

PRAYING FOR A MIRACLE

by Allison

Stabbing pain hit Catherine from out of the blue. If she wasn't sitting at her desk, she surely would have crumpled to the ground. She reached down to rub at her legs to try and relieve the ache. Pain shot from her calves to her thighs. She knew if she tried to stand she would fall. Another pain hit her mid-chest, this time it felt like the wind was knocked out of her and she couldn't breathe.

"Hey Cathy, are you okay?" Edie asked when she noticed Catherine's pale face.

"I don't know. It feels like..." Her voice faltered as another wave of pain assailed her.

"Radcliffe, what's wrong?" Joe's voice was filled with concern as he came near her desk after hearing Edie's question.

"She's been doubled over and grabbing at her legs for the past few minutes," Edie stated.

"We better call her an ambulance," Joe ordered.

"I'm fine, Joe. No need to bother with an ambulance. It's just leg cramps."

"Oh, really? Can you stand?" Joe asked, even though he knew the answer.

"I..." Catherine again doubled over as a wave of pain hit her.

"I thought so. Make the call, Edie."

While waiting for the ambulance to arrive, Joe called Dr. Alcott who informed Joe he would meet them at the hospital. As Peter hung up the phone, there was a knock at his office door.

"Dr. Alcott, there's a young man here who insists on seeing you immediately."

"See what he wants, Claire. I have an emergency." Peter finished the note he was making in a chart.

"Hey! Wait! You can't go in there," Peter heard Claire exclaim.

As the young man pushed his way past the secretary, Peter immediately recognized Kipper. "It's okay, Claire. I know this young man." As the secretary turned to leave, Peter asked, "Kipper, What are you doing here? What happened?"

"There's been a cave-in Below. One of the supports gave way and trapped Vincent and a few others."

"How bad? Was anyone hurt?"

Kipper hesitated to answer. "They're still in the process of digging everyone out. Father asked for you to come down in case..."

"Vincent?" Kipper nodded at the man in front of him. "How badly was he hurt?"

"They don't know yet," Kipper stated.

"Tell Father I'll be down as soon as I can. Something happened to Catherine. This may explain what happened to her. I'll know more once I see her. I'm sure she's fine and I'll bring her down as soon as I can."

Kipper hesitated. He didn't want to tell Father Dr. Alcott wasn't coming.

"Kipper, don't worry. I'll explain everything to Father. Hurry back now. He may need me to bring some supplies with me."

"Okay, Doc. If you're sure?"

"I'm sure."

Kipper took off like a shot and went flying out the door. Peter told his secretary to cancel the rest of his appointments for the day and that he would be at the hospital.

Peter walked into the ER and could hear Catherine's raised voice arguing with someone. As he entered the cubicle, he could see Joe and a nurse trying to restrain Catherine.

"Let me go, Joe. I've got to get out of here." She continued to struggle against them.

"No way, Cathy. You could barely stand at the office and I'm not so sure about now."

"I'm fine, Joe. Really."

"Let me be the judge of that." Peter stated as he came closer to where they were.

"Peter!" Catherine cried with relief.

"Now young lady, let me check you out first. Then you can get to where you so desperately seem to want to go."

"Peter...I'm all right. I have to get out of here."

"You'll be no good to anyone if you keep on like this." Catherine stopped short, thinking of Vincent as she realized what Peter was saying.

"You'll let us know, Doc?" Joe asked. Peter nodded as Joe and Edie left the room.

Once they were alone, Catherine started questioning Peter. She listened with growing horror of what Kipper had relayed to Peter regarding the cave-in.

"Now you know as much as I do, Catherine. How are you feeling?"

"The pain's manageable now."

"Can you sense anything?"

"My sense of Vincent is constant so I know he's still alive. I have to go to him. He needs me."

"All right. I'll tell your boss you need some time off and that should cover things for now."

"What if I need...?"

"We'll cross that bridge when we come to it. Now play along." Peter spotted Joe and Edie near the door. He gestured for them to come into Catherine's cubicle.

"Do you know what happened to her, Doc?" Joe asked as he came in.

"Not really. I'll run a couple more tests and keep her here overnight for observation. I recommend she take a couple days off to see if it happens again."

