

REFLECTIONS

by Heather Peters

It is nearly dawn, and still, I cannot sleep. Even though we parted over two hours ago, I cannot get him out of my mind, my heart....

I must speak of him, if even only on paper. My vision of him is still sweet and clear in my mind.

Tonight, I was with him, in his chamber; and we spent many lovely serene moments reading to each other from Shakespeare and others. Aside from the distant tinkling of the pipes, and the subway rumblings, all was quiet in his secret world. Below. I envy Vincent his home beneath the city; and how I at times long only to remain there... always... to stay with him. But for now, these dreams are not possible.

When he reads to me, his comforting, soft tones both soothe and excite me. I close my eyes and center my concentration on him. I so love being where he is, where he lives, where he sleeps... where he dreams.

So much of his persona is captured there - in his chamber. Every candle with its waxy aroma, each book that emits muskiness with its age, all the bric-a-brac and symbols of our city; all are constant reminders of the man who dwells there. His chamber reflects his complex personality, and I never tire of being there; sharing secret, precious moments together.

His worn, huge arm chair cradles his body perfectly as he reads, and he so reminds me of a prince - confident in his domain, resplendent in his regal white ruffled shirt. He is so uniquely beautiful, yet so unaware of this fact.

God, he reads so beautifully. His voice carries with it not only a quiet gentleness, but also a calm command. He isn't even aware that his voice inflects a subtle hidden sensuality, that fills me with delicious sensations that I dare not share with him.

Can he possibly know how much I love him? He feels everything I do, so I guess he can. I cannot deny it any longer. I know I must be patient, take my time and not push him. I long to tell him how uniquely beautiful he is to my eyes; that it's his differences that I'm in love with, as well as his loving, gentle heart.

He is so wonderfully naive about himself, about his maleness, that it makes me shudder. At times when we're together, I can't help but stare at him and I'm sure he's caught my gaze of desire more than once. Can he feel my desire for him? Does he desire me when he holds me and our legs touch? Does he want me, does he want to touch me? Is he frightened of his own sexuality? Do I really want the answers to these questions, or am I afraid that if we do cross the secret path to physical unity, that the pure love he feels for me will lessen in his eyes?

I remember what Kristopher (or whoever he was) said to me in the warehouse - that I ask 'too many questions,' and that if I'm not careful, I might get answers. Well, I guess that's the lawyer in me. No... that's the woman in me. A woman deeply and hopefully in love.

I know of his fears. The night on the balcony, when he poured out his heart to me about Lisa, tore me apart. I hope by now that he knows (and feels) that I have absolutely no fear of him. The desire he felt for Lisa was a normal reaction for a teenager to have. Why didn't anyone bother to tell him that? I told him there was no shame in desiring her, but all he could see was the fact that he hurt her. What would have happened if she hadn't been a tease... if she hadn't pulled away? Would his

fear of a physical relationship between us be lessened? Or have Father's repeated warnings and lectures about Vincent's differences left a permanent mark in his mind?

He has never told me that he loves me. Oh, he's told me in many roundabout ways, and I know that he loves me truly. But I sometimes get the feeling that if he told me straight out, 'Catherine, I love you.' there would be no turning back after that. And to tell the truth, I'd have a hard time letting him go if he whispered those precious words to me.

Several nights ago, we were together on the balcony when it started to rain, really rain. He turned to embrace me and the sound of thunder caused me to throw my arms around his neck and hold him close. His musky, sweet scent made me shiver. I know that my actions aroused him. Gently, his hands caressed my neck under my hair. My body melted as his hands slid down to rest on the small of my back, and through the howling sound of the wind, he whispered my name in such a sweet, tormented voice, that it was all I could do not to beg him to carry me to my bed and never let me go.

I looked up at him through the downpour, both of us soaked to the skin, and I caught his quick glance at my nightgown and robe, drenched, and almost transparent. His gaze literally burned through me as we stood, our eyes transfixed, as though we were under a spell. For a moment, I almost thought he would stay all night.

I wanted to touch him everywhere. I lifted my hand and stroked his hair, pushing wet strands from his eyes. He caught my hands and laced his own through mine. The rain turned into a cold misty drizzle and my body shook from the dampness. I heard him take a deep breath, as if he were physically torn between his sense of nobility and his obvious arousal for me.

