewhere?"

"If you could give us a lift to Penn Station and Port Authority, we can find our way home from

there." Moira said.

We all said our goodbyes to Vincent and Catherine and piled into Devin's van. After we got settled, Jodie turned to Becca.

"Okay, Becca, out with it, exactly what did Elliot whisper in your ear in the limo?"

"Well, Elliot said that he wished he had met me a long time ago, that he wasted all his time pining over Catherine Chandler when he knew she didn't love him, and that he wanted to skip lunch and go straight to dessert with me alone," she said blushing a deep red again as we all grinned at her comment.

Well, that's Elliot Burch for you, playboy to the last," Devin laughed as he wove his way through traffic.

Devin dropped us all off at Penn Station and we hugged each other as we sadly parted for our various ways home and said we would see each other again soon and told Devin to thank Vincent and Catherine for the wonderful afternoon we spent with them

END