"Do as the doctor says, Radcliffe. The office can run without you for a few days."

"But..." Catherine started. She knew she had to put up some type of protest for Joe.

"No buts, Cathy." Joe flatly stated. "You are going home and are forbidden to return to work until Dr. Alcott says so."

"Yes, Joe." Catherine sheepishly hung her head to hide her grin.

"If the tests are normal, I'll send you home in the morning. I want to make sure nothing else happens."

While Peter was finishing up his exam and ordering the tests, the tunnel men were able to free Vincent and the others from the cave-in rubble. They froze in horror at the jagged piece of broken pipe protruding from Vincent's chest. Winslow took a closer look at it. The pipe piece was about 1/4 inch in diameter and about three inches was protruding from his chest. Winslow couldn't tell how deep the piece penetrated. Vincent's left thigh was a mangled mess with pieces of flesh and bone protruding. His right wasn't as bad as far as they could tell. They knew what a compound fracture looked like from Father's warnings about the possibility when there was a cave-in.

"Give me your belts," Winslow commanded as he took his own off. "We need to slow the bleeding with these belts until we can get him to Father. Kanin, grab four of those timbers. We'll use them and the other belts to splint his legs so we can move him."

"What about the broken piece of pipe?" Pascal's voice rose with concern for his friend.

"We have no choice but to move him up to the hospital chamber."

The men jury-rigged a stretcher and gently placed Vincent upon it. They covered him as best they could and hurried him from the site, up the winding passages to the hospital chamber, where Father was waiting. Winslow alerted him that Vincent was free and on his way.

Kipper arrived and gave Father Peter's note, then waited patiently in case he was needed. Father paled at the part where Peter said something happened to Catherine.

"Dear God, no. Not her too."

"Doc Alcott said he didn't think anything was seriously wrong and that he'd bring her down as soon as he can."

"Thank God for that. Vincent will be arriving shortly. Mary, is everything ready to treat everyone?"

"As ready as can be, Father. I've asked Zach to keep the pipes clear in case they are needed."

"Thank you, Mary."

A few minutes later Winslow and the men burst into the hospital chamber and quickly placed the makeshift stretcher on the exam table. Mary gasped in quiet horror as she took in the extent of Vincent's injuries. Father's face cast a grim pallor as he, too, saw how badly Vincent had been injured.

"Mary, get some water and clean towels," Father ordered. "We need to clean this dirt off him before I can even begin to examine him."

"I'll get the water, Father." Winslow offered as the men left the chamber. "When I return, tell me what to do. I want to help."

"Thank you, Winslow. Mary, make sure that chest wound and his legs are thoroughly cleared of dirt and debris."

"Yes, Father."

She moved quickly to start those tasks. First she took a pair of scissors and cut open Vincent's pants up to his thighs so Father had easy access. Winslow returned with the water and Mary asked him to lift Vincent up so she could remove his vest. Mary then had to cut around the broken piece of pipe in order to remove Vincent's shirt. Once completed she instructed Winslow how to carefully clean the wounds on Vincent's legs while she concentrated on his chest. In the meantime, Father donned a surgical gown and washed his hands thoroughly and grabbed a pair of gloves.

"Dear God!" Father muttered as he got his first real look at Vincent's injuries.

"Can you help him, Father?" Winslow's concerned voice questioned.

"I don't know, Winslow."

Father carefully examined Vincent's chest wound. He took a closer look at the piece of shattered pipe protruding from Vincent's chest. "My God! It looks like the piece is lodged near Vincent's heart. I can't be sure without an x-ray but it looks like it's deep. I'm surprised he's still alive."

"What are we going to do?" Pascal and Jamie asked at the same time.

"We've never had anyone with injuries like this," Father stated.

"Can you remove the fragment?" Mary asked.

"I don't have the necessary skills to safely remove it without killing him. If I tried and made the wrong move...?"

"Do you know anyone who can?" Jamie whispered.

"No, but Peter might."

"What about his legs?" Pascal asked as he placed Vincent's hand down.

"His left leg is badly crushed. He would need extensive surgery to repair the injuries. Even then, I... I don't know."

"Can you do that surgery at least?" Jamie asked as she came closer and stood next to Pascal, holding onto his arm.

