

Author's Note: Anyone who has written a Season Three fiction soon realizes the challenges of reconciling the timeline. For the purposes of this story, episode script, production and airing dates are largely ignored. Instead, the timeline has been somewhat stretched from what the episodes themselves imply. This gives the characters a little more breathing and planning room, which is necessary for this story. Dates referred to in the episodes are retained in their proper place.

The timeline which precedes this story is as follows:

The Rest is Silence: Late December 1988 – early January 1989: Catherine enters Vincent's cave

Though Lovers Be Lost: early January: Catherine saves Vincent in the cave, they make love;

Mid to late January: Vincent recuperating;

Mid-February: Catherine discovers she is pregnant;

Late February: Catherine is abducted, Vincent's begins his search for her;

Saturday, August 12, 1989: Jacob is born.

Too Deep for Tears

by Angie

*Come to me in the silence of the night;
Come in the speaking silence of a dream;
Come with soft rounded cheeks and eyes as bright
As sunlight on a stream;
Come back in tears,
O memory, hope, love of unfinished years.*

- Christina Rossetti (Echo)

~

“In this city of night, in this city of millions, there are countless stories.

This is one, of two lovers who shared a bond that changed their lives. Forever.

It is my story.

Her compassion opened my heart to a world where goodness and truth was stronger than hate or fear.

Then, one day, she was taken from me, by the forces of evil she had battled so bravely.

And now, alone with her memory, yet armed with her courage, I have sworn to fight those who would kill, or harm, or destroy. And hope that one day I will find what all men seek to find - my destiny.”

~

1 – Saturday, August 26, 1989 (Walk Slowly)

Dear Vincent,

Earlier today I attended my own funeral. I was tired and depressed as I sat in the back row and watched as my friends sat oblivious to my presence all around me, displaying their grief. They didn't see me because they weren't looking - and because Gabriel had helped me disguise myself.

Not much disguise was needed, Vincent. I don't look like the socialite of my old life, or even an assistant DA. I willingly threw all those outward appearances off when I visited you in the tunnels, but I knew I would go back to them. They were just a different skin. But my socialite 'above' attitude went deeper than my clothing. I see that now.

That life is behind me and it seems less real, a dream almost. I feel different, adrift. Being apart from you at this time, knowing that you grieve, tears me apart. I know you cannot feel me through the bond, or you would be here now, at whatever cost to yourself.

I was at that graveside farce because Gabriel suggested it. You haven't learned of Gabriel yet, although he says you saw him leave in the helicopter. But he says you *will* know, when the time is right.

I don't know if that's his real name, but if not, he chose it for a reason. He believes names have power. Yours means "conqueror". Did you know that? How appropriate it is. His name is appropriate too. I looked it up in a reference book in his library. It means "God is my strength", the name of an angel, one who looks like a man and gives revelations, warns of the apocalypse.

My name simply means "pure". I don't feel pure at all. I feel apart, though, not because of purity, but because I am effectively cloistered, virtually a prisoner.

On August 12, I gave birth to our son. He is beautiful, just as I told you on the rooftop. But he cannot know you yet, although I long for him to do so. I know that you probably didn't even glimpse him.

How I wish I could tell you not to fear for him, my love! You will see him - and me - one day. Or so I must believe, to live as I do now, in this place with our son.

Today, I decided to start keeping a journal. The word 'diary' seems too trite for what I want to say. I found a hard-covered, fine-lined notebook in the drawer of my night stand - and it's perfect. Was it put there for me to use? I have to assume so. Nothing happens in my life by accident now.

This journal is not for everyday tribulations or fluffy thoughts, but a record of the time to come. These next months will be unlike anything that has gone before. I won't write every day, but I'll try to include the events that happen around me. In truth, not much happens in my life right now, and I don't care to record the usual banal march of my days.

This record will also tell you what has happened before this day, for that is important too.

I hope you can forgive me.

You won't be able to read this journal for some time. I don't know when that will be, or what the conditions will be then. It's probably best I don't know – and there is no way I can predict the future in any case. Gabriel tells me to stay in the present. Easy for him to say. I have memories I don't want to forget, or brush aside. But I keep those to myself. I need their solace and hope.

I ask for your patience if I ramble.

But back to the funeral service. I looked at that awful coffin, which looked more like a birthday cake than a final resting place.

Pink! I never wore that colour, except at night, to greet you on my balcony perhaps. Why did they choose that to put me to rest? It would make me want to rise from the dead, if I were not already alive. I shouldn't criticize, but Vincent, I almost wanted to laugh cynically at that thing, gleaming in the sunshine, standing on a fake green rug, soon to be below the ground where the colour mattered not at all. It didn't represent who I was when I 'died', any more than a diamond ring would have. At least I like to think so. Perhaps others saw me differently. Was I really so ... incomprehensible, so ... normal? How could you stand me, if that was the case?

Anyway, I was there, dressed in a brown polyester outfit I would never have worn in either of my old lives. A pantsuit and turtleneck! And big sunglasses and a hat, of course. I looked like a suburban matron. No wonder no one gave me a second glance.

Had I been hoping for a different outcome, to be recognized? No. The plan is important. You are important, Vincent. I'm doing this for you - and for our son - and for everyone below. Gabriel would not have let me attend this if he thought there was danger of my being exposed.

Of course, I'm not walking quite as I did either. Our son was large, Vincent, and I am still somewhat tired. I no longer wear high heels, so my lack of height means I can almost disappear in a crowd like that at the graveside. My hair has grown back to its natural brown over these past months and I let it grow. No more blonde highlights or hair colouring for me! Gabriel does not indulge me in such things. I hardly ever look in the mirror either. There seems no point, and I don't like the look I see in my eyes. I cannot really fool myself, you see.

It doesn't matter, really. Nothing matters except being re-united with you, and the safety of our son.

I thought of you the whole time I sat there, imagined you sitting below in your big chair with candles lit around you, perhaps some special ones made by Rebecca, scented with herbs. I know you are there waiting, mourning, wishing you could be at this ... thing I watched, with everyone else.

I was glad that you couldn't attend, Vincent, because I would not have been able to resist revealing myself to you. Wouldn't that have caused an incident? It makes me smile, ruefully, but it's really not funny at all. I want to cry, but cannot.

Maybe you are now writing in your journal, as I write in mine. Of such little fantasies is my life comprised.

I can hear your voice reading to me, see your beautiful face as I tell you of some happening in my old life. I see you, Vincent, as you looked on that rooftop, so wonderful, so loving, so tragic. You cannot imagine how glad I was to see you, that we had been allowed this one scene, although our time together was too short – and so very painful for you. My guardian had other plans.

I mentally recorded every detail of that grave ceremony, as if it were something you would want to know about, like a play or concert here above. Why would I think that? Because it seemed surreal, Vincent. I could only bear it if I looked upon it as a fantasy. Which of course it was, since I wasn't in that casket.

I don't know if I'll ever have the courage to tell you about it. Others will try, perhaps, if you ask them. I know they'd never insist or impose. This journal will do it for me, and with more courage than I could muster if I had to face you now.

I saw Father, William, Michael, Jamie, Pascal, Mouse, Olivia, Laura - and others whose names I have forgotten. I saw Joe, Elliot, Jenny, Marilyn, Cleon - and of course Diana, almost the only person wearing a hat, watching everyone, yet ignoring me completely.

Gabriel told me about her. He tells me what he thinks I will want to know – which is certainly not everything he could. Just enough that I know what’s going on and remain willing to cooperate. He does need that from me, Vincent. Could I refuse? I probably could, but I think I’m safer here, given what is going on. I hate the necessity, but any second thoughts – which seem almost petulant now - no longer matter.

I did not fit into any of Diana’s profiles, her projected expectations, as she searched for clues to my mysterious ‘other’ life. Her eyes flicked over me without stopping. To her, I probably looked like someone who wandered into the cemetery to visit the grave of a maiden aunt, got caught up in the crowd, then sat down to wait it out.

Gabriel was right about that too.

Why was I there? Why was I not in the coffin as everyone believed? It’s a very long story, Vincent, and it isn’t over yet. But I can tell you what has happened up to today. Then I’ll try to write more frequently, a recording of events as they unfold - as far as I am able, at least. I will not know it all. Gabriel says that’s for my safety, and I do believe that, although my safety means nothing without that of you and our son.

I assume Gabriel approves me my writing this journal, for nothing happens here without his permission. I am under no pressure; I want to do it. I feel I must do it, for me, for us. I’m keeping it close to me all the time. I don’t want anyone to read it. It’s not a large book, so I can keep it in a pocket with the pen. At night I put it in the drawer of my bedside table. I would know if anyone looked in there while I was asleep. It squeaks. I’m careful not to open it when anyone is around or that noise would mysteriously cease - or the whole unit be replaced. It amuses me to think that something isn’t quite perfect in this place.

This funeral marks the end of a chapter in my life. There’s no going back from this. I’m not dead, but my old life is gone. That is a certainty, and Gabriel has made that clear. I’m glad I have no family to consider. My friends will grieve and then get on with their lives. Some day, I may be able to apologize to them, but I mustn’t hope for it, Gabriel says.

You see, I listen to Gabriel because he knows all about me, about you, about the tunnels. That’s a story in itself, and I’ll tell you about it ... later.

So under that benevolent sun in the cemetery, I watched as so many people I cared about cried and hugged each other in their grief, comforting each other. I truly hope it helped their pain, but it was awful to sit there and watch. I couldn’t, often, the emotions were so thick in the air. Even the beautiful day couldn’t make that easier. It mocked everyone’s grief, even mine, which was directed elsewhere, to you.

I felt like an impostor - which of course I was. Will they every forgive me? Will they ever know? Gabriel thinks not. There’s no way to tell them now, and perhaps no need for them to know. That life is ended, as I said. I hope that later, your family will forgive me. They are better at such things. I would not want to be an outcast. The hope that I will see them again, be part of your world, is what keeps me going, Vincent.

But my topside friends and colleagues, what would they think? The grief and betrayal may be too much for even good friends to overcome. I know that - but it’s so difficult to face that truth, Vincent, if truth it is. I will probably never know for sure - and that makes it even worse.

I know I’m repeating myself and I ask your patience, again. I know you will understand the horror I feel, as will Father and the others below. You are all used to adversity and reverses in fortune. And you are my family now. I must concentrate on that happier thought.

Even Peter may forgive me, although I didn’t see him at the graveside. I’m glad he wasn’t there. He’s been a special person in my life. He might have recognized me more easily than anyone else there. He

has known me from my birth, after all. I hope that it's not grief which has kept him away, that he just had other matters, happier ones, to attend to. Perhaps he was helping a woman give birth. It is very sad that he was not on hand to welcome our son into the world, Vincent, as he was me. I wanted that so badly. Instead I was among strangers and you were elsewhere, unable to reach me, until after the birth.

And naturally, as I sat there at that funeral, I looked down at my hands, the nails cut close, no polish, such everyday hands. I thought of what my world meant to me, what I have left behind in this city of light and concrete, everything from manicures to music. I accepted it without thinking much about it, or appreciating the little things, as I suppose we all do. So much changed after I met you, but I was still part of this world. And now a new chapter has started.

I love New York and everything saying that entails, but my world has never treated you well, Vincent. Anything can be laid at that door and no one would contest it. Even this current situation is a result of my failure to keep away from danger, an error that has forced me to act out this scenario for my life and that of our son's. It is the ultimate in hard lessons, short of dying. And it will never happen again once we are re-united, my love. As I said, my old life is gone, buried as deep as that casket, and just as incapable of being revived.

I guess I had hoped I could make a difference, somehow, make the world a little better. But I'm gone, as far as that effort in the DA's office is concerned. And what has changed? Nothing, Vincent, except that I'm no longer part of the equation.

It's weird being in limbo like this, but this is necessary. Gabriel has explained, and I agree. I didn't have to participate, but I want us to be together. This is the only sure way, Vincent. But it's hard - very hard.

Perhaps I needed that final, full stop punctuation point, that funeral on a fake grass in the daytime, that travesty of a pink coffin and all those colourful flowers. It makes it easier to do what must be done in the future, because there's no going back from here. I hope to be with you again, below, with our son. I must try to keep a little of that sunshine in my heart.

Oh, what a tangled web we weave, Vincent! I've never felt this so strongly. Yet Gabriel unravelled that web. And in doing so, he probably saved my life and that of our son. So be patient with me, my love, as I grasp the end of the tangle and begin to unravel it for you.

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You didn't know about the book Joe gave me, Vincent, and the friend who died to give to Joe. Moreno did, and that's where the problems started. He wasn't trustworthy. Gabriel will expose Moreno, but not yet. Soon, I'm told. I hope so. He ruined my life and put me where I am now.

A cage, even a gilded one, is not a pleasant place. Although I am comfortable, I suppose. And out of danger. You would appreciate that last, something that is true for perhaps the first time since I have known you. I was so reckless, Vincent. I can barely live with myself as I think of those years. What was I doing, really? Did I actually help anyone – and if I did, was it worth the risk to you?

Now, the corruption in the DA's office has become critical. There are others besides Moreno in this terrible game, and they must be exposed as well. I don't know how long this has been going on because I was much too busy to notice such things when I worked there. I didn't speak to Moreno much, and I wasn't really on his radar then. Joe was the person I dealt with every day, and he is as honest as the sun. Thank goodness that is true. Gabriel has praised him – and he doesn't do that, as a rule. He is terse to the point of incomprehensibility most of the time. Deliberately, I realize.