I wanted him. He knew it, and sighed deeply. I honestly thought for a split second that his passion might overshadow his sense of reason, but it was not to be. I wanted only to be a part of him.

I kissed his chin, but immediately knew I shouldn't have. His apprehension overruled his desire and he pushed back away from me. I told him I loved him, and his tortured look went through me like a knife. Oh, how I long to wash all his fears away. I want so much for him to be happy. For us to be happy. He deserves so much and it's sad to know he'll never have all that I want for him.

My fondest dream is to awaken in your strong arms every day, and to know you're with me every night... really with me. I want your face to be the last thing I see before I sleep, and the first thing I gaze upon when day breaks. Ah, those are indeed, my deepest, secret dreams. Vincent, you are my most precious fantasy, my innermost desire.

I am constantly battling with myself, fighting to contain my passion when we're together. Shall I tell you of my wakeful nights? No, I think not. On the nights when I do finally drift into fitful moments of sleep, all my dreams are of you. I wonder, do you feel my dreams as well as my conscious self? Can you feel us making love as my slumbering imagination conjures images of your burning flesh as it meets mine in loving unity? Does your body physically awaken to your desires as mine welcomes your maleness?

What am I to do, Vincent?

I know what I will do; what I have done for two years; I will wait. Patiently, I will continue to guide you as we journey upon untried paths and I will learn to understand your apprehension. Some day, you will realize to trust in me - without reservations - and to trust, more importantly, in yourself and in our love. For our love will show us the way, Vincent. I truly believe that we can endure anything, as long as we venture the way together.

Courage, indeed, will see us through the fears. But I've told you time and time again, that I am not afraid. I am ready. Have faith, Vincent, for there is no force on earth that can defeat us, as long as we have each other.

I can recall the time after we lost Ellie and Dimitri to the plague. You said something I will never forget. 'One either moved towards love or away from it, there is no other direction.' Well, your words couldn't have held more substance. We are moving forward, and the way is becoming clearer with each passing sunset. It's true, and I think you know that, too; don't you, Vincent?

All you need to do is look into my eyes to see the truth. And that truth is that I would never draw away from you if you wanted me. You are my heart, and whatever I am, it is because part of you lives in me. I am you. I live within you. Nothing can ever change that.

I often daydream about what it will be like when we make love. Will you take me to the Chamber of the Falls and lay me down on a soft blanket while the powerful rush of crashing water thrusts its mighty torrents between the rocks below? You told me once that being near the Falls gives you a sense of freedom, allows you to let go of your daily frustrations. Do you remember when you told me that? You couldn't have made a more sensual statement if you tried. You didn't even realize how much weight those words carried. Or, did you?

The Falls are definitely the most romantic place in all the tunnels, and I love our talks there. When you read Blake's 'Song' and Shelley's 'Indian Serenade,' I would close my eyes and your husky, mellow tones lift me till I feel I could float on a cloud. How I long for you to read Elizabeth Barrett Browning's 'How do I Love Thee?' but I don't think I could get through it without your lips meeting mine.

I want so badly to live with you, but I know that is not possible. I must do what must be done Above, and I love being a Helper to you and to those who dwell Below. Sometimes I think I'll go mad with want of you!

Do you ever dream of what it would be like to feel yourself inside me? I do, all the time. In the dead of night I often wake up, my heart pounding, my hands shaking because my dream was so real. And it's always the same. You come to my French doors, you slowly open them and enter my bedroom. Your cloak slips from your powerful shoulders and my arms lift to welcome you.

Our hands and eyes meet, and, without hesitation, you move to my bed. I am wearing a silk nightgown with thin straps which you slide off my body. I can see the passion rising in your eyes, in your being as you engulf me completely. It's as though you're living inside me, Vincent. It's the most exquisite sensation I've ever felt. And even though it's a dream, I can feel your flesh - hot, strong, hard. I can smell you... the unique scent of you. You are so gentle, yet commanding as our bodies respond to our most loving desires.

Am I sounding selfish? I don't mean to be. Am I being unreasonable? Maybe. I need you so much and I want to give you everything. I want us to experience all that can be possible for us. It's that simple... and that difficult.