"Again, he needs more than I am able to accomplish. He may end up losing both legs even with the surgery."

While they were discussing Vincent's condition, Rebecca came into the chamber and told them that except for a broken arm, the other men only had cuts and bruises. They were lucky," she said.

"Thank God for that," Father sighed in relief.

"Mary, give Vincent 500mg chloral hydrate. We must keep him sedated so he doesn't move. He's lucky the trip up here didn't dislodge the fragment. Also give him 10mg morphine sulfate. He must be in considerable pain."

"We were very careful, Father," Winslow explained. "I had a feeling it was dangerous to move him but I knew we couldn't treat him where he was.

"Now all I can do is wait and pray that Vincent's vitals stay stable until we can figure out what to do. But..."

"So without someone's help from Above, Vincent will die?" Pascal whispered.

Jamie and Mary softly cried as Father slowly nodded his head. Winslow straightened to his full height and with a determined look he headed for the hospital chamber entrance.

"Where you go?" Mouse asked as he emerged from the shadows.

"To get Catherine and Peter," Winslow stated.

"But Doc Alcott said..." Kipper started.

"I know what he said. We need Catherine down here. He needs her...now. She's pulled off the impossible before, maybe..."

"You're right, Winslow, he does need Catherine. We don't have time to waste. Go." Father waved his hand in silent salute. "If, for nothing else, she should be here when he..." Father's words trailed off.

"Vincent not die. Catherine save." Mouse stated.

Winslow was waiting outside the room where Catherine and the others were. He waited till Joe and Jenny stepped onto the elevator before entering the room. Quickly and quietly, he explained the situation below.

"I'm not staying, Peter. I'm leaving now. Vincent needs me."

"Yes, Catherine, you should be with Vincent before..." Peter was unable to continue.

"Vincent's not going to die... if I have to use every last penny I own. I'll find someone who can help him."

Winslow and Peter could only nod at her determination to save Vincent at any cost.

With a little bit of determination and luck, the three of them were able to leave the hospital and enter the tunnels shortly afterwards.

"Peter...Catherine...Thank God you're all right," Father exclaimed as they came into the hospital chamber. Catherine almost collapsed when she caught her first glimpse of Vincent. Without Winslow's strong arm, she would have surely fallen to her knees. She gasped softly as she reached for Father's hand.

"Will he live?" she whispered.

"Without some type of surgical intervention, I'm afraid there's nothing more I can do. He needs more than I am able to give," Father choked.

"What about bringing someone down here to treat him?"

"Even if we could bring someone down here, we are not equipped for the type of surgery he would need."

"If these specialists could stabilize him, could he be moved Above? I'm willing to take the risk of exposing Vincent, if it will save his life."

"I'm not sure he would be willing to do that. He would say the safety of this world is more important than his life."

"Peter, do you know someone who can help Vincent?" Catherine turned to her godfather.

"I might, Cathy, I might. I'll need to consult with Father about what Vincent needs."

"Whatever the cost, whatever their fees are, I'll pay them. Offer them anything, offer them everything. Just get them to save Vincent." Catherine's voice broke at that moment and she turned into Mary's waiting arms.

Suddenly they heard a groan from the bed where Vincent was. They all turned and saw Vincent slowly shake his head, trying to wake up. "C...Ca...Catherine...", he finally managed to whisper.

Catherine wiped the tears from her eyes and went to Vincent's side. "I'm here, Vincent, I'm here." She reached down and clasped his hand.

"W...Wh...What happened?"

"You were in a cave-in," Father started to explain.

"The others...?" Vincent tried to rise but felt Winslow's strong hands holding him down.

"The others are fine, Vincent. Don't move. You've been badly hurt." Winslow told his friend.

"How bad?" Vincent whispered. "Tell me, Father. I want to know."

"Your legs were badly crushed and you have a serious chest wound. If we don't get these injuries treated in a timely manner..."

"Then I will die," Vincent determined.

"Vincent, you know we are not equipped for the type of surgery you would need."

"No," Catherine informed him. "I'm not gonna let that happen. There's got to be something... someone who could help you."

"Peter, do you know of anyone who could possibly do the surgery?" Jacob asked.