I was given that book by Joe in hospital. That was orchestrated, although the explosion was not supposed to have injured Joe so badly. So even the best laid plans can foul up. Even Gabriel's. That's not a comforting thought.

Then I was kidnapped because I was trying to decipher that book, given the task by Joe, in as many words. Naturally, I wanted to know what was worth such a horrible event. Joe wanted it kept safe, but he must have known that it could not be kept secret for long.

We believed the cryptic code in that book had to be deciphered and used to rid the world of some very powerful criminals. But it wasn't that simple. This was Gabriel's way of exposing Moreno, except that our DA went off the rails. Of course, I didn't suspect Moreno until he gave me up to Gabriel's 'kidnappers'. Joe still doesn't know.

I had given the book to Elliot to give to a specialist to decipher, and when Moreno realized I didn't have it, he panicked. He believed that Gabriel would be angry, so I had to disappear.

Moreno's involvement was a shock to me, Vincent, and Joe will be devastated when he learns. He can't be told, yet, because he could never keep it secret. He's too honest for deception of that kind. Moreno knows it, so he's very careful.

Except that Moreno grabbed me before it was necessary. Seeing him there, his face as cold as stone, then to watch him walk away and leave me with two armed thugs, as if I was no more important than a street person, instead of someone he had worked with in his office for over two years. It was the worse thing I could imagine, Vincent. I was stunned. I did try to escape, but didn't get far.

Everything changed when I was handed over to Gabriel. You would have laughed, Vincent. Gabriel almost broke his cover, he was so shocked. So even he can't predict everything!

I wanted desperately to let you know I was safe, just to send a message via a helper. But Gabriel wouldn't let me. I didn't understand the reason, then, but I knew you would worry when I didn't appear as promised at the threshold. I had a lot to learn.

So events took an unexpected turn. I had to stay out of sight, even as I dealt with the fact of my pregnancy, and our love in that dark place. That memory is a sweet one, and I think of it often.

Sometimes I wish I had told you about my pregnancy when I knew - which was after I gave blood for Joe and visited you below. But our bond was gone, so you couldn't feel my inner conflict about whether I should tell you. In your fragile, but so very tranquil state, I hesitated.

You were so different to what you had been, and you didn't remember so much. I just couldn't risk upsetting you. Perhaps you would have welcomed the news, but I couldn't be sure, and so I said nothing. I was going to tell you later. I thought I had time.

And so you didn't know about our son until I told you on that terrible rooftop, after Gabriel took our son away with him in that helicopter.

Then, when I think of what has happened since, perhaps it was better our bond was so impaired. You would have wanted to rescue me, no matter what - and even more urgently if you had known of my pregnancy. No, the corruption in the DA's office has to be excised first. I agree with that. If I can help with that by appearing to be dead, it's worth it. My last act, so to speak.

You were so unhappy with the loss of our bond, that last time I saw you. Perhaps that made what followed less hard for you to bear. Gabriel says you searched for me almost every night for months and months. He knows these things because he's been watching you. You, it seems, may be the key he is looking for. The one which will expose Moreno at last. It has to happen logically. Gabriel can't force it or he'll lose the advantage and some vipers will be left in the nest.

I've had lots of time to think, and also time to talk to Gabriel. A remarkable man, and an obsessive one. He's always doing something. Fine-tuning he calls it. He's putting the pieces of a huge puzzle together.

He is one of the special operatives employed by our government. He did his research well. He focused on me, because I seemed the best tool to help him to expose and disable the network of corruption in the DA's office. He said I had the courage and the conviction he needed, because of the work I had already done. I would also have the necessary mobility.

Well, he wasn't completely right about that last. He didn't know about my pregnancy until I was handed over to him. So he doesn't know everything, Vincent. That's not much of a consolation, but it means I still have some secrets. The doctor didn't learn anything from me either. I let him make his own conclusions,

which he did. I saw no reason to correct any of his misconceptions. He is not my friend, and Gabriel is his boss. I learn more by saying nothing and listening. No one will answer my questions anyway.

Gabriel did find out a lot about me, though. He found out more than poor Spirko could have imagined in his wildest, debased dreams. He used logic and deduction to do it, and of course he had access to all the files I had worked on, and all the final reports.

He knew there was a missing piece - you. He had to know more, not because he wanted to expose you, or bring you to justice, but because he had to know what part you could play in his plans. He had to understand you.

So he planted a helper and learned all about you and the tunnel world. He won't use that information against you, don't worry. I know there may be some challenges ahead for you - but I have been promised you will survive them and we'll be re-united.

I am being well looked after, but Gabriel has a front to keep up. He must be regarded as a kingpin, a criminal mastermind. He has people under him who believe that without question. This plan has been long in the making, so I am a pawn - but a willing one, at least in front of Gabriel alone. Before the others I do and say nothing.

I'm not being abused, but Gabriel has to ensure that appearances are what they seem. He's mercurial, and that keeps his staff off balance. Sometimes they aren't kind to me. But they wouldn't dare disobey him. He makes sure they know the limits.

He plays his role well. There are no suspicions. I would know, for I would probably be freed if anyone felt any kindness towards me. I tried to get them to help me, you know. That was in the early days of my pregnancy, when desperation sometimes hit me like a blow and I wanted to escape. But they were too frightened to be corruptible. Gabriel chose well.

I wanted so much for you to find me, but I knew that would be impossible without our bond. I did manage to send a signal from a pipe in that first place they held me. That, Gabriel did not expect. He had not revealed himself to me yet.

You made that mandatory when Gabriel saw you for the first time. He told me that his information didn't do you justice. He didn't see a monster, though, as others have. He saw someone who had survived, even thrived, with a unique set of weapons and skills. He also knows you're intelligent. That, I think, intrigues him.

You almost succeeded in rescuing me. After that, he had to hide me better and he revealed a little more of himself and his plan, to prevent me trying to do any such thing again. I had to be part of the operation, you see. He needed you to keep searching, and for Moreno to keep trying to hold it all together in his network. There had to be a lot to keep him busy, so that something would slip. Gabriel is sure that network will eventually fracture. But it can't be rushed.

So I was hidden and I knew you were probably frantic. I suspected our bond was broken because of my pregnancy - it seemed the most reasonable explanation. But it hasn't returned now that our son has been born. I don't know why, but perhaps that's best for now. I don't want you endangered.

I can sense you dimly, enough to know that you are alive. I have learned not to allow myself to try to sense you often. Your attention is now focused on rescuing our son. You want him, naturally, now that I'm 'dead'. And I do believe you can sense his life force, but not well enough to find him.

Oh, my love, he's so beautiful! How I wish you could have been there when he was born, and I didn't have to "die" in your arms. I was given a strong drug, but not a fatal one. Gabriel made sure of that. My pulse would have been very low, and our bond was lost. Otherwise, you would have known that I lived.

Gabriel had not expected you to carry me back to my apartment, though. He thought you would take my body to the nearest hospital, where he had people waiting to revive me. He had to make alternate plans to get me back and those were complex. Diana was now on the job, so she was another complication.

But he managed it. A corpse, that of a woman who had died in childbirth and who looked a lot like me, was prepared. I was spirited away before reaching the coroner.

I don't remember any of that. Gabriel can arrange such things. It was a simple transfer between ambulances, I was told later. As for the autopsy - Joe couldn't bring himself to watch, fortunately, and Diana didn't know me well enough from photos. During my pregnancy, I'm not sure even my friends would have recognized me.

So no one else was allowed to see my 'corpse' and that other body was quietly cremated in my place - and presumably put into that pink coffin.

So Gabriel brought me back to life here, where I will live until this is over. Wherever this is. A large estate, somewhere not too far from New York, I think. I can feel and hear the city hum, see the glow of it at night from some of the windows, but I can't see the skyline. The tradesmen's vans which visit all have New York telephone numbers and addresses, though.

I haven't asked where we are, because I know Gabriel won't tell me, but I suspect it's Staten Island. I think I can hear the ocean in the distance sometimes. It's a sound I certainly never heard in my apartment. It's restful and I'm trying to remain calm.

You would think that six months as a prisoner would have made me used to being sequestered like this, but it has not. I ache to see you even more now - now that our son has been born. Oh, how I miss you, Vincent! I have never missed you so intensely. I recall those wonderful evenings when you read to me and I want to go to sleep, in the hope that I'll dream of you, but I do not seem to dream anymore. I suppose I must, but I don't remember them when I awaken.

I must try to keep my emotions from showing. Even Gabriel does not suspect the depth of our love, and I don't think he'd understand it. He is usually unemotional and dry, almost cold. It's impossible to know what he's thinking, yet I know he never stops his machinations in pursuit of his goal.

Our son is healthy, and he has your eyes. He is a joy, one I wish you could share now. I hope he is not too much older when we are re-united. You shouldn't be denied the joy of seeing him as a baby.

Soon, my love, soon. I must be patient. How I wish I could console you in your grief, wash it away with my tears. But you have a role to play.

And my love is too deep for tears.

2. Saturday September 2, 1989 (Nevermore)

Dear Vincent,

Oh, how can I stand this? I almost wish I didn't know. But that's ridiculous! I don't want to live in any more of a bubble than I do already. But I want to go to you - so badly I can hardly sit still!

Gabriel told me this morning what had happened overnight. That Moreno is dead and Elliot had almost been almost killed by Moreno's henchmen. And you have been injured, probably badly. You managed to escape back to the tunnels. This all took place in the Park carousel!

Moreno, it seems, had gone berserk and become frightened after Gabriel met him. Moreno was concerned about what Elliot knew and what his man Cleon had discovered. He was also worried about Joe - but it seems stopped short of suggesting a final solution for him.

And all because of that address, the one of the building where I had been held and where I 'died' in your arms! The irony is horrible. That more people should die, just because they discovered where I supposedly died, is beyond belief.

Next thing Gabriel knew, he told me, Elliot's man Cleon had been killed and hung in the parking garage

of Elliot's tower. So there is corruption in the police department too, people Moreno undoubtedly knew and used. Oh, why did this have to happen too? I saw Cleon at my funeral. No one deserves to die like that. Elliot must be regretting I ever came to him. I wish I had thrown that book into the Abyss. It's the cause of too much pain and death.

Even Gabriel seemed to be a little shocked at the swiftness of these events. I know this because he spoke with hard neutrality. His plans have obviously taken another right angle turn. How long before *he* is in someone's gunsights?

Moreno is gone, but the network he headed survives. It's extensive and no one can be trusted. I wish Joe had known about this before. I suspect he does by now and it will be as devastating to him as it was for me, when Morena had me abducted.

Gabriel's intelligence is good. He knew you had been to see Elliot, and that Elliot went to see Joe, who was on mandatory leave. Moreno had ordered Joe to stand down from investigating my death, apparently. That order originated with Gabriel, of course. Those two meetings led to that massacre at the carousel.

I know you will wonder if you could have done something to prevent this, Vincent. But you couldn't have. Gabriel says that one of Elliot's bodyguards was reporting to Moreno.

After telling me this, Gabriel has closed himself off from everyone, I presume to re-think and revise his plans. I don't know what he will do now, but it is even less safe for me than it was. Even I can be sure of that. I have to stay here, for my own protection and that of our son. And it has never been more difficult to remain calm.

This whole mess has come about because of me - who was only to be a pawn. Now, it seems, I have become a king - the piece with limited movement that underlies every other move on the board. It's a lot of responsibility to bear and it gives me nightmares.

I sit here, waiting for crumbs of information, hoping that I'll never hear the worst. Everyone I love could die. I know this. Gabriel does not try to deny it. But he says he is working to make that less likely. I have to believe him. What choice do I have?

There is one bright spot. Our son. He knows you - even though he has never seen you. His bond with you has awakened. I'm absolutely sure of this. He is normally a quiet, contented, even curious child, very aware of his surroundings. But lately, he has been unhappy. The doctor, who is too traditional for our extraordinary child, says he's ill. I know better. Gabriel doesn't understand yet, but perhaps he suspects. He would never admit it to me, and certainly not in front of the doctor or nurse. Naturally, I will say nothing of this.

Is your bond with him how you found me in that building? I suspect so.

He whimpers sometimes, for no reason I can determine, and I think those are times when your emotional state is overwhelming you. He woke up last night and began to cry, so I knew something was wrong, that you were in physical pain. Then he went almost silent, as if he was holding his breath. He's calmer now, so I know you survived and are healing. I have to believe that he would be inconsolable - or worse - if you were dead.

Gabriel was not available when this happened. He was in his control room, monitoring his hidden cameras, gathering intelligence, speaking to operatives - whatever else he does in there. I can only guess. Even with all this equipment and a lot of very careful men, events cannot be predicted - or revised in time to prevent deaths. That's no consolation to me as I wait.

Oh, my love, how I wish I could spare you this pain - all pain! If I could send you my strength, or even a hint that I live, I would do so. But that seems impossible. Our bond is still not restored.

Gabriel could not tell me more about your situation a day later. His planted helper does not go below and you are very well protected. But the helper is sure you aren't near death. He talks to tunnel folk and

that is something they would not keep secret from friends.

Gabriel is concerned about Diana now, who is getting very close to finding the tunnels. He has had a caretaker keep an eye on my threshold, and he saw her go down there. Joe wants her to keep investigating my death, and somehow she has managed to keep doing so despite the corruption. Moreno did not appear to know about Diana. Joe must have gone to her secretly. Greg Hughes would have told him how to do that.