Thank goodness you'll never read these words that I felt I had to express, even only to myself. I just did this to have a visual sense of my feelings. What I feel for you is real, Vincent; believe in it, believe in me. I cannot lie to you. I can't fool you, for you feel what I feel. I know you're experiencing every emotion, even now, aren't you?

Feel me. Sense my love for you. Our day will come. I promise you that with all that I am. Please know I am here for you, always.

I love you

Three days later....

"Okay, Geoffrey; now remember to give this to Vincent," Catherine smiled at the handsome ten-year-old, as she handed him a large manila envelope. "I can't come Below because I'm late for work, but please tell him I'll be back tonight, so that we can attend the Concert Society's Spring Recital."

Geoffrey nodded his head and smiled at the attractive woman. "Sure, Catherine. I'll get it to him right away. You can count on me."

"Good. It's the sheet music I promised I'd make copies of for the children. Now run along and I'll see you all tonight. Tell Vincent I'll meet him right here."

"Right here, I'll remember, Catherine. See ya tonight."

Catherine tousled his thick brown hair. "Tonight."

Reaching the office, Catherine slipped off her bolero jacket and went to her desk. She opened her large shoulder bag and removed a deposition she'd been working on. But when she opened the folder, she was surprised to find a manila envelope caught between the deposition papers. "What on earth?" she said to herself as she casually opened the envelope to spy the contents.

Sliding out the pages of assorted sheet music, her eyebrows crinkled in puzzlement as she pondered her error. If she held the music in her hand, then what had she given Geoffrey less than an hour ago?

Suddenly, the realization hit her hard. *'No, it can't be!'* her mind screamed. She had meant to burn the pages containing her most erotic and secret thoughts, but had put them aside instead. And now, because of her carelessness, her most intimate desires and imagined dreams were in the possession of the man they were least intended for!

"Oh, my God!" She practically flew out of her chair, but even as she gathered her bag, she knew that she'd be too late to catch Geoffrey. He would hand that envelope directly to Vincent and no one else. And at this very moment, Vincent was most likely reading the most personal thoughts she'd ever possessed. She swallowed hard and halted in her tracks. It was done.

"Hey, Radcliffe," Joe's voice came from behind her. "What are you waiting for? We have that deposition down at the Tombs. Let's go."

Catherine nodded weakly and followed Joe out of the office. Her heart was pounding madly, and her hands began to shake as she tried to think of a way to deal with this catastrophe.

'Maybe he won't read it,' she thought in consolation as she entered the elevator with Joe.

And maybe... he would.

He was waiting for her Below that night. She could feel his gaze searing her nervous body. Walking toward him, her mouth went dry and she thought her legs would fail her. She had absolutely no idea of what to say to him, nor of what he would say to her.

'Tell him the truth,' she told herself. Vincent always urged her to never fear the truth. She stopped and faced him, her head lifting to meet his gorgeous, blue-eyed gaze. Oh, how she loved him! Yes, every word was true.

"Vincent, I wish to explain ..."

"Catherine," he gently interrupted her. "We must talk."

She nodded in agreement. "Yes, we must."

Just then, she thought she spied a hint of a smile gracing his lips. Was it a smile? Yes, it was. She

watched in awe as he reached for her hand, and brought it to his lips, gently kissing each finger, and sending tantalizing shivers up and down her spine.

"I thought we might take a walk," she heard him say as he tightened his hold on her hand. He paused, considering his next words. "Maybe... to the Chamber of the Falls?"

My Dearest Catherine,

How shall I begin? As I place these reflections to paper, my hand trembles. Here I sit in my chamber, my mind, soul and body completely engulfed in your memory. How does one describe his feelings when he has journeyed to Paradise in a single night? I will attempt to do so by my inadequate words, so that I may keep you close to my heart.

Two years ago, my life was forever changed when I found you in the park. Never in all my wildest dreams could I have imagined that our candle-filled celebration on your balcony, our world, could culminate into something so special, so earth-shattering, that my body still aches with the recollection.

To have spent the night with you, to have loved you so completely, to be loved by you with such deep abandon, has brought to me a fulfillment that mere words can never hope to describe. It was your courage, your passion, that gave me the strength to take you in my arms and feel your softness. To touch your womanness, was to comprehend what it means to be a man.