"No, Father. It's too dangerous to bring someone down here. I won't allow the tunnels to be exposed like that for my sake."

"Then for who, Vincent? Without surgery, you will die and I am not about to let that happen," Father told him.

"Neither am I," Catherine stated.

"But the risks...?"

"Are ours to take," Father told him.

Catherine told Vincent. "I will risk everything, do anything, give everything I have to, if it will save your life."

Vincent took in the determined look on everyone's faces and knew that it was pointless to argue any further.

"I'm going to return Above and get started on finding someone who could do the surgery. I hate to seem indelicate but..." Peter hesitated to ask his question.

"Try to get someone as soon as you can, Peter. He's stable for now but his chest injury worries me. If he catches a secondary infection..."

"I know, Jacob, I know. Cathy..."

"I'll be here when you need me, Peter. I'm not going anywhere."

With that, Peter returned above and began his search.

It had been forty eight hours since Vincent's injury. Peter knew he needed the surgery soonest. Peter asked around discreetly who the best cardiac and orthopedic surgeons were in New York. He had gotten a few recommendations but everyone he asked said to consult Dr. Mark Reed and Mathias Bostman. Both were board certified and considered the best in their field.

Peter decided to bring Cathy with him when he spoke to Drs Reed and Bostman. If anyone could convince them to treat Vincent, it would be Catherine.

Peter managed to get an appointment with both doctors for the following afternoon. He explained to both doctors that he needed to consult with them on a medical emergency, but didn't want to go into detail over the phone. Luckily for Peter, both doctors were able to see him at the same time after consulting with each other. Geoffrey was assigned to watch Peter's threshold at his office, while Kipper was assigned to watch Peter's home threshold. Both boys knew they'd be told when the other was contacted by Peter.

Geoffrey's head shot up as Peter tapped him on the shoulder. "Tell Catherine we have an appointment tomorrow at 4 pm. Have her meet me here and we'll head over there together."

Geoffrey took off running down the tunnel towards the home chambers. He wanted to get the message to Catherine as quickly as possible. Geoffrey arrived at the hospital chamber out of breath but he quickly relayed Peter's message. Catherine told Geoffrey to tell Peter she'd be at his house in plenty of time. She also thanked Geoffrey for relaying the message. Kipper was notified that Geoffrey had received Peter's message and he returned to the home tunnels for any further instructions.

Father sedated Vincent so that he wouldn't move during the night. They'd been lucky so far, in their

move of Vincent after the accident, but his chest injury made anything they attempted a risk.

Catherine refused to leave Vincent's side until the doctors' appointment the following afternoon. Father had Winslow move one of the other cots next to Vincent's so Catherine would have a place to rest. He knew she'd get as little sleep as he would but resting was better than none at all.

The tunnel community set up a silent vigil to watch over Vincent during the night. Catherine was grateful for everyone's concern as was Father. They took turns in small groups throughout the night, everyone praying for Vincent to pull through this crisis.

Morning soon arrived. Father examined Vincent and was thankful the sedative had kept him quiet during the night. So far there was no sign of infection in either his leg wounds or his chest, for which he was extremely grateful.

"How is he, Father?" Catherine whispered as she came into view.

"His vitals are stable, there's no sign of infection. Thanks to the sedative, the night passed peacefully. Now we can only hope the doctors you and Peter are going to see will agree to help."

"They have to, Father. They just have to. I don't think I can survive if Vincent..."

"Don't even think like that, Cathy. Vincent's strong and he has an incredible will to live. As long as you're with him, he can endure anything."

"Catherine..." They heard a whispered voice from behind them.

"I'm here, Vincent, I'm here." She rushed over to his side, overwhelmed with emotion. She couldn't say anything at first. She saw his arm slowly reach for her and she grasped his hand.

"How am I, Father? I can't move my legs and my chest feels like it's been hit with a ton of bricks."

"You're stable for now, Vincent. Peter and Catherine are meeting with the doctors today."

"Father, I still disagree with your decision but I will no longer try to change your mind. Tell Peter I appreciate his efforts on my behalf."

Vincent turned his head to look at Catherine. She tried to smile but tears blurred her vision.