I know there must be some clues to you in my apartment, which apparently Diana has been visiting often. If nothing else, there are the books you gave me, with their inscriptions. It's difficult to remember what else I had. They were just there, part of my life - and now they're in a place I must forget.

According to Gabriel, the caretaker has also reported that work was going on at my tunnel threshold below the storage room. He thinks the entry has been bricked up. He knew what to listen for. He assured Gabriel that no one else knows.

So that boundary between our worlds has now been sealed. I know it's unlikely I'll ever use it again, Vincent, but it saddens me to know it's gone. That place was precious to me - I thought of it as mine. I remember the first time you took me there, so I could return to my world.

I often felt like an intruder in that place, and you seemed godlike as you stood in that light, or filled the doorway where the tunnels began. But then you would approach and hug me, and our worlds would mesh. Then I knew I belonged there, to you, and nothing else mattered.

I'm sure you're unhappy about it too, but the safety of your world has to take priority. I understand that. I hope that not too much more will be lost to you before I can return. It frightens me just thinking about what could happen if Diana tells anyone what she suspects, or if Joe becomes suspicious.

I don't know what Gabriel can do about Diana. She works alone in a division that has no corruption. He wouldn't miss it if it were there. Their investigations involve the most sordid, the most depraved, the deadly predators of society. Like those two young men who were killing prostitutes. You remember them, Vincent. There's no money or power to be gained from those cases - but the rich can be just as deadly, as we discovered.

Gabriel may arrange for Diana and I to meet if she gets too close. Although it is you she seeks, it is my death she investigates. She will need an explanation, and we must protect you at all costs. Gabriel has not said this, but it seems to be part of his plan. He has a use for you, my love.

~

You must wonder why I haven't given our son a name. I want to leave that honour to you, Vincent. Gabriel has suggested Julian, but I don't want to address our son by anything but his true name. He is too young now to respond to one anyway. I give him pet names, and he gurgles in delight when he sees me.

Gabriel talks to him sometimes. He likes children, although he is careful not to show much emotion when the nurse or doctor are in the room, which is to say even less than usual. He has made it known that he will raise this baby as his own. He says no more - for nothing more needs be said. He wants to imply that I am alive merely for convenience, to ensure our son is getting what only his mother can give him. Gabriel wants him to be strong; he says that often.

She's a hard one, that nurse, exactly the type of person for the job - emotionless and efficient. Thank goodness I am here to comfort our son and watch over him. Gabriel allows this, telling his minions that the boy must not cry, because he hates noise. They let me hold him any time I wish, except when Gabriel is there.

This house is like a mausoleum, Vincent. Not a sound can be heard. Everyone walks around soft-footed and silent. Only our son gives it any humanity. He is allowed to do so - within limits. Thus, I am permitted access to our son, since none of the others want to be responsible for upsetting him. I can

keep him calm. They allow me to breast feed him too.

Gabriel allows me more leeway than he does others, but that doesn't mean I have any privileges. I am very careful around him, knowing how delicate the situation is. I pretend fear of Gabriel - not difficult when he puts on his cold expression. He is truly terrifying when he goes quiet and issues orders. I see the fear in the eyes of the doctor and nurse. So my fear for you, which hardly leaves me night or day, works as if it were of Gabriel. Does he know the difference? I don't care, Vincent. I only cooperate because of his promise. He knows that.

I say very little unless Gabriel talks to me alone, and then I dare not ask any pointed questions. He gives the impression of power barely held under control, just as you do, Vincent. But Gabriel's power is of the mind, not that of the body. He may be strong, but he doesn't need to be. The menace he represents is enough. He owns everyone in this house with his power of life and death.

He has little patience for small talk. The one exception is when talks to our son. It's scary sometimes, listening to what he says as he leans over the cradle. About castles built on fear and shadows that hide the truth, and the stupidity of people - their willingness to believe anything rather than think. Of course, most of this is for the benefit of the nurse and doctor, but I wouldn't be surprised if Gabriel was speaking his mind on these occasions. He cannot abide stupidity and he expects instant obedience.

I have never heard the nurse speak, so I don't know anything about her. I don't address her, not now. She made it plain while I was pregnant that she is doing her job, and that is all she will do. She is efficient and keeps our son clean and properly clothed. I expect nothing more.

Gabriel's a scholar, Vincent. He can quote Machiavelli as well as Shakespeare. He likes Ovid too. He quotes such classics occasionally, to make a point. He told me once that a person can metamorphose into anything they wish. After all, it's what he has done. He says you have done so too, of necessity, to survive. He doesn't really know much about your life, though, and I don't enlighten him. He hasn't asked. He likes to think things through, I believe, and assumes he is always correct. Is there a name for that type of person?

I don't want to become cynical or depressed, but this place is so insular. I have no idea what is going on beyond its walls. Gabriel says that's best. So you see, he is careful of me. He wants me to care for our son and implies that is all I need worry about. If only it were that simple!

So I sit here and read. I almost want to do something with my hands, like knit or crochet, but have no patience for that now, even if I knew how. I don't know that I would be given the materials if I asked. No one here seems to do anything but their jobs. There is no music, no laughter, no television, no radio.

Reading is difficult, but I can almost go into a trance, and in that trance I can think of you, Vincent. Usually I am alone, except when I am with our son. The the nurse is always there, sometimes the doctor as well, although he seems to do little except observe and make notes. Just the same, I write in this journal late at night, when I can't be disturbed. Then, I can relax a little and think. I am always aware of the undercurrents in this house. I don't want to miss any of them. They tell me when something is happening, even if obliquely.

Gabriel is very cynical and gives no quarter to his staff. I can't blame him, having seen a lot of the worst of people too, but I remain hopeful. He does not. He's not cold-hearted, but he is committed, realistic, driven. Nothing must prevent him succeeding at the job he has undertaken.

Would he commit murder if necessary? I don't know. He has people who do that kind of work, I know, but I think he might be capable of it himself.

How can one understand this kind of man, whose life is embedded in the criminal world? How does he move from one assignment to another? I suspect he does so very infrequently. He admits this one is international in scope, and has been long in the making. If he left even one loose end at the conclusion, he would not long survive it, I'm sure.

Sometimes, my situation seems too complicated, Vincent. I often wonder why my life should be such

a tangle. After decades of being a rich socialite, and then for such a short time an assistant DA, here I am in a luxurious mansion. It's a strain not to show impatience, to remain even-tempered, to pretend disinterest. I don't even know if I succeed in this. No one talks to me, except Gabriel, and he is terse. I am not expected to reply, comment, or ask questions.

I chafe at the silence, the soft-footed nurse always watching me or our son. I must not lose control. I am so very isolated, and yet the tension I feel will not let me rest easily. I sleep, but not well. I try to take a nap during the day, and sometimes manage a short one, often while our son sleeps. He seems to calm me, at least when he is calm too. Perhaps that's our empathic connection.

I know what you're thinking, but no, my situation is not your fault. It's the fault of my world. It's a juggernaut that rolls over little people without even noticing them. I had no idea of the scope of the criminal element until I met Gabriel. He doesn't tell me much, but even I can see this is no ordinary operation. The DA's office did not prepare me for this. Even Elliot, with all his dozens of New York towers and power games, is a small player. My father might have understood this better, moving as he did in the corporate world, but I am very glad he missed this chapter of my life. I don't think I could continue with this farce if he were still alive. Bad enough that I must stifle what I feel for you, who are the love of my life.

How lucky you are to live in a world that has such simple needs - and manages to largely survive without money. It keeps me grounded, Vincent, just thinking about it, remembering where you are and the love that surrounds you. For here there is no love, except what I share with our son. Emotions are not permitted in this place. Gabriel himself rarely shows any, and never any of the softer ones.

Knowing your world exists is everything to me, especially now. I can dream about it and pretend I'm in your big bed, beneath your stained glass window, with you beside me, sleeping peacefully. Our son is there too, of course.

Will that ever come to pass? I hope so, Vincent, or I could not justify the pain I am causing out there in the world. It gives me nightmares. I'm living a nightmare, for that is what it seems to me. I feel so helpless, as if I'm caught in invisible chains, unable to move forward or back, paralyzed. I've had nightmares like this - who hasn't? I never thought I'd live one.

What kind of operation needs to keep me apart from you, and you separate from your son? It seems ridiculous that we should be caught up in this. Now I have some understanding of the ripples that one small act can cause. It's enough to make me stay in bed, even though nothing at all can happen here, unless Gabriel wills it. I am just a pawn, after all, not a king at all. I cannot truly affect anything. I must ride the wave and hope not to drown in it.

I almost wish I could cry, but I dare not show such weakness. Tears are useless here. They cannot give solace where it matters, deep in my soul, and they would be viewed as weakness. Above all, I must not be weak.

3. Thursday, September 12, 1989 (Snow)

Dear Vincent,

Something more has happened and I'm trying to make sense of it. I don't know if I should be frightened, but anything this unusual has to be related to what Gabriel is doing - and by extension you.

Gabriel has been prowling around this house, his face stiff and unfriendly. Things are not going well, I assume. Then, I heard him talking to someone yesterday morning, although I didn't see who it was, not then. You cannot know how unusual it is to hear anything here. Naturally, I was curious.

I was in the library with our son in my arms, watched by the ever-present, blank-faced nurse, but I could hear the voices, although not all the words. I tried to hear what this unusual disruption was about and

moved to where I could hear better. I feared the worst you see.

I know Gabriel sometimes has guests, but I barely know they're here. He generally takes them far away from this part of the house. He would not let me be seen, and that, oddly enough, gives me some hope. If he's keeping me secret, it's for a reason of his own. Should that change, I will start to worry.

I often don't know anything, and am often grateful I don't. The things I do learn are often frightening, simply because it's Gabriel who tells me. But this time, somehow, I knew that you were being discussed.

They were speaking softly. Gabriel's voice is always that way, especially when he is being menacing, but even at the best of times, his voice is never raised. He has perfected a flat, emotionless tone.

Their voices echoed a bit out there, so even closer, I couldn't hear much that made sense. But I heard the other man say, "He's beautiful." I knew with absolute certainty that they were not talking about our son, whom I was holding at the time, but you. Gabriel made some kind of rejoinder which made the other man shout, "I'm not talking about your stupid statue."

That 'statue' was probably the Terra Cotta Warrior in the lobby. It may be real. Gabriel has ways of acquiring objects, it seems. I suspect it's just a very good copy, a piece of set design to impress people.

They exchanged some more quips and then I suddenly heard a barrage of gunfire. The noise was deafening! Even the nurse seemed to draw in her head. Our son whimpered.

Later, when I left the library to return our son to the nursery, followed by the silent nurse, some of the household staff were cleaning up the lobby floor, putting large chunks of stone into a bin and sweeping up a lot of dirt. And the statue was gone! That must have been what was hit with the bullets. Nothing this peculiar has happened since I arrived, Vincent! I have to wonder what it means.

Now, believe it or not, I'm worried about Gabriel. I doubt anyone else has dared to confront him like that. This man must be someone special. And that scares me. If anything happens to Gabriel, I'll be in real danger too. I don't think that nurse or the doctor will let me live to identify them, and our son would be endangered too.

I don't even know exactly where this house is, or what is outside the gates, so I can't even pretend to plan an escape. Gabriel is nothing if not careful, so he has not told me our location. He doesn't really trust anyone, not even me - or perhaps especially me.

I feared what this contretemps was about, but I dared not ask Gabriel. I can't press him. He'll tell me news when it suits him, and only then - usually when something has been resolved. In between he just ignores me. Sometimes the staff take that disregard as an opportunity to become less kind, almost threatening. He watches, but won't interfere unless they endanger my life or that of our son. They wouldn't dare. But in a place where I have no friends at all, I prefer not to have enemies either. I don't complain about my treatment, even though I could.

Maybe Gabriel wants to be sure I know only the true story of this operation. Obviously, I can't possibly know anything except what he tells me. Who would I hear it from? No one talks to me but Gabriel. There are no newspapers or magazines. There's nothing in my room or in the library that relates to current events. I never even hear a phone ring. It's as if Gabriel doesn't trust them or need them, his network of spies is so good.

Does he worry about what might be said about him when this is all over? I have to assume he does not. Why would he care? Will it ever be over? When? No, I must not think about time. I will drive myself mad if I do. I must somehow make the hours pass and the days too.

~

Just a few hours ago there was another disruption. I heard a noise from the lobby again. I left my suite and went onto the atrium balcony so I could look down from behind a pillar. I was the only observer on this level. I was careful not to be seen obviously watching.

I caught Gabriel asking about a ring. He was talking to Pope, a man I avoid. He's Gabriel's second-in-

command. He looks at me as if I were a side of beef hanging from a hook. Luckily, I do not have to talk to him. He is often with Gabriel, but Gabriel never talks to me in his presence. Pope made some answer Gabriel didn't like and I didn't quite catch. Gabriel gave a curt order and Pope left.

Gabriel looked down at the body of a man with white hair, dressed in black, on a stretcher. He had bandoliers of bullets across his chest. Two men were standing by and when Gabriel gestured at them, they wheeled the stretcher away.

Gabriel walked up the stairs and beckoned me into a small salon. Had he known I was there? Perhaps. He misses nothing. I went, afraid of what I would learn. He got right to the point.

"That man - his name was Snow - tried to kill Vincent," he told me softly. "He failed."