I can still feel the silkiness of your sweet-smelling hair as the wondrous strands spilled through my fingers. My body aches now as I recall your angelic voice, whispering love words in my ear. I shudder once more and my body arouses again, even now, as I feel myself come into the warm intimacy you offered. The loveliness of your body calls to me even now as I sit here, alone, and I am almost tempted to come to you again, even though the light of day breaks in your world.

Once I thought my only sanctuary of a safe, secret place was my home Below; yet now the tunnels are rivaled by the safety I experienced in your loving, giving arms. I love you more than all of heaven's stars, and I will love you longer than time itself, even after I draw my last breath.

I can feel the tides of passion rising as your scent, so sweet, so wonderful, engulfs my body as I think of you. You make me feel beautiful when you looked at me from the depths of green, desire-laden eyes, and I could feel my whole being pulled toward you with an intensity such as I have never experienced.

I can still envision the candlelight in your bedroom, beckoning to us to share in its dance. A dance of light, of exploration... of sending our souls skyward into a ring of flaming fire. As you slid the cloak from my shoulders, I could feel the core of my being calling out for you, for your touch. The gentleness of your loving fingers played a passion-filled game with the fasteners of my outer clothing, and your actions brought me ever closer to the oneness of our destiny... eager to complete our dance of passion... in the softness of your thighs.

To have you touch me where no one has ever ventured, was sheer, utter ecstasy. To taste the nectar of your most secret place, brings me to a clear certainty; that I will never again awaken without wanting you... beside me, sharing in that most sacred of acts. I lived within you last night, Catherine, and at that most miraculous moment, I was unable to determine where I ended, and you began. You love me with such sweet surrender, with a soul so rare and precious. You open yourself to me with no reservations, no fear....no repulsion.

What a magical night! Filled with promises of all the city had to offer - the moon in all its glory, so bold and bright. I felt as if I could almost reach out and touch it. If I but had the power to pull it from

the sky and give it to you, Catherine, I would have, happily.

I watched over you as you slept... I reveled as we lay, entwined, sated from our lovemaking. I could feel your heart beating against my hand, and my tears fell freely, my joy causing me to realize for the first time in my life, what it truly means to share one's self... to give the deepest of yourself to another. If my life ended on this day, Catherine... just to know you have loved me in this way... would be enough.

I know that I cannot be all things to you, Catherine. Yet your strength in what could be for us, and your sacrifices, have given me the courage to envision all that may be possible for us. You have chosen a life of secrecy, of generosity, and of love. Without you, my life would be a dark, empty shell, void of meaning.

My world of darkness now has a flicker of hope - you. You are my hope, my dream, Catherine. You are my piece of the sky, my ray of sunlight in a world filled with storm clouds. Do I dare wish for a life of completeness for us? Do I dare envision more for us than just scant moments of measured happiness?

Yes, Catherine, I do.

I have nothing to give you. I am not able to walk beside you in the daylight. You cannot live in my world, nor I in yours. We will never marry, nor have children. But there is a certainty that will not be denied. I can, and will, give to you my heart, my body, and my soul. These I give freely, without reservations, without hesitation.

My memories of our treasured night are so bittersweet. I hated to leave you before the dawn, however, the manner in which you awakened me was sweet torture, indeed. Just to have you intoxicate me with the sweet wine of your passion-filled kiss, just to feel the warmth of the sensual curves of your body so soft, molding to mine perfectly is a vision that will burn through my mind, and haunt my dreams till next we join again.

Never have I known such physical love before last night... before you. I was not prepared for the intensely emotional eruption when our bond opened to its fullest. You then called out to me to fill you with myself, as your wings bid me entry into the core of your softness. How I was able to pull myself away from you after the magic we shared, I don't know.

Now that we have glimpsed all that life holds for us in its hand. I, too, hold a faint glimmer of hope that our dream may yet be possible. How? I do not know. But I do know that fate has opened yet another door to our possibilities. We stand at the threshold of a wondrous journey, and I feel that we have overcome yet another obstacle.

I will come to you tonight... when the stars shine brightly in the heavens... when the wind whispers through the foliage... when the stirrings of the city slowly fade... I will come to you, my darling Catherine, and again we will taste all the wonders in life.. .and in each other.