"Catherine, we are something that has never been. I place my life in your hands as well as my heart."

"We will endure and get through this together. I am with you just as you are with me." Catherine placed a gentle kiss on Vincent's lips.

After Catherine left, Vincent laid there contemplating what fate had thrown at him. He knew that he'd lose his legs for sure, if the surgery wasn't performed, and that there was no guarantee that the surgeon could save his legs. Vincent wasn't sure what would happen if his chest wound wasn't repaired. All of these things made Vincent wonder if it was all worth it. Then he recalled the looks on everyone's faces and knew that he would have to attempt it - do anything he could to stay in the same world as Catherine.

Catherine returned in a little while bearing a tray of tea and biscuits from William. Winslow followed her in and gently raised Vincent's head in order to let him sit up higher and consume some of what

she brought. As silently as he entered, Winslow left the same way.

Catherine spent the rest of the morning and early afternoon keeping Vincent company. Reading to him, feeding him some of William's soup at lunch, since Father refused to let him do anything for himself and just being with him.

Peter sent a message down along with a polaroid instant camera. The message said to take picture of Vincent's injuries from every angle they could get. He wanted as much detail as he could get so the two doctors would be well-informed about Vincent's condition. Catherine loaded the camera and with Father's and Winslow's help, took detailed closeups of Vincent's chest and leg wounds. Father was impressed with the picture quality and he dictated a detailed report to Mary for the doctors to read. He knew they would have to see for themselves, but wanted to help in any way he could.

Winslow escorted Catherine to Peter's office and said someone would be waiting at the tunnel entrance to escort her back. Catherine showed Peter the pictures and Father's report. From there, they took a cab to New York Presbyterian Hospital, where their meeting with the two doctors would be.

Both men stood as Catherine and Peter were escorted into Dr. Reed's office. Mark Reed was a distinguished-looking man in his mid 50's with dark hair and a touch of grey at the temples. Mathias Bostman was in his early 60's with a salt and pepper buzz cut and blue eyes.

"I have the *'mother of all doctor/patient confidentiality assignments for you two'* ," Peter began... "It requires the upmost discretion."

"Oh?" Dr. Bostman questioned.

"You intrigued us, Peter," Dr. Reed stated.

"Before we begin, we ask you not to reveal to another soul what we are about to tell you, and where we'd like to bring you if you agree."

"Yes, we both agree," Dr Reed said as Dr. Bostman nodded also. Peter explained how his patient was not able to enter the hospital through normal channels. Peter went on to explain Vincent's appearance. He also explained how the accident had happened and that his doctor was unable to treat him.

"I can understand the need for secrecy," Dr. Bostman stated. "If the authorities found out about him, he's be a lab specimen, or worse, for the rest of his life."

"When can we see him and examine his injuries for ourselves?" Dr. Reed asked.

"Peter suggested we get photos to help you see the extent of his injuries and a detailed report." Catherine handed the chest wound set to Dr. Reed, and Peter handed the leg wound set to Dr. Bostman. Silence reigned throughout the room as both doctors studied the photographs and read Jacob's report.

"It's a miracle he's still alive," both doctors said, within moments of each other.

"Vincent is indeed a miracle. Whatever your fee, I'll pay it. Just save him," Catherine begged.

"Mark, your surgery center on 57th and 8th Avenue has the necessary equipment, doesn't it?" Dr. Bostman noted.

"Yes, it does."

"What about your staff?"

"I'd rather involve as few of the staff if possible," Dr. Reed commented.

"Do you have people who can assist? That way we don't have to involve anyone else." Both doctors turned to Peter.

"Well, Jacob and I can assist with the surgery. Mary and Sarah are excellent nurses. Many of Vincent's friends would be willing to help in any way they can."

"What about anesthesia? Can he tolerate it? What about medications?" Dr. Reed inquired.

"Most medications have an adverse effect on Vincent. As far as anesthesia, we usually used ether with him. We don't know how he'd react to anything else." Peter explained.

"Will ether keep him under long enough to complete both operations?" Dr. Bostman questioned.

"It will have to, if we want to keep him alive," Dr. Reed told his colleague.

"When would you be able to get him there?" Dr. Bostman asked.