Then he walked away. I stood there stunned, then went back to my room to think. Questions roiled around my brain, chasing each other like mad squirrels.

Why on earth would that man have tried to kill you? I knew the answer, immediately. Obviously, he had orders from Gabriel! Why is Gabriel endangering your life, sending a man like this to hunt you? How does this fit into his plans? What has happened?

Although I can't say how I know it, I think there is some connection between this man and the conversation I had overheard earlier in the day, the one that resulted in the destruction of the statue. Two such unusual events have to be related somehow.

I think you must live, Vincent, or Gabriel would have said something. That conclusion allowed me to relax a little. Our son has been quiet, so that's another indication that you are all right.

The killer was himself killed. Although Gabriel didn't say so, I'm certain this killing didn't happen at the carousel. This man went into the tunnels! You must have killed him there!

And how and where did Gabriel find the body of this killer? There is only one explanation. You carried him above. But where would you have taken him? If the body got back to Gabriel, you must have known who sent him and where to leave his body. The killer must have revealed a clue - perhaps Gabriel's name.

And Gabriel's questioning of Pope about a ring seems important now. He never says anything without a reason. Gabriel wears a gold onyx ring that he occasionally twists on his finger, the only nervous habit I've noticed in him. I suspect it is important somehow, this ring. Did Snow have one too, then?

I was thinking about all this when suddenly, I knew where you had taken Snow's body! Where else, but that building where you found me and the only time you saw Gabriel. Obviously, it is still being watched.

What was Gabriel expecting to happen? Did that plan fail spectacularly too, or was this what he wanted? Gabriel hasn't said anything more, but he didn't look worried.

Why? Why would he endanger you and the others below? I can't ask, Vincent. I'm afraid I won't like the answer. I know that Gabriel must do many things I would find abhorrent. But I find less and less reason to think of him as anything but my jailor, perhaps even my torturer.

There is only one conclusion I can make about this latest event. I think he used you to get rid of this Snow, although I have no idea why. I don't know if anyone died or was injured in the tunnels. I hope not. This man would have been ruthless. Gabriel, if he knows any more, has not said. Would his helper tell him? He may not know either. I know this was a contest between you and Snow, Vincent. I'm very glad you won, of course.

Gabriel really frightens me now. I can't comprehend how this event helps him. Snow must have known something that Gabriel did not want to incriminate him. Why else eliminate a man like this? Perhaps they'd had dealings in the past. Is Gabriel who he says he is? How did he come to be here in this house, doing this job? How long has he been doing it? More to the point, who will be the next victim?

So many questions and no answers. I have time to think but it does me little good.

Oh my love, it's becoming more difficult to sleep. What more does Gabriel need? He told me earlier in the day that Joe is now acting DA. That's good news. He also said that Diana has been told to add Moreno to the investigation into my death. So Joe knows there's a connection.

I'm not sorry Moreno is dead, but I don't want anyone put at risk because of me. I told Gabriel this later, when we ate dinner together. Sometimes we do that. I never refuse, because he often tells me something. It really can't be called news because I can't know whether he's telling me the truth, or how much of it. I'm starved for whatever he can tell me, though, far more than for food. I am not eating much, but I try to eat enough, for our son's sake.

This time he looked at me expressionless.

"Sometimes, there are no choices," he told me cryptically, then pushed away from the table and left.

When he talks like that, he reminds me so much of you, Vincent. He says little, but every word is to the point. He's very focused - as you are, and as Joe is - and of course Diana is too. So there is a triangle now - and I seem to be in the middle of it with Gabriel. It's an uncomfortable place to be.

So I wait, and try to focus on our son, again. He's all that keeps me from going mad, I think. I don't know how sane I am, in truth. My days are uneventful most of the time, boring even. I cannot find the heart to do anything to make them less dull. I think I've convinced myself this is my penance, for allowing this to happen to me. I do have to take responsibility for that. I should not have involved Elliot either.

I should have given that book to Moreno right away. Why didn't I? Joe wouldn't have disagreed. I think I was too upset by his accident to think clearly, Vincent, and I was also worried about you. When I discovered I was pregnant, I was first shocked, then exhilarated, then afraid for you. I was clearly in over my head. I should have confided in Father, perhaps.

I can't cry anymore. I think I've lost the ability. My heart breaks every time I hear your name - but my eyes are dry. You are too far away, too deep in the earth for me to reach. My tears would be useless and nothing would be helped by them. And I cannot let anyone here see me break down. If I become a liability, I will die. I know that.

4. Monday, September 25, 1990 (Beggar's Comet)

Dearest Vincent,

I apologize for the gaps in this journal. As I said at the outset, not a great deal happens here. I'm sure you don't want to hear about my average day. It's highly structured. Gabriel likes to know what is going on every minute of the day - or night. So I get up at 7 am, am given breakfast, and our son is brought to me for his first feeding. He sleeps through the night, which is wonderful. He is growing and healthy. Then I read all morning and lunch is brought to me and I also feed our son again. Then more reading in the afternoon, then dinner, feeding our son, and then I sit for a few hours and try to fit the pieces of the puzzle together. This routine never varies. It's a good thing that reading is something I enjoy. I can sink into a book and forget everything, coming up for air only for the other necessities of life.

I do visit our son during the day, as I said, not to comfort him, but to give me something to look forward to between feedings. He is not an unhappy child, as a rule. He seems to understand that being quiet is best, as I do. Perhaps he senses that in me.

I long for news of you, but often do not hear anything for many days. I almost go into a trance, so as not to think. I always fear the silences as much as the talks with Gabriel. Neither bodes well.

Then some event, like that of Snow, wakes me up and I start to pay attention again.

There is not a noticeable difference in the seasons from my perspective. So I started remembering

Winterfest, and that lovely memory gave me some solace. I hope to be home with you before the next one. That thought is a comfort. My first Winterfest with you is a memory I can re-live – and I do. I can still hear the music of the wind in my mind, and remember the feel of you holding me and dancing with me, there in the empty Great Hall when everyone else had left.

I hope you are able to find something that gives you pleasure in these dark days, Vincent. You must be incredibly lonely, driven to try to minimize the danger to your family in the tunnels. I can imagine you probably isolated yourself once you healed. You could not know why Snow was sent, except that he targeted you. That would be enough to give you reason to leave the home tunnels.

I hope you are still writing in your journal, as I do in mine, and finding solace in something you love. Reading perhaps. Perhaps we can compare journals when I return.

The food is well-prepared here, although not as good as William's of course. Gabriel seems to prefer no nonsense cooking, but it's very good quality and I'm sure it's nutritious. Gabriel is almost thin, a whipcord man who moves like a predator, makes few gestures. He eats more than I do, but not a great deal more. I don't have much appetite. I seldom finish what they give me. However, if I refuse to eat, I am given a liquid supplement, and that is frankly horrible. So I try to eat enough that they are satisfied.

I think Gabriel is worried now. He's too quiet. He has not rooted out all of Moreno's henchmen and Joe may not have time to do so before things get worse. Yes, I believe things can still be worse than they are, out there in the world I know so little about now.

Diana ... I don't know what she's doing. Gabriel said she was in the tunnels at the same time as Snow - confirming where that operation took place. Is she the reason he sent Snow there? He probably knew she would go there again. I can't think why that would be important to him.

Gabriel says matters are approaching a resolution, although I don't know exactly what he means by that. He revealed that Elliot is now on Joe's radar - and Joe suspects Elliot knows about you. Joe wants to charge Elliot with Moreno's murder! Even I know that has to be a desperation move. Joe is grasping at straws. He must be very frustrated to even think that way!

I know Elliot won't betray you - or me - but it's worrying nevertheless. Why is Joe still investigating my death? What can he expect to find out now? Surely exposing Moreno's network is enough of a challenge. Moreno is more to blame than anyone else.

I did ask Gabriel why Joe hasn't closed my case file. He says that Joe may know about our son, or at least suspect his existence. That seems reasonable. I think that, in Joe's mind, he can only rectify the fact of my kidnapping - which was his fault - and the treachery of Moreno this way. Gabriel says he's on a crusade, and knowing Joe, I believe that.

This adds another level of complexity to the whole situation. Already far too much seems to be related to me and I hate it, not for myself, but because this can endanger your family, Vincent – and you.

~

Gabriel told me at lunch today that Elliot has been arrested. One of his bodyguards talked to Joe and told him Elliot had been at the carousel. I'm sure Gabriel made the man tell Joe. Apparently, he didn't know before this, not for sure.

I wonder what you are doing and thinking, Vincent? I know this must be very hard on you. I know you have sought Elliot's help and will feel guilty when you learn of this arrest. You must be worried about what more disasters can befall your world because of your crusade to find our son.

I was sitting in our son's nursery with Gabriel when he asked Pope how Elliot was, and was told he was having a bad day. Gabriel passed on an order 'to play the Judas card'. I don't think I want to know what that means. I dared not ask. I sat there and looked at our son, hoping against hope that this game ends soon.

I am such a coward, Vincent! So much happens that I dare not question. I am playing a role and I must

not appear too curious. What I don't know, can't make me a liability, or so I like to believe. Of course, almost anything could result in my real death. I try not to think about that for long.

~

Nothing happened for several days, so I returned to my usual reading and musing and remembering. I hate this waiting. I know something is going on, but can't imagine what – and Gabriel is not telling me anything. It must be something major though. The tension is thick in this house, and even the doctor and nurse seem more nervous than usual. Pope looks smug, and that is more of a worry than anything else.

Today, Gabriel has been in meetings with his men. I know this because there's been a lot of tramping back and forth from his control room and the small, stark meeting room he has next door to it. I've seen that door open, but have not been inside it or the control room. I think the two are joined, but I'm sure Gabriel lets no one see what he does in there.

Something is going to happen. I pray that it does not affect you, Vincent. That you will be safe. But since you are a key player, I fear for you, without having the least idea what I should be afraid of.

Gabriel did not invite me for lunch or supper. I waited, knowing that some operation was underway, some big part of his plan. And then, well after nightfall, all the lights went out! The power was gone in the entire house. If they went out here, they must have gone out in New York too. How peculiar! There's been no storm. The weather is mild.

I ran out into the patio, just to see the sky without the city glow. No one stopped me. I saw a shooting star, Vincent! I made a wish on it, a wish that wherever you are, you are well and that you will be safe.

Then the house lights came on. I suppose there's a back-up generator here.

I ran to our son's nursery and found him wailing and kicking. So I know something has happened to you ... again. Something terrible. I was beside myself with worry. Fortunately, that nurse had disappeared.

I expected Gabriel to come, because I thought he would want to check on the baby. But he didn't make an appearance. I don't know where he is. I wouldn't know if he left this house, in truth. He hardly needs to be secretive, but I think that's part of who he is.

I picked up our son and carried him back to my sitting room, hoping to calm him – and myself by extension. The nurse came in a little later – perhaps there's a baby monitor or closed-circuit TV in the nursery. I have never thought to look. I'm always concentrated on our son.

I made myself appear calm. Our son did stop crying after a while, but he whimpered, which was almost worse. I rocked him in my arms and closed my eyes, humming that little tune of my mother's. It seemed to help.

Suddenly, there was a knock on the door and Gabriel came in. He brusquely told the nurse to leave, which she did, almost running, closing the door behind her. Gabriel moved into the room and then turned to look at me. His eyes were haunted – a look I have never seen on his face before, Vincent! He looked down at the floor and spoke very softly.

“There was an explosion, Ms Chandler, on a fishing boat in the harbour. Elliot Burch and Vincent were on that boat. A meeting had been arranged. Burch has been helping Vincent search for his son.

“They ... I don't know if they survived. There were several explosions. Large ones. The boat had to be completely destroyed. They were supposed to escape over the side of the boat before that happened. But for some reason, they were on the deck.

“You see, I had to convince the DA's office to leave Elliot Burch alone and drop your case. It was a drastic measure, but necessary. Mr Maxwell's obsession with you is jeopardizing years of work.

“My men found no trace of either of them. If they survived, they could be seriously injured, drowned. My men are watching for them, but the harbour is always crowded and now it's swarming with police and coast guard. If either of them is found, I'll tell you.”

I mentally cried out your name then, Vincent, knowing now what our son had felt. I stood up, passed Gabriel, went into my bedroom and shut the door. I couldn't face him another second.

But I don't think you're dead. I put our son back in the nursery after a while, when he had finally dropped off to sleep. He was quiet and that gave me hope, except he almost seemed to be holding his breath and then letting it out in small gasps. But he did not seem in pain, so that comforted me. Does this mean your life hangs by a thread, that you are unconscious? I wish I knew.

I didn't tell Gabriel any of this. He has no need to know. He's responsible for this incident, as he admitted. Perhaps he didn't want it to happen that way, but lately so many of his plans are going sideways. If he has badly injured you or Elliot, I will ... I don't know what I'll do, what I can do. I've never felt so powerless. I hope justice is done, that's all.

So, I am still a prisoner in this luxury home with its huge quiet grounds. I have to sit here and pretend to read, or care for our son, while my brain tries out one horrible scenario after another, with you in a starring role. I understand, now, some of what you must have been experiencing as you sought me all those months. Perhaps you felt I was alive, but you could not be sure of any more than that.