Until then, you have all my love, always...

Vincent.

January 12th - A selection from Catherine's journal

It grows late, and here I sit, in his comfortable worn chair. The candlelight gives off an almost ethereal effect, and other than the distant tinkling of the pipes and the far off rumbling of the subways far above me, our world is silent.

As each new day dawns, I grow more and more at ease here... in my new home... I live Below now.

I've been here for... well, since the first day of Summer, and I'm happy to say that I've never, ever regretted my decision to come and live here with him. This is where I want to be... need to be... where I belong... with Vincent, who is my love... my life.

Even now he is close by, sleeping peacefully, in his bed - our bed - the bed where we share our bodies... our hearts... our souls... together.

I can't pinpoint the exact moment when we both knew it was the right time to me to give up the world Above and embrace the universe Below, but it was not long after my father passed away. After that, I began to spend more and more time in Vincent's world, and the longer I stayed, the less desire I had to return to my empty life Above.

Vincent began to realize it, too, I think. And slowly, as he trusted my love for him more and more, and as our love deepened into a total commitment, we knew my destiny was to be here... to truly start a life... together. He knew I was unafraid of the risks, and willing to make any sacrifice to be with him. The doubts slowly faded into nothingness and the fears pushed back to expose only soul-deep love.

At last, his faith in my love for him enabled him to conquer his dark side. He has risen above the darkness; now all that remains are floating beacons of shimmering, sparkling light... I love him so.

Our love, in all its miraculous beauty, is our strength, our courage and because of this, my life is complete... whole.... I can want for nothing.

In three months, I will have a child - Vincent's child - our child. Already he senses that it is a girl... he says he can feel her tiny soul move within his own self, as it moves within me. He is almost like a child himself, for he shows an almost innocent wonder for the simplest things in life. A flower, Candlelight, Poetry. The sound of the children's voices... But most of all, when he lays his hand upon my stomach, and feels our child as it moves in me.

I never cease to be amazed by this extraordinary man, and feel so blessed that he loves me. We spend much time together these days, usually sharing private times in the Chamber of the Great Falls, visiting Mouse to inspect one of his new inventions, or sitting close to Father as he reads an excerpt from 'Romeo and Juliet' or 'Wuthering Heights' while I sit in Vincent's warm, strong embrace.

These days, we are discussing names for our unborn daughter. Samantha says we should name her Juliet, after her favorite Shakespearan heroine, while Zach and Geoffrey think Diana is better. They are studying astrology these days as was obvious when Kipper came up with the name Cassiopeia!

This morning when I awoke, Vincent was lying next to me, smiling down at me, and I cannot explain the joy that passed through me at that second. To have someone to wake up with, to share in a life, in an almost indescribable sentiment. I threw my arms around him, and held him close for many long, sweet moments.

I'm beginning to appear a little awkward lately, which can be attributed to my advancing pregnancy. Mary dotes on me, the children wait on me hand and foot, and Father, dear Father, tries not to show concern under that stern look. But I know he is jumping for joy that he will soon have a grandchild to love and to lend his wisdom and guidance.

Vincent shows obvious, loving concern for my impending labor and delivery. He says that if it were possible to take the pain from me and send it to him, he would gladly spare me that stage of childbirth. But I am not afraid. I would willingly endure any pain, make any sacrifice for him; for the safe arrival of our child. Mary will help Father with the delivery and Peter Alcott, our dear friend who delivered me over thirty years ago, will also be summoned when my time is near. And of course, Vincent will be with me... he is my strength, my anchor... my world. I can't wait for the onset of

labor, for it will signal the impending birth of a miracle - our dream came true.

How lucky she will be... our baby girl... to live in such a peaceful, loving, magical world as we have here Below. How fortunate she will be to have such an extraordinary, special father as Vincent. I know that together, we will guide her through a life filled with generosity, respect and love.

The love Vincent and I share is a rare thing, as my father told me when he appeared to me in a very vivid dream shortly after his death. And as Father told Vincent on another occasion, the love we share is something that warms all of us. The light we carry now will burn brightly, for our children, and beyond all our wildest expectations.