"We have Helpers and others standing by, who can be mobilized at a moment's notice," Peter stated.

"I'll have to check the schedule, but I can probably close the center the day after tomorrow." Dr. Reed looked at Dr. Bostman who stated he'd make sure his schedule was free as well.

Dr. Reed made a call to the surgery center and found out nothing was set for Thursday or Friday as of yet. He told his administrator to give the staff the day off with pay. He glanced at Catherine, who nodded agreement, and that he would see everyone bright and early on Monday.

"Okay, we have the center to ourselves Thursday and Friday. We'll do both surgeries at the same time if we can. That way we can minimize the time Vincent has to be under the effects of the ether, and to keep him under observation over the weekend. We can also handle any complications that may pop up."

"Once this is done, I'll sit down with your administrator and work out the details to get your staff paid for doing this," Catherine commented.

"On behalf of my staff, thank you. Knowing they aren't losing two days pay with the center closing, will be a relief to them." Dr. Reed grasped Catherine's hand.

"I'll also sit down with both of you to discuss fees for your services," Catherine offered.

"Mark and I have already discussed this," Dr. Bostman began. "This is a unique emergency and we are privileged you chose us to help you. We are honored to help this individual and do not want any compensation in return."

"You're sure?" Catherine asked.

Dr. Reed nodded as he looked at both Peter and Catherine.

"Then we shall make arrangements to bring Vincent to the center Thursday morning." Peter spoke up.

"Come to the back entrance at 8 am. We'll be waiting." Dr. Reed extended a hand to Peter.

"8 am it is then," Peter acknowledged. "I'll contact Mr. Maxwell and tell him you'll be out of town for awhile. That I want you away from all the office stress for now. He can contact me if he needs you for anything."

Catherine smiled at that comment.

"If anything happens in the meantime, let us know immediately and we'll figure something else," Dr. Bostman said as he shook hands with Peter.

"Thank you for doing this so quickly." Catherine struggled to contain a sob.

"Contact me if you need any further information on Vincent," Peter told them.

"Any possibility of seeing him before Thursday? I'd like to take a closer look at his injuries so I have a better plan for Thursday." Dr. Reed said with Dr. Bostman nodding agreement.

"Do you both have the time now?" Both men nodded. "Come with me." Peter pointed to the door.

The gentlemen and Catherine went to the elevator outside Dr. Reed's office. Instead of hitting the lobby button, Peter pushed the button for the basement. Drs Reed and Bostman glanced at each other but didn't say anything. They quickly exited the elevator when it stopped and followed Peter to a small utility door. Inside Peter tapped on one of the large pipes and moments later a large rusty door creaked open. Peter explained things quickly to Jamie who nodded and stood aside as Peter ushered everyone through the door. Silently, Jamie led them to the hospital chamber then quietly disappeared back to her post after they arrived.

Father turned as he heard movement outside the chamber entrance. Peter ushered the two doctors in and introduced them to Father. Peter explained they wanted to see Vincent before the surgery, to get a better idea of what they're up against. Father waved them to the lone occupied bed in the chamber. Mary looked up as the gentlemen came closer and smiled. Vincent opened his eyes and turned his head towards the voices.

"Vincent, these must be the two doctors who will be helping Father." Mary touched Vincent on his shoulder to calm him when she saw his eyes widen in surprise.

"Doctors, thank you for doing this. I truly appreciate your efforts in attempting to save my life."

"Vincent, we wanted to take a closer look at you before we do the surgery," Dr. Reed told him.

Dr. Bostman pulled the sheet away from Vincent's legs. Peter discussed in earnest with Dr. Bostman about all possible complications while he did a thorough exam. Dr. Reed took the opportunity to examine Vincent's chest wound in great detail and discussed any complications with Father while he did his exam. After the exam, all four doctors retired to Father's chamber and talked long into the night regarding Vincent's medical history.

Catherine stayed the night, sitting by Vincent's side, reading to him and holding his hand.