With that thought, I belatedly remembered the bond. Perhaps I could feel you, even now. I stretched my mind into that place where our bond lies almost dormant, Vincent. I was sure this time it wouldn't matter, that you couldn't sense me. I felt your heartbeat, although it was very weak. So I do know you live. I felt such immense relief that I almost wanted to shout it out. I got myself under strict control. I can't be sure no one is watching.

I hope you are not injured somewhere above where no one can help, that you made it to safety. I am not going to tell Gabriel this. He doesn't deserve to know anything. Let his people tell him, if they can. Our bond is the only thing I can truly keep secret. It comforts me to know it's not completely dead, perhaps just waiting for something. Truly, neither you nor I are safe yet, so this is best.

I have to trust Gabriel to let me go when the time comes, which now seems more urgent than ever. This changes everything. I must not cry now. I must concentrate on our son and hope that Gabriel can finish his work with no more danger to you. But perhaps I can take advantage of the situation and learn more from him. He has been rattled by this. His customary aplomb has been dealt a blow. I'm sure he hasn't revealed himself to anyone else, though. That would be dangerous for him, just as any visible emotional response would be for me. We both have to keep up this appearance; unconcern or neutrality in my case, determination and control in his.

I think my heart has become hard and lean, like my body. I have no sympathy left for Gabriel or anyone, not even Joe. I must believe that somehow we will be together again, Vincent, or I will not be able to stand another day of this incarceration.

I feel more like a prisoner than ever now. Gabriel is not trying to sugar coat anything, but the coldness I feel inside includes everyone but our son. He is all that matters. I do think of you often, and those thoughts are all that keep me from turning to stone. I do want to be able to give you back a lover you deserve, one without psychoses. I know I walk a fine line. I cannot be sure I am not verging on insanity. But I think our son would know and be uncomfortable with me. At least I hope so. He is quite the opposite. He grounds me, keeps me from obsessing about what I know. He looks at me as if he understands. His eyes are yours, Vincent. So beautiful.

You see, even Gabriel's best guesses have not told him how you knew I was in trouble. He has questioned me and I just shrug. He couldn't know what went on between us. That kind of information isn't in reports and there are few witnesses. He would not willingly believe in empathy, or anything not written in stone – although he cannot deny you, my love.

To him this is all a chess game, a Machiavellian play. His complex machinations draw in everyone, both evil and good, to be used as tools. He doesn't know that you can feel our son either - and he won't. Not from me.

Tears - when did I last cry? I can't Vincent. That would tell Gabriel that I worry. Above all I must maintain my outer calm.

5. - Thursday, October 12, 1990 (A Time to Heal)

Dear Vincent,

I've been trying to find out more about what is going in your world and how you fare, without appearing to be doing so.

Gabriel seems to have relaxed a bit. He told me nothing specifically about you, but he says Diana has withdrawn from my case and Joe is furious. He thinks this means she has found something that she won't report, that she's holding something back.

Of course she is! I know exactly how that feels. She is having to do what I did, especially with Joe. He must be experiencing déjà vu. It's almost funny, except that this is no laughing matter. I can only think of one reason why she would leave a case unfinished. You. I'm sure Gabriel has the same suspicion.

In any case, you must be safe and well. Our son is calm and stopped whimpering yesterday. I hope you're in the tunnels, or if you were with Diana, as I suspect, that she has kept your secret. She'll be under a lot of pressure. But I know she's strong. Gabriel has hinted at that – and she'd have to be to do the work she does, has been doing for some years.

I know Joe. He's a pit bull. He'll hold on until he's satisfied he has all the facts. Now that he's DA, he'll be worse. He can make good on any threats he thinks would work. And I know he wouldn't hesitate to use that perogative on Diana. I feel for her in this delicate balance she's trying to maintain.

~

This afternoon, Gabriel told me that three drug addicts had been found in the Park, in a dark place under one of the stone bridges. They had been slashed. No one is investigating their deaths - they were all carrying knives and the police believe there was a fight.

Gabriel told me they died somewhere else entirely - the drainage culvert at the tunnel entrance. He looked at me when he said this, and I know he was thinking about you. That means he must have had someone investigate. I imagine there was blood, or some other clue.

He knows you, Vincent, and he knows that you could have done this. It wouldn't have been a casual encounter. There must have been a serious threat.

I wonder what happened? Did these men try to invade the culvert? Why would they do that? And then I knew. I looked at Gabriel and he nodded. He and I are beginning to think alike, Vincent. I'm not sure I like that.

So, Diana must have sought you out. She's putting her career on the line, and she wanted to see you again, because you've changed her life. I used to do that too, do you remember? I needed to see you, to know you were real, that you cared for me, that you were worth everything. Even though I knew the truth in my heart.

You gave me strength, Vincent. I knew you were the most important thing in my life, but somehow I had to keep reinforcing that knowledge, to ground myself by seeing you. Or perhaps I just wanted to feel your arms around me. I didn't need much excuse in those days.

Investigations can be soul-destroying, as I'm sure Diana knows only too well. How can she keep her sanity in the face of so much inhumanity? Does she always succeed in solving a case? What horrors, what monsters must she face, before she can close the file? My work, for all its dangers, seems so ... normal, when I think of the work she does.

Diana may also have wanted to see you to warn you of suspicions in the DA's office. There were many times when I had to lie to keep my source – you – from Joe. He stopped asking because I was getting results, but I know he never stopped wondering. And now Diana is doing the same thing. You had to be warned so you would be on guard.

I always feared that Joe would do something he didn't tell me about, something that would endanger you and the tunnel folk. So she is right to be worried, although I think Joe is the least subtle person I know. When he does something, he does it openly and loudly.

If I were still there now, working, I know Joe would be pushing harder. He takes his position very seriously, Gabriel said. Of course he does. That's Joe. And he's driven now.

You probably rescued Diana from those men. She went to the one place she knew she could find an entry. Gabriel says Snow entered via that culvert, blasting open the wall. He followed your blood trail from the carousel. Perhaps you hadn't had time to repair the damage. I can imagine the confusion when Father thought you were lost, possibly dead.

Diana wouldn't know where the other ways into the tunnels are. She doesn't know any helpers either, I assume. Gabriel says she entered before via my threshold, before the cement had dried on the bricked-up wall. She must have realized she couldn't go that way again. He suspects she somehow found her way to that blasted out culvert entry.

Amazing that she didn't meet Snow in her explorations - but you would have been leading him far away from anyone. Did you know Diana was in the tunnels too?

How ironic this all seems from where I sit. You rescued me and took me below. Diana likely rescued you and took you above. How did she know where you would be? Where would she go that she would be likely to find you in your injured state? The explosion would have been known in the DA's office, but how did she associate it with you?

You see, my brain does work when I make it. The stimulation is good for me. When I returned to my rooms, I sat down to think. How had this scenario played out? I had to know.

If you'd made it to the culvert, or any manhole entry, or even a helper's, after the boat explosion, you would have been rescued, hidden and taken to Father. Gabriel apparently didn't know, so his helper could tell him nothing. Where would you go if you were injured and expected to die? What place could Diana have known about?

Then I knew and my heart gave a lurch, Vincent. My grave in the cemetery, of course. You would want to be there at the last. I am so very glad that you got there at night, that Diana was there to take you away and hide you. I don't know how she managed it, but she must have. She's resourceful.

Oh, my love, how I wish I could hold you and take away the pain, all the pain! To think of you lying on my grave, waiting, wanting to die. How can I stand it? But you survived, and for that I owe Diana everything.

Are you starting a new chapter of your life now? Coming so close to death, at least twice now, you must be wondering what more can happen. You must be getting desperate, discouraged. But you will find a way, I know. Could it be that you are getting closer to me and our son?

I think Gabriel will have to make some plans about Diana. He is in danger now too. He told me yesterday that Snow had left his ring with you – like the one he wears. So I was right about that – but Gabriel apparently didn't expect it. Gabriel says Snow must have realized he had lost the battle. Gabriel commented that Snow looked as if he had been buried. Perhaps he had! You would lead him to a dangerous place, one where you had the advantage, as you did for the Tong gang. I wonder if that was the Maze?

That ring could lead you or Diana here - but it won't be easy to find out anything, I'm sure. So there's still time.

However, Gabriel says that his Moreno investigation is just about over. He's keeping watch on Joe and Diana just to be sure. If they're threatened, he'll know there's still a loose cannon somewhere. He knows there are corrupt police, but they're lower level thugs. He's not concerned about exposing them. They're just tools. Dealing with them is Joe's job.

I hope the end of this nightmare is in sight, but I'm afraid to hope, Vincent. Anything could happen, and I refuse to cry unless my tears are happy ones.

6 – Tuesday, October 24, 1989 (In the Forests of the Night)

Dear Vincent,

Gabriel told me that Joe has not given up trying to find out who killed Moreno. It seems your name is now high on his list, and he wants you badly enough to threaten Diana. He has seen the marks of your hands and he wants to bring you to justice. Apparently, even though Moreno was crooked, Joe will not let you be. He thinks he's on a crusade to somehow honour me - still.

Then a few hours ago, a huge warehouse that was used to make drugs was destroyed by fire. Gabriel says you tracked it down from the dealer of a street pusher, one of the people who uses children to sell drugs to other children. You then followed the man to the processing facility. He says nine men died in that fire, Vincent, some of whom had been slashed as well as burned.

I can imagine you roaring through that place, destroying the lab and inadvertently starting the fire that destroyed it – as you did with Paracelsus' little lab. You were not responsible for the deaths, and I know you were hoping to find Gabriel, or some link to him.

Gabriel admitted he didn't know why you suddenly became a crusader against the drug trade. He told me that the pusher, when questioned by two of Gabriel's thugs, said he had been threatened by a man in a beast mask, that the name Rolley had been mentioned. Gabriel looked at me as he said this. So there's no doubt you were involved. I didn't say anything and did not let him see that the name meant anything to me. I think I've cultivated a stone face almost as good as his! That's not a compliment I want to remain with me.

Rolley! That must mean that he has returned to the tunnels, but as an addict, probably injured. He would not go to ground below unless he was desperate. I hope Father is able to help him. I hope his talent may still be saved and I know Father will do his best to cure him. Gabriel can come to his own conclusions. I'll never tell him that story.

Perhaps it means I am no longer on the right side of the law, if there are sides in this horrible game, but I can't feel sorry for the creatures who make the drugs for people like Rolley. But Vincent, you have enraged Joe! He is sure you were involved and is more determined to find you than ever. He is now obsessed with that!

Gabriel was talking to the warehouse manager on the phone when you burst into the office. He heard you. In order to ensure that the one survivor didn't talk, Gabriel went to see him in hospital. He seems to get entry wherever he wants. I'm sure no one "officially" saw him. Anyway, Gabriel told the man to have the courage to end his own life - which apparently he did. He was very badly burned and probably wouldn't have survived anyway. Or so I tell myself. I detest almost everything I learn these days. How many more ways must I justify my silence and cooperation? I hate myself for this subterfuge.

What is happening to me, Vincent? Have I become cold and obsessed as well, being around so many people who think that way. I don't see them much, but I have no friends here, none at all. There's no one to talk to, as I would you or Jenny. I feel like an outcast, a non-person, inconsequential. I am effectively all of those things, yet somehow, I am still alive.

And I wonder why I tell you these things, as if you can read them as I write them. It seems a bit ridiculous, but I need this outlet, Vincent. I have no one else to talk to - no one at all. I hope you'll forgive me for any inane remarks, that you understand I understand almost nothing, and truly know less.

So Joe was thwarted again and is probably blaming Diana, because she was there in that hospital room before Gabriel. Now Joe knows you could not have had anything to do with the man who died in hospital, except that you put him there, through your action in the warehouse. I doubt anyone is sorry to see that place gone, even Joe. But justice must be served. I'm sure he believes that.

I know that you are now desperately trying to find Gabriel and our son. You have very little information, but a face, a name and the ring. Gabriel has covered his tracks well. He has to, Vincent, although I hope it isn't for much longer.

Diana is protecting you. I know this because Joe would have had an army down in the tunnels by now, if he had any inkling where you are. I pray that won't happen, that he remains ignorant. Gabriel is trying to divert attention from you, but is not being helped by your actions.

I wouldn't tell you not to destroy these drug places, even if I could, but please be careful. I'm sure Diana is also giving you advice, because I sense she cares for you too. I hope she isn't finding the dichotomy too much to bear. I think she's tough, but she will have to fight Joe, unless she can come up with a reasonable explanation. Gabriel says he's working on that. He doesn't want anyone getting any closer to him before he's ready to leave the scene. He says it will be soon now.

The destruction of the warehouse was apparently the signal to begin dismantling the operations he has taken so long to set in place. He told me it won't take long. That's the first good news I have had since I've been here.

Our son seems upset now, Vincent. He is unhappy, perhaps feeling your despair. I can only comfort him when I hold him, and I can't do that all day and night. Gabriel recognizes that our son needs his father, and has promised to bring you here. The end game is starting, he says. He won't tell me how that's going to be done - or when exactly. He says he's waiting for the right time, whatever that means.

I have to trust him, as I am unable to leave without our son. And if you are coming, I'll wait an eternity. Gabriel says it's not safe just yet, because there is too much violence surrounding him. Only careful distractions will prevent Joe from searching you out. Joe must be convinced that the person he seeks is not you, but Gabriel himself. Diana knows this - but Joe is not seeing clearly. He's angry.