Wednesday was a busy day both Above and Below as everyone made preparations for the complicated surgeries on Thursday. Drs Reed and Bostman were at the surgery center making sure the operating theatre was set for Thursday. The doctors made sure every piece of equipment they could possibly need was sterilized and ready for use. Catherine and Peter went to a medical supply warehouse with letters from both doctors and bought extra bandages and other supplies the doctors might need. Father made sure all the porters were ready to carry Vincent to the freight elevator in the morning. He had them place Mouse on a stretcher and practice with him till they got the rhythm down to no jostling at all. Father didn't want anything to compromise Vincent in any way.

Thursday morning the tunnels were buzzing with activity as preparations were completed to take Vincent Above. Catherine and Peter said they'd be waiting at the surgery center. Everyone bid Vincent farewell and told him to get well and hurry home. The porters moved Vincent flawlessly to the freight elevator, for which Father was extremely grateful. Peter had an ambulance waiting and a Helper driving it, in the warehouse when the elevator reached the surface.

Luckily, traffic was light and the ambulance made it to the surgery center without any problems. Helpers were standing by and quickly moved Vincent from the ambulance into the surgery center and into the room where the operations would take place.

"Vincent, I'm frightened that I may not see you again, hear your voice, feel you next to me." Catherine exclaimed, as the realization of what was going to happen settled around her.

"Catherine, I feel your fear. Know that whatever happens, whatever comes, know that I love you with everything I am and everything I could ever be."

"Are you ready, Vincent?" Drs. Reed and Bostman asked as they entered in their green surgical scrubs.

"I place my life in your hands, Doctors," Vincent whispered.

"I'll be with you, my son." Father whispered as he stepped into view, wearing the same color scrubs.

"Father..." Vincent was glad to see Father. He trusted the doctors but with Father there, he knew everything possible would be done. He noticed Peter standing behind him in the same scrubs and knew he was in capable hands.

The doctors suggested deep sedation for Vincent. Father was a little hesitant but they convinced him that it would be the best option for him. They could have someone standing by with the ether in case Vincent stirred. They administered the medication and shortly afterwards Vincent was unconscious and ready for the operations, with no apparent ill effects, for which Father was very glad. The operations were long and arduous. Dr. Bostman took his time inserting the various rods and pins, putting Vincent's legs back together. Several times he thought his efforts would be in vain and that it would be easier just to amputate both legs. But he knew he had to make every effort to repair the

injuries. Even though Peter was unfamiliar with most of the orthopedic equipment Dr. Bostman used, he proved to be a more than capable assistant.

Dr. Reed and Father also took their time before attempting to remove the piece of pipe from Vincent's chest. X-rays that Dr. Reed was able to take allowed him to assess the area and figure out the best course to remove it. Father was able to cut around the pipe's edges and make the area larger for Dr. Reed. Mary and Sarah fluttered around all four doctors, grabbing instruments from the various trays. Winslow stood at Vincent's head, a cloth soaked with ether at the ready for the first sign of Vincent regaining consciousness. He noticed Vincent move his head a little so he placed the cloth against Vincent's nose, and waited until he settled down again into sleep.

Dr. Reed was finally able to remove the piece, and Father applied slight pressure to the area to stem the bleeding. Dr. Reed finished repairing the damage caused and closed the wound, which would allow minimum scarring.

Mary checked Vincent's vitals and told Father that Vincent's vitals were strong and stable.

"Thank God he survived," Father said.

"He's not out of the woods yet," Dr. Bostman said.

It was another two hours before both doctors agreed they'd done all they could.

"Now it's up to Vincent," Dr. Reed said.

All four doctors stripped off their surgical garb, as Helpers stepped in to move Vincent to the recovery room, where Mary, Sarah, and Catherine set up a vigil.

"Vincent should sleep through tomorrow and we need to watch for signs of infection. He should be ready to be moved back to where you live Sunday night if, no complications arise," Dr. Reed told Father.

"He'll have a long hard road ahead of him to recover from something like this. But with patience and help, he should make a full recovery." Dr Bostman commented.

"I'll go see Moreno and tender my resignation. I'll tell them the stress is getting to be too much. Since my father died of a stroke, the pains were a warning signal that I can no longer ignore. I want to help in Vincent's recovery and I can't split my time between Above and Below any longer," Catherine told them.

"You would be most welcomed, Catherine," Father said, "and I'm sure by having you with us, Vincent's recovery will be swift."

END