I have become an automaton. Only our son know my true self, because only with him can I relax a little, but I can't be seen to show emotions other than those everyone expects. No matter, he seems to understand. I hope you can feel him a little too. Thank goodness you can't locate him! I don't want you to take such risks now, just when I'm assured events are moving in the direction I wish.

Our bond comforts me, just the same. We are together, in a sense, my love, through our son, although you don't know it yet.

I have had to contain myself, draw into a kind of shell, keep calm, keep from crying, even as I try to guess what will happen next. I wonder if I will ever be able to cry again?

7. - Thursday, November 2, 1990 (Chimes at Midnight)

Dear Vincent,

It seems that Diana has been asking jewellers about the ring. One of Gabriel's network was tipped off, so he took steps to bring Diana here. To kidnap her.

I didn't see her, of course, but Gabriel told me a little about their meeting. Apparently, she didn't come

willingly and they very nearly had to hurt her. She almost escaped. At this point, Gabriel does not want the police involved, but he believes she managed a call to Joe.

Gabriel was very careful at their meeting, and she saw our son, although she pretended to be skeptical. He told her 'his' son is very ill, dying in fact. Well, what would she know? What would any of them know? It was a good ploy and I know why it was done. So she would tell you, of course.

But Diana is very observant, he says. He has discovered she has a remarkable mind, an analytic one, although she says little and revealed nothing. He's sure she'll find some way to track him down to this place. She came here blindfolded and left the same way, but she saw inside the house. Now she will want to find our son for you. Gabriel will be less important.

Gabriel said he will not be here much longer. Only a few things in this house remain, and those will stay. He has destroyed a lot of records, he says. Now, he is been taking steps to get you here and all of us away.

He gave Diana an ultimatum and she apparently delivered it to you. He wants you here, Vincent, where Joe can't get you and Diana is temporarily neutralized. He wants you to see our son and to be motivated to save him and escape.

Gabriel has deliberately used our son for this end. I didn't know this until today. He told the nurse that she has to walk him around the house, on the pretense of getting him used to her, implying that I won't be alive much longer, nor you either. I was there when he said this to her and it chilled me to the bone. Even though I know he doesn't mean me or our son harm, it upset me and our son felt it. So he behaves exactly as Gabriel wants, fractious, upset, whimpering.

The nurse obeys, but our son doesn't like her. He can probably sense that she is afraid for her life and dislikes him. So he is not happy, our dear baby. I do believe he's empathic to more than just we two in his bond. Just like you, Vincent.

Does Gabriel suspect that connection yet? I think perhaps he is just using whatever material comes to hand. It's important to him that our son be unhappy, just for a short while. I am still with him sometimes when he sleeps, and he knows I'm here. But neither of us is sleeping well.

I tell myself that if this brings you to me, I'll wait willingly. Our son is not in pain and he's sleeping when the nurse leaves him alone, but he's eating less. But that nurse and doctor are upsetting him. The doctor has been taking blood samples and has examined him thoroughly. Gabriel is using our son's reaction to make his point. The doctor is as frightened as the nurse and has stated his concerns, while I was there, about our son's blood type, which is unique, being neither yours nor mine.

But our son will survive this. There isn't much time to wait now, and that is all that really matters.

~

Oh my love, you're here, in the cellar of this place! Gabriel told me that today. How that came to be is a story in itself. I wonder what he told you? He tells me very little now. He is concentrating on the finale.

But when I found out you were here, it was very hard to stay in my room, although I managed not to show it. However, my agitation was felt by our son and he became even more upset. Fortunately, Gabriel was able to counter that by taking him to you. I saw him go, Vincent, and said nothing. What could I say? He is with his father, and I cannot begrudge him that, although I do envy him seeing you. Soon, my love.

Gabriel let me see the closed circuit TV of you in that cage downstairs. You were sitting on the floor, cradling our son and the expression on your face was soft with love. You have chains hanging from your wrists. Gabriel says he had to make you appear to be properly restrained, so he had to chain you up. Too many people have seen you in action.

His people are frightened of you. For good reason, since you broke those chains! That surprised Gabriel. He knew you were strong, but not how strong. He almost appears to be sorry that this is all ending. I

think he wants to know you better, Vincent. You are something unexpected in this operation. He finds you fascinating.

I hope you can forgive me for not breaking away and coming to you, my love. I suspect there are things I do not want to know about your incarceration. Gabriel has said so little that I'm suspicious. But he assures me you are being fed and are well. He says you are necessary for the health of our son – whom he told you is now his. He is goading you, I know.

Soon, my love, you and I will be together at last, forever. I know it now. I can feel that this nightmare is coming to an end.

But I worry about the nurse and doctor. They are obedient, but they are also becoming so frightened that they might do anything. Gabriel is saying little, but he's watching. I don't think anyone would harm our child, the child Gabriel has claimed is his to everyone who will listen. But you are another matter, as am I. Will they try to anticipate what Gabriel wants? I don't think the doctor or nurse would dare. But others are not so clever and they're dangerous because they are heavily armed and ruthless.

How long can Gabriel keep up this farce? Diana, he told me today, is seeking him and has a clue – a ceramic tile used on the floor. This will all end in a matter of days, he says.

Gabriel has given me clear instructions on how to escape, while you rescue our son. He says there is an old, disused steam tunnel under the house. It isn't in good condition, but it will get us away.

So I had to decide what to wear for this last scene. I came here in office clothing, but Gabriel anticipated that and has insured I'm properly clothed. This morning, I received a package that contained jeans, a sweater and a jacket, as well as a pair of boots and underthings, all taken from my apartment! I don't ask how he managed that. It's wonderful to have some of my own clothes again. The clothing I've been wearing here is nondescript, like that brown pantsuit I wore to the cemetery. Nothing stylish, although not uncomfortable. While I was pregnant I wore nothing but a white gown the whole time. Since our son's birth, I have been wearing simple clothing and slippers.

Why didn't he get me some of my own clothes before, if he could? Then my brain started to work again. Of course he couldn't! Diana would have known, since she was in that apartment often, apparently. This means that she has found out everything she needs from there and that part of the investigation is over. I certainly hope so!

I had not realized how much I missed dressing as I wished, for comfort, casually, in clothes I had bought and liked. How very silly this sounds. As if clothes matter now! So I have not quite shed all those rich girl ways, my love. But I know that life is over – and I will have no regrets if I'm with you and our son. None at all.

Gabriel says he will not have much warning, so I must be prepared to take an escape route down some hidden stairs to the cellar, as soon as he gives me the command. He says to use the entry in this room, my sitting room. It leads from the back of a closet I never use. I had never even opened it. But there's a coat hook on the back wall. He showed me. Pulling on it opens a panel to reveal a door. The other people in this house do not know about it – he has promised me that. I will be safe.

I am not so sure of that, given some of his failures, so I will not go unarmed. I have kept a small sharp paring knife in my jacket pocket, just in case. If anyone noticed the loss, they haven't said anything. I think a certain amount of chaos reigns here now. I hear a lot of noise from the control room – Gabriel giving his last orders, I hope.

I have not seen the doctor today and I wonder about that. Gabriel has said nothing, but the nurse looked quite frightened when I saw her, a far different expression from her usual blank look. She went to the nursery and when I followed after a while, she didn't look at me. Something has happened. I can't imagine what.

But I have no thoughts to spare for her or the doctor. Why should I care about them? They have done nothing but make our lives unpleasant.

So I have my clothes set out ready to wear. I will take nothing else. There's nothing I want. Gabriel says our son will escape with you. I don't know how he'll arrange that, but he assures me it will happen. I don't know whether to believe him, but what choice do I have?

I'll see you both at the end of the escape tunnel. I tell myself this every few minutes, as if by repeating it, I guarantee it will happen.

I don't know how all this will come about, but I know you will stop at nothing to save our son. I just hope no one dies who does not deserve to.

And Diana? What about her, I wonder. Will she have a role to play too?

But I am not out of here yet. Every hour makes me more nervous. So much could go wrong!

And finally, there is Gabriel himself. He has not told me where he is going after this. I wonder. He seems very closed-mouthed. He may be worried about his own safety, but he is ensuring that of mine, and yours, and our son's, so I will forgive him his secrets. I know he won't betray us. I truly hope I never see him again, though.

My eyes burn now, Vincent, as if the tear ducts have dried out. I don't want to cry, but the waiting is so difficult. I must be strong to do what has to be done. I hope nothing goes wrong.

8. Monday, November 20, 1989 (Invictus)

Dear Vincent,

Gabriel sent the nurse to the nursery and then led me into his closed circuit TV room. He was watching you, Vincent. You were sitting on the floor of your cell, looking sad, now without our son, but somehow defiant too. I could tell you were listening, feeling our son, that your bond with him was strong now.

I looked at Gabriel. He spoke quietly, almost sadly.

"The last act is prepared, the players wait. There will be a raid very soon, led by Joe Maxwell. We will soon be surrounded. Vincent will escape and come to the nursery. The guards have their orders. I have one last act to play."

Then Gabriel told me that he would not see me again and wished us well. I thought he might apologize, Vincent, but he didn't. Such men probably never do. In their minds, they can never do anything wrong, because they have good intentions.

"Go down the secret stairs in one hour. Wait at the bottom until you hear a noise. It will be unmistakable, that of a metal screen on the steam pipe entry being broken off. This is where Diana will come in, but there may be others too. Wait until it's quiet and they're gone, then leave through the pipe. The pipe is small and goes some distance, but at the other end you will be in a larger tunnel and will be able to find your way out."

He said you will come to the nursery, take our baby, then escape before the raid begins. Diana will tell you about the pipe. Gabriel is sure she will come to the nursery too.

I wanted to ask why he's waiting for this, that he must have an exit plan, but he looked at me with the kind of expression I had seen on his face when talking to Pope. One calculated, I'm sure, to discourage questions or comments.

I knew then that he was not expecting to exit this last act, as he called it. He'll be in the nursery, I'm sure, waiting for you. Where else would he be? I know he'll keep his promise, but I hope the confrontation is not deadly. Somehow, I expect it won't matter. Gabriel knows exactly what's going to happen. I don't want to ask, Vincent. As long as you escape with our son, I cannot let it worry me.

Perhaps Gabriel played his part too well. He has no friends now, and he could not reveal himself or

what he has been doing, except perhaps to Joe. I can feel sorry for him now. I don't dislike him enough to wish him dead.

You would be happy to kill him, my love, as would Diana, for what he has done. Even Joe might not hesitate, this once, just so that he could see an end to all this frustration.

I'm sure Gabriel could still escape, by helicopter if no other way. Why won't he? I've asked myself this several times over the last 24 hours. I looked at him and he saw the question in my eyes. He dropped his head. His voice was soft, toneless and bleak.

"The stage is set, chess pieces are shifting into place. The players with the key roles await their moves. Will it be a checkmate or a stalemate – or will the board be destroyed?"

There was a heavy silence after that. I could think of nothing to say. I did wonder who was the king and who would make the final move? I knew I was not even a pawn now, merely a bystander, insignificant, but aware of a battle that I must survive.

"Leave me. Take the stairs in one hour," he said again. I almost wanted to shake his hand, Vincent, but he had them clenched and he didn't look at me. I couldn't bring myself to thank him.

So I left and made my way back to my room, put on my own clothes and jacket, and made sure the little knife was in my pocket. I sit now in a chair and write these last lines. There's an inside pocket in my jacket and this journal will just fit there. I cannot leave this behind. This observer has a secret. And I will want to add the final lines of this adventure when I am safe with you and our son.

I'm watching the clock and waiting, dreading these next hours, hoping that this orchestrated event happens as Gabriel intends.

Oh, how glad I am to be leaving at last! The house is silent, but it seems to be waiting for something. Gabriel is waiting, I know. Perhaps you are too.

I would like to see our son one more time, but I know that I must not. The nurse is in the nursery and I must not frighten her or endanger him, or do anything that might upset this plan. I don't know what she knows.

This is our only hope now, Vincent. I must do exactly as I was told. I will not see Joe or Diana, then. I hope they can forgive me for everything.

I must go now. It is time. Until we meet again, my love. Farewell, but not goodbye.

Tuesday, November 21, 1989 (Home Again)

Dear Vincent, my love,

It has been so hard to concentrate. I must write it all down though, the last part of this adventure, before I forget. It's important, a part of my history – but not just mine, of course.

I went down the stairs, as I was told, and waited at the bottom. It was chilly, but I sat on the bottom step with my hands in my pockets, fingering the knife, feeling the comforting square of my journal. I had put the pen in my pocket as well. I didn't want to leave anything with my fingerprints on it. Gabriel had brought me a pair of my gloves too, so I put them on before I left. They seemed looser than I remembered, as did my clothes. I guess I really have lost weight.

I wondered what you'll think of me, after so long. I saw you on the monitor, of course, and you seemed different, more intense. Of course, it was hardly a good experience for you. We will both have some adjustments to make, I'm sure. How could we not be changed by what has happened?

How silly that little knife seemed as I felt it! There was nothing else to do but sit and think. I wondered how long I would have to stay there, and of course every minute felt like an hour. It was too dark to see my watch.

I kept nervously touching the middle of my chest, and it took me a while to realize what I was doing. I was feeling for my crystal, your gift to me. But I had not seen that since before my abduction.

I don't know what happened to it, Vincent. I lost it somewhere. And because I had nothing else to do, I started to think about that. Where could I have lost it? Of course, where else? It must have got caught and ended up on the floor of that cave, where you and I put your beast to rest. It distressed me that I couldn't think where I had lost it afterwards. Luckily, you didn't notice.

I wonder if you found it later, or if we will find it should we visit that place again. It's a bittersweet memory, Vincent, and perhaps we should. It's where our son was conceived, after all. It deserves to have a better association than the one you probably remember. I suspect you still don't remember what happened there. I think it's somehow tied up with our bond, strange as that seems.

I stopped musing when, after what seemed like an eternity, I heard a lot of noise, helicopters, the sounds of truck engines, echoing even in this hidden place. I heard a metallic noise from outside the door and knew that was my signal. I waited until I heard footsteps go by, waited several more minutes, then carefully opened the door a crack, grateful that it made no noise. I saw a silhouette and flashlight some distance away, then it went up some steps.

There was nothing else to see. The place was very dim but I could see it was cluttered with old junk. I let the door close softly behind me and went into the pipe, which was quite small and obviously unused for a long time. Diana - I presumed that was who had emerged - had broken the spider webs, but there were a lot hanging. I felt them touch my face and hands as I moved, but tried not to notice, or think about the spiders who made them. There were more important concerns. I had to keep moving and get away. I could see very little, but it was plain where I was to go. It was slightly less dark ahead of me.

Gabriel was correct. It hardly rated as a tunnel. For once I was grateful that I'm small, and that I was wearing gloves. I had to feel the sides of the pipe to know whether I was walking straight. I was a little stooped but kept up a brisk pace for some while. I felt that I had to move as quickly as I could, to get well away before anything happened behind me. I walked a long time, but I knew I couldn't stop to rest.

Then the murk lifted gradually and finally I could see something, a brightness, ahead. The pipe seemed to be coming to an end. It was a welcome sight because fear seemed to dog my heels. I tried not to think about what was happening back in that house, but what else was there to think about? Everything depended on Gabriel's plans working. And what was ahead? I had no idea but my thoughts were back with you, my love.

I finally emerged into a tall brick-lined tunnel junction – and what a relief it was to stand up at last! But I had no time to do more than stretch, because I looked around, and there was Father, standing against a nearby wall. He blended in so well, I didn't see him immediately.

The light was much better here and I saw his mouth drop as he realized who I was. He straightened up, speechless. Obviously, he had been expecting someone else – you, of course. That he was here meant he had played an important role in this escape plan. Of course he would want to be here! I felt a rush of love for this old man.

“Catherine?” he croaked out at me finally. I went to him and he gathered me into a hug. I could feel my tears starting then. He didn't hold me tight, as if he was afraid I would break. I suppose he must have realized I was thinner than when he knew me before.

I nodded, unable to say anything, and looked back at the pipe entry. I could hear the noise of distant shuffling in there and I knew it had to be you, Vincent. I almost considered going back in there, to meet you, but then worried that it might be someone unfriendly, so I hesitated.

Father, though, moved forward. He motioned me to the side and I knew he was right to do so, just in case. I moved into the shadows on the other side of the pipe. Also, I felt that he deserved to be the first to greet you. He had obviously made plans with Diana.

We waited, and the minutes ticked by, and suddenly there you were, bent almost double as you exited the pipe. You held our son close to your chest. The chains were still dangling from your wrists and they clattered disturbingly. You saw Father right away, and the two of you stood for some moments looking at our son. Father was almost overcome with emotion. I was unable to hold back the tears as I watched you both. You looked so happy, so hopeful. I want to remember that scene forever, my love.

Finally, Father looked over at me and I said your name, barely more than a whisper. I moved into the light. You stiffened and turned your head. You almost dropped our son in shock. I saw your arms shake.

I was paralyzed. I couldn't speak, and my tears were falling like rain. You handed our son to Father, reached me in two steps and caught me up in a hug that almost broke my ribs. I felt the chains hit my back and that sobered me. I didn't know what to say. My throat had closed up.

You whispered 'Catherine' in my ear over and over, in that voice I had dreamed about for so many long months, and which in dark moments, I had feared I might never hear again. I managed to whisper your name again.

Finally, Father cleared his throat and spoke quietly. "We must leave here. Now. We don't know who else may come out that pipe."

You let me go and nodded, but kept my arm in yours. Then I noticed your poor hands. They looked raw, red and burned. I knew they had to be painful. I saw you wince. I didn't know what had happened, but you shook your head and I knew I shouldn't ask, not then. There was no time.

"It is nothing, Catherine. They will wait until we get home. Please don't worry."

You held my arm tight under your elbow and wove the other through Father's. He could not use his cane and hold our son as well. I could tell you were torn but you needed to feel me, as if I might dissolve into a dream. I felt the same way, and my legs were shaking in reaction. I needed your strong arm, giving me strength. I could not fail you. We were all still in danger. There was no time to waste.

"There's a vehicle waiting above the manhole at the next junction," Father told us.

When we got there, Father passed our son to me, and you went up the ladder to shift the manhole cover and climb out. Father followed half way up and then I passed our son to him and then he was passed to you. I followed Father as quickly as I could. You helped me up and then we all climbed into the back door of the vehicle – which was an old hearse.

The irony didn't escape me. A hearse of all things! And I still not dead! But the driver – who looked like he was a taxi driver - got us back into New York.

Meanwhile, Father rooted around and found a plain black cotton cover in a plastic bag. I presume it was used to cover a casket. He tried to tear it, without luck. You were holding our son and seemed engrossed. Then I remembered my little knife. I dug it out of my pocket and handed it to him. He used it to start the tear and then ripped off long strips of the cover. He shuffled over to you and you handed our son to me. Then Father looked at your hands, then picked up a plastic bottle of water someone had left in a string bag attached to the side.

"We have to try and get all that rust off them," he said, by way of explanation. He poured water over your hands, one at a time, over the plastic bag. You winced and close your eyes.

Then Father bound your hands with the cotton strips and neatly bagged up the water.

With your hands now covered, you seemed less tense and I handed our son back to you. I'd had months of holding him. You needed to far more than I - and you couldn't take your eyes off him.

We drove into your warehouse, the same one where I had first seen Peter delivering supplies to you during the plague epidemic. How long ago that seems now! Another life.

You carried our son when we left the vehicle and your face was calm and full of love. I held onto your arm, wanting to feel your heat, see your joy, just to know that you were there.

Ah, it has been such a long, cold, year for me, emotionally. I wonder if I will ever not think of those terrible months every time I look at you and our son? Certainly, we will have to make new memories now. I know we will.

We took the freight elevator down and walked to the home tunnels. The pipes were chattering crazily and I knew we could expect a large welcoming committee. Father suggested we go to his chamber and he tapped that message on the pipes.

You were carrying our son, gently, almost as if he were a basket of eggs. I stayed close. If I lagged, you stopped. I was tired, although I had done almost nothing for days but wait. I felt emotionally drained, even as my love for you gave me strength. I felt as if I walked on air, but also felt as insubstantial as dandelion fluff, as if I might indeed become mist. It felt like a dream, walking through those stone tunnels, towards a new life. My dream of being with you was coming true at last. We were now a family.

We arrived at Father's chamber, and there was everyone I had seen at the funeral, now with entirely different expressions. They were amazed to see you, Vincent, and our son, but seeing me seemed to leave everyone speechless, although there were a few gasps. Peter was there too, which surprised me, but I was very glad to see him. He looked no less astonished.

I smiled at everyone and moved to hug Mary and then the others, one by one, finishing with Peter, who held me the longest. It was wonderful to feel real caring arms around me. My tears were falling and I could hardly see by the time I returned to you. You gathered me close with one arm, holding our son with the other. He looked up at both of us, gurgling happily.

You were tired, and I'm sure Father was too, since he does not usually walk so far. So he begged everyone's indulgence and announced that we would see them all at breakfast, that we all needed to rest. Peter proclaimed he would be back for breakfast and let no one stand in his way. There was laughter at that.

Everyone filed out, patting us as they did so, needing that sense of touch, as if we were not quite real, yet. They were all smiling broadly, though. Father collared Mouse before he left and nodded at your chains. Mouse grinned and ran out.

"Now let me put some salve on those hands, Vincent," Father ordered. He pulled you into the dispensary and I followed, carrying our son. Father took off the bandages, washed them more thoroughly with something mildly soapy and then dried and spread salve on them, before wrapping them with gauze. I saw you sigh and relax, so I know they must have been hurting. I wanted to ask how that had happened, but couldn't, not then. I suspected this had been part of Gabriel's plan and I silently cursed him for making this last indignity necessary.

Mouse had returned and was shifting from foot to foot, holding a leather bag, waiting for his turn. Father ignored him.

When everything put away, Father turned to look at the three of us, standing close together, as if we could not be separated by so much as an inch. Leaning heavily on his cane, tears were now rolling down his cheeks.

"I don't know what to say," he said, shaking his head. "It's almost too good to be true. I almost wonder if I'm dreaming."

"If you are, then so am I," you told him.

"And what about me?" I asked. "Am I a phantom?"

Neither of them spoke for long moments, just looked at each other and then at me.

"I think you will have quite a story to tell, young woman," Father said at last.

I nodded. I didn't mention this journal because I wanted you to read it first, my love, and anyway, I wanted to know the end. What happened in that house and to Gabriel? I still had to write the final chapter.

“Now?” Mouse asked, and Father nodded.

Father said good-night, pleading fatigue, and we went back to your chamber. You lay our son on your bed. He was asleep now, perhaps as tired as we were. He looked so wonderful there. Both of us looked at him for some while.

Mouse was waiting impatiently and you sat down on your chair and held out one of your arms so he could work on the manacles. I saw Mouse frown, but he tried different bits of metal on the lock mechanism and finally found one that satisfied him. He gave it a twist and one manacle fell off with a clatter. Then he quickly released the other one.

You were free! The chains sat on the floor. I could not take my eyes off them. I could feel my jaw tense and tried to relax it.

You thanked Mouse and he smiled and left quickly, having for once nothing to say. Even he knew he would not be wanted now.

You looked over at the chains and picked them up, gingerly, using just the tips of your fingers. Then you lifted them onto the scales of the Lady of Justice statue in the corner of your chamber, one chain in each. I reached into my outside jacket pocket and retrieved the little knife. I gave it to you and you added it to one pile of chains. Then you reached inside a vest pocket and pulled out a ring.

“Was that Snow’s?” I asked. You nodded and added it to the other pile. Justice is served at last, I thought, smiling at the silly joke.

Then I noticed something around the statue’s neck – your pouch! I must have stiffened because you saw what I looked at and carefully removed it from its place. You looked at it for long moments, then opened it to pull out my crystal!

I was speechless, Vincent. I was weeping as I looked at it and I reached out my hand. You put it around my neck as you had so long ago, and I felt it there, where I had always worn it, to give me courage above.

Then you told me you had found it after I died on the rooftop. You had gone to that dark cave to try and remember our loving. That you had seen a vision that launched you on your crusade to find our son, no matter what the cost.

Then you drew me into a hug. No more needed to be said. We would learn each other’s story soon. I could wait. We had not stood there long when we both began to yawn.

“Will you stay with me tonight?” you asked.

As if I could go anywhere else but where you and our son were! But I didn’t say that. I hadn’t expected there to be any question.

“Just try to send me away - ever,” I said, somewhat fiercely.

You looked at me, your tears flowing freely now. You hugged me to your chest again, not quite as hard as before. You were careful of your bandaged hands. I could have happily stood there forever.

“You will never have to wonder where I am, or what I want, or leave me, ever again,” you told me.

I didn’t say anything to that, but I felt the knot around my heart dissolve. I had been so afraid I would never see you again, my love, that I had prepared for the worst. Now I knew I was truly starting a new life with you.

You blew out all but one fat candle and then brought out the tunnel gown I remembered. We both got undressed and into nightwear. You put on a long shirt and soft pants that made me want to rub against you and purr.

You no longer seemed to mind if I saw you, although there wasn’t much I could see in that dim light. Your fears seemed to have become part of the past too. I was a little surprised, but too tired to comment. Then you gave me a long kiss, our first, and I felt my legs wobble. You must have felt that. You held

me tightly until my legs obeyed me, then we climbed into bed with our son between us. It was late now and anything we wanted to say could wait. We had the rest of our lives to talk. We wished each other a good night and fell asleep.

~

Wednesday, November 22, 1989 (Home, Day 2)

My dearest Vincent,

This morning, we left our son with Mary, after I had fed him, and went to the dining hall for breakfast. Peter was already there, sitting beside Father. We began to eat and William kept bringing me more food, mumbling about how thin I was. I did have a better appetite, but I couldn't possibly have eaten everything he put before me. It didn't matter, because you ate what I didn't and I wondered just how well Gabriel had fed you. Perhaps you had lost your appetite over the previous months too. You did seem a little thinner.

Before we had finished eating, Diana walked in and said hello to everyone. Then she saw me and I thought she was going to faint. She had to hold onto a table for support. It took her a while to get her voice back.

"Catherine? How?"

"A very long story, Diana," I said. "I'll tell you all about it, I promise, but you can't tell anyone that I'm here. Not ever."

"I know," she replied. "There are still people in the police department that can't be trusted. I'm going to stay here for a few days, as a guest, if that's okay. My loft needs some repairs."

She looked at Father then, who nodded. "You are always welcome here, Diana."

Diana sighed deeply and her voice sounded a bit strained.

"I had a lot of explaining to do yesterday, after the raid. I grabbed a few hours sleep at Joe's place. I couldn't go back to my loft and I had to get away before something else happened. I told Joe I'm on holiday, and he won't see or hear from me until I decide it's over. For once he didn't argue. He'll be too busy to worry about me."

"And Gabriel?" you asked.

"Dead," she said bluntly. "Shot with Catherine's gun. I left it with Joe. That stopped him from leaning on me too hard. Thanks for giving it to me, Father. It was the last act - and Gabriel knew it. He smiled at me just before I killed him, as if he didn't believe me capable of it."

Father nodded. Now it was my turn to look stupified.

"My gun?" I croaked.

Father looked embarrassed.

"You remember the gun you gave me, Catherine. The one that I had asked for when that gang invaded tunnels. We found it during the cleanup ... afterwards. I knew you wouldn't want it back, given what it had done, so I put it in a safe place.

"I had forgotten about it until Diana was brought down, dressed in only a raincoat and light clothing, needing our help. She couldn't go home because she was being sought by men who would kill her, some of whom were police officers. She couldn't trust anyone above and she had not been able to contact Joe."

"Gabriel told me you were dead," you told her dryly. "He threw Snow's ring to me. I kept it."

“Wishful thinking. And a memento.” Diana replied tartly.

I didn't know what to say, so I kept quiet. Of course you would all look upon Gabriel as having got his just desserts. That's what he wanted you to think. I said earlier in this journal that I would be sorry if he died, and so I am, despite what I know.

He was as kind to me as was possible under the circumstances. He could have told me nothing at all. I know he had a lot to answer for, and I know I don't know the half of it. I'm sure I will hear more. But he kept me and our son alive. That's worth more than a moment of regret at his death. And now I know he did not expect to survive this last act. He smiled at the end because he had done what he wanted for me, for us.

I dropped my head and looked down. So much pain - and all my fault. So I decided to keep my story to myself for a little longer.

I write this now in the evening, after a day of such happiness I can hardly contain myself. Our son is making happy sounds in the cradle you found for him. He fusses unless one or the other of us is nearby, except when he's asleep. You have gone to Father, to have him check your hands.

Our son will have his naming ceremony in a few days, once your hands are healed and we've all rested properly. Diana is invited of course. There is only one name possible for him. We both agree.

I found a few minutes to talk to Peter and he told me my apartment and my inheritance was safe and waiting for me. He had not been able to do anything with either while the investigation was going on. He commented he had never been so glad of the slow wheels of justice. I thanked him, and told him I'd talk to him about it all soon, when I'd had a chance to think over what should be done. He agreed it needed a lot of thought.

I am too happy to think about things like money right now, or my apartment. They are not part of this world, and therefore not important at the moment. And as I said from the start, my life above is over. I have the chance to go forward, as I have wanted to for so long. I will not change my mind. This is where I want to be.

I have a lot of time with you to catch up on, Vincent. That has to take priority. The world above, and the threads of my former life, can wait. I've seen enough of it for a long time. I'm starting a new chapter of my life, one that has everything I need now.

And before you even think of arguing, don't Vincent. I always knew what was really important in my life, after you and I met. But life above demands so much time, so much energy, allows so little reflection. That will never happen again.

Now my life is here, in this chamber with you and our son. I have a lot to learn, a lot to do, and so much to atone for. Don't try to deny me this mea culpa, Vincent. I need it. I deserve it. I have earned it. I must face it.

But you are here with me, and there is no reason why we cannot begin anew, with our son, discovering exactly what it means to be us, who have never been. I look forward to the journey, which will have its own challenges and joys, and demand more than any previous chapter in my life. I want no regrets to carry into the future now.

The only question I have is about Gabriel. Why did he not escape? Why did he look at me that way when he told me it was time to go. He seemed different, somehow, after the explosion on the boat. Perhaps he had over-stepped the plan and his bosses - whoever they were - had condemned the action that had killed Elliot Burch. Even in Elliot's reduced circumstances, his death would have had ramifications that couldn't be ignored. Perhaps Gabriel could see no good outcome from the end of his mission and had decided to take whatever fate awaited him in the house.

I don't know what to think, Vincent. I was kept safe and Gabriel was not unkind, although distant, most of the time. I ached for you, of course, and hated being kept in seclusion, but I have to admit I can't fault

the care given myself and our son. The worst I can accuse Gabriel is failing to relieve my boredom, which I have to admit was largely my own fault. It would have been very difficult to address, given my circumstances. Gabriel was not one to hesitate if something had to be done. I was simply not a priority. I *am* sorry that he's dead, I realize. Such a mysterious man, intentionally I know. I can barely comprehend the kind of man who would take on these long missions. Presumably, he had no family or friends to mourn him. How could he? A lone wolf would have been essential to this kind of operation. In a way, his life was a lonely one, a neverending play-acting. My exposure was brief and uneventful, in comparison. I can feel sorry for him, although I assume he did it because he liked it and was good at it.

So I am left with an enigma, Vincent. Perhaps that's the best epitaph Gabriel could ask for.

Looking back over what I have written in this journal, I am appalled at my meanderings. I'm sure your journal is nothing like this. I didn't write it with the intention that anyone but you would read it, of course. I know you will understand my state of mind.

Once written, however, it cannot be erased and I will not stroke anything out at this remove. It does reflect my state of mind. How can I not think of The Rubaiyat now? It seems so apt, so prophetic, so ... personal.

'The moving finger writes and having writ, moves on. Nor all our piety nor wit can lure it back to cancel half a line, nor all our tears wash out a word of it'.

I never felt the truth of this so much, Vincent. I know you will forgive me, but can I forgive myself? Your love can heal me. I have to believe that.

Epilogue

Vincent finished reading the last page of the journal and closed it carefully. So much of what he read had been surprising, even extraordinary, yet so much was missing. Catherine could not have known what underlay so many of the events she referred to. He had hated that she'd had to know. But if nothing else, their love now demanded complete transparency about the past.

Vincent had told his story, leaving out nothing, earlier in the day. There had been a dead silence in Father's chamber when he finished. Then one person had stood up, and then everyone had. They had all come together in a group hug, and everyone had cried, their tears soaking the clothing of their neighbours.

It had been, Vincent mused, cathartic. Perhaps they had all needed this in order to move forward. He and Catherine had found their peace in his bed, the night before. He had known she felt guilt and shame at being unable to do anything, even when she knew what was happening.

His crusade, as Catherine called it, to find his son, seemed almost unbelievable now. He had been obsessed, and had risked everything. He did not regret it, but wondered if he had perhaps been too willing to overlook the negative effect on those he loved. Diana had made that point clear and had stated he was dooming himself as well as his son. She had been the voice of reason. He had not been quite sane, he realized now.

He preferred not to think about Gabriel yet. Catherine obviously felt badly about her forced remove from what she did know about. He supposed his story would have to become part of tunnel history too. He could not escape himself so easily.

He looked over at Catherine, sitting on his bed holding their son. It was a picture he wanted to carve into his memory forever. Perhaps Elizabeth could record it for him.

She looked up at him and then looked down, her tears running down her cheeks again. So many tears, he thought. We shed them now like rain. He didn't want her to have to cry, ever again, but knew that

was impossible. Life was not so kind. However, he could make her happy, and that he would do that to the best of his ability.

How will I ever get used to seeing her here, in my chamber, with our son?

Vincent rose and knelt in front of her. He lifted her chin so he could look into her eyes, those beautiful green eyes, now shiny with tears.

“Catherine, don’t cry. You should have nothing to regret. Nothing. You are here, restored to me. And our son is safe.”

“But the pain, Vincent. The terrible months you endured, the danger to everyone ... and the deaths ... and then what Gabriel did.” Her voice trailed off into a whisper at the end.

“It is your story too, Catherine.”

She would be telling her part of the story tomorrow. He knew she was not looking forward to it, but having read her journal, he could see no reason for her to be anxious. He tried to convince her.

“You were a victim, as much as I. Safer, for which I am grateful, but still with your own hell to endure.”

“But Gabriel was so ... unkind, so ... despicable to you,” she said, quietly. She was glad she had not known of Vincent’s torture at the time. She might have been tempted to attack Gabriel, or that odious doctor, or even Pope. She almost begrudged Diana the credit for Gabriel’s death.

Then she remember what she had written in her journal. He was dead. There was no point in recriminations. Gabriel had done what he promised. Who was she to judge what he had deemed necessary? They were safe now. That was all that mattered.

Vincent looked at her quietly for a few moments, realizing that she was conflicted about Gabriel, although he had kept her and their son safe. Vincent saw it differently. He had matched wits with Gabriel, but he understood only too well the attraction of physical power as well, and could not condemn the man in this instance.

“Gabriel knew it was the only way, Catherine. He recognized that I did not fear death, that I almost welcomed it. What did I have to live for? Our son was the only thing tying me to this world. He knew that. Gabriel could not touch my soul, no matter what he did to my body. He could only make me angry enough, and desperate enough, to escape his cage and rescue our son. I see that now. And he destroyed the evidence, for which I am grateful.”

Catherine had earlier expressed some worry about the tapes from the closed circuit TVs, but Diana, also listening to the story, had revealed that they had been found as a melted clump in the bottom of an incinerator. Gabriel’s last act before the end. His second last one had apparently been to ensure there was nothing to obviously tie Catherine to that place. Any trace of a guest had been removed. The specialists had found nothing – but then they had not been looking for her, as Diana had pointed out. They would have needed a reason to search for anything beyond evidence of the crime syndicate, and there was none. Catherine was supposed to be dead.

Catherine supposed that was another debt of thanks she owed Gabriel. No one would be looking for her.

Vincent continued, softly.

“This is all past tense, Catherine. I would gladly endure it all again, to be here with you and our son now. Perhaps I needed to feel the sorrow I had always feared, the ultimate sorrow for me, losing you. I survived those months. They have made me stronger. More determined.”

“Determined?”

“Yes. I will never again deny myself, or you, any expression of our love. I thought I had lost you, Catherine. As I rescued our son from Gabriel, I knew I could look forward to nothing but watching him grow, motherless. I could not give him your love, and my own would have been tempered with sorrow. His birthday would have been the day you died.

“I questioned whether I was doing the right thing for him. I could not part with him, not then, but I wondered if I would have to eventually, for his own good.”

“Now he has both of us.”

Vincent nodded. “And an aunt in Diana. Without her help, I would never have found him.”

“Yes. Gabriel needed you to come to him. Diana made that mandatory. I wonder if we should tell her. She’ll feel like she’s been manipulated – as we all were.”

Vincent looked down at their son. He could not find it in him to regret anything that restored Catherine to him and gave him his son.

Catherine spoke again, softly. “Gabriel felt he had exposed all the criminals in the DA’s office. But apparently there are still some in the police department. He was after bigger fish – like Moreno. Joe will learn all he wants to know now.

“He’ll find the others, but it may take a while. All the people on that estate are in custody, Diana said. I told her the names of the ones I knew. There was enough evidence in that house to put them away for the rest of their lives. Gabriel did nothing to hide their complicity.”

“I’m afraid I left my mark on Gabriel,” Vincent admitted, after a silence. “I don’t know how Diana explained that. I slashed his face, much like I had slashed Devin’s. And there is the missing child. Will Joe forget that?”

“Joe knows about you, Vincent. Diana said so. But he also knows that you were not responsible for my abduction or death, or the abduction of our son after I died. He blames you for the warehouse fire, of course, but he will probably not pursue that. Moreno got what he deserved. Gabriel too. Even Joe can see that. Later, we may have to take him into our confidence, if he is not satisfied enough to close the file.

“Diana says no one looked at the cot closely, that it didn’t fit what they were looking for. She said the corpse which replaced me could have delivered a stillborn child. The coroner didn’t believe any child would survive that quantity of drugs. Diana has said nothing about what she knows about you or our child.”

Vincent sighed. “Always it comes down to me. I leave death and questions in my wake when I take action. I do not know what else I could have done, but I deplore the necessity.”

“And that’s the critical point, Vincent. The necessity was always there. You didn’t act without thought of consequences, or for revenge, or lightly. I hope you’ll never have to do so again.”

Vincent looked at her and planted a kiss on her lips. She closed her eyes and relaxed into his one-armed hug, their son beside them on the bed, encircled too.

There would be repercussions of these last months, of course. But there were years ahead of them now, happy times to enjoy. They would face whatever came together.

“Whatever happens, whatever comes ...” she whispered.

Vincent looked at her and smiled. “Know that I love you,” he whispered back.

“Though lovers be lost, love shall not,” he said after a pause, musingly. It seemed to have an entirely different meaning now.

“And death shall have no dominion,” she finished for him, for them both.

And as if those words were the key – and perhaps they were – Catherine felt her bond with Vincent explode into life. She heard him gasp and knew that he had felt the same. His eyes were luminous with love now, as were hers, even through the tears they were both shedding.

Their son, looking up at them both, wriggled happily and chuckled. There was nothing to be said. No more questions, no more answers were needed. They completed each other, all three. Nothing and no one could separate them now.

~

“In this city of night, in this city of millions, there are countless stories.

This is one, of two lovers who shared a bond that changed their lives. Forever.

This is our story.

Her compassion opened my heart to a world where goodness and truth was stronger than hate or fear.

Then, one day, I lost her. In a secret place, she gave me a son and waited.

Love reunited us, and our destiny now resides in each other, and in our son.

We will 'break in the sun, till the sun breaks down. And death will have no dominion'.”

(Dylan Thomas)

END