I am tired now. Our daughter kicks vigorously within me, and her movements fill me with an insatiable, indescribable joy. I have all ever dreamed of and more.

I have Vincent, we live in each other's hearts. Our bond is now deeper and stronger than ever before. He is in me--- always. I will never want for more. I love him...he loves me... it is enough.

Entry from Vincent's journal---April 12, Dusk

She blessed our world at dawn. My child was born - our child - child of our souls. Her name is Arielle.

My joy is indescribable as I speak of her, this tiny miraculous being. From the moment when I was allowed to guide her from Catherine's womb, to the magical sounds of her first lusty cries, I cannot seem to tear my eyes from her, or her mother.

They sleep now. Catherine rests comfortably in our bed, with Arielle close by, sleeping in the handmade cradle that Cullen so lovingly carved for her. I sit in my chair, just now able to calm my trembling hands so that I may speak of our precious miracle.

The pipes are alight with the news of the newest member of our world, and throughout most of the day, the rest of our family has been rejoicing, as evidenced by the constant sounds of laughter and happiness. Even Father seems to be enjoying the attention he is receiving. I truly feel he is relishing his newest title; Grandfather.

She is tiny, and perfect, and so beautiful, our little one. Catherine says she is our small part of immortality, and it's true. When I watch her, my thoughts go back to a time, only three short years ago, when I was certain that my life was destined to be one of only solitude and aloneness. But surely, on this joyous of all days, Arielle is wonderful proof that dreams, indeed, can be a reality. Our Arielle is living and magical proof that love can conquer all differences. My joy is such, that I fear I shall burst with happiness, for now I have all a man could ever hope for.

What can I say about Catherine? Dear, sweet Catherine, who for most of last night endured the great pain during long, arduous hours of labor and childbirth, refusing all medication offered to her in order to bring our daughter into the world. Catherine, who never wavered during delivery, as she centered every thread of courage to me through our bond, so that I might guide her through her most difficult moments.

Could it be possible to love someone so deeply? Is it possible to love a woman more with each passing day? Yes, it is so. And today, she has presented to me the most wondrous gift that one person could ever receive. Thank you, Catherine; for loving me enough to give me our daughter. Thank you, Catherine; for loving me.

As she was being born, Father allowed me to guide her from Catherine's womb. I felt her take her first breath, as I took her into my hands. My eyes met Catherine's at that initial moment of life, and as our bond opened to its fullest; I, too, felt Arielle's heartbeat in my palm. It was as though, for just the fraction of a moment, I felt the beginning of her life resonating throughout my soul. I then gave

her to Catherine, as tears of joy fell freely from all of us.

Shortly after, Catherine's loving arms reached for me, and we savored a long, loving embrace. We just lay there – exhausted - happy to be in the fold of each other's caress. And just before falling asleep, Catherine smiled at me, and uttered two words as she looked at our beautiful Arielle.

"Thank you."

I lost all sense of time as I watched them sleep. I felt a deep sense of peace, of serenity fall over the three of us then. I truly know that I am complete at this most joyous time in my life. If not for Catherine's endless faith in our love, our tiny miracle might have never been. Never in my wildest dreams did I think myself capable of fathering a child. Now, thanks again to Catherine, who is my love of a lifetime, my Arielle is here; and I am her father.

Just for a precious moment while they rested, I allowed several of the children to peek in on our precious treasure. Samantha, Zach, Eric and Geoffrey quietly gazed, as though in awe of her. They threw her a kiss and Samantha whispered to me that, as a surprise for Arielle, all the tunnel children were quilting a special pink and white blanket as a gift for our child's Naming ceremony, which will be held as soon as Catherine regains her strength.

Now I feel I must write of the origin of our child's name. Shortly after the baby's birth, we were all quite happy to learn of my brother Devin's arrival. We shared many joyous tears, and the moment he lifted the baby and cradled her into his arms, he looked at me and smiled.

He informed all of us then, in his own inimitable way, that since he was the child's uncle, he should have the honor of naming her. Much to the dismay of Father, my dear brother announced his choice for our little one.

He told us that we should name her, Arielle. Now Catherine and I had been discussing possible names for months, but had never settled on one definite name for our daughter. Since I had felt the child in Catherine's womb from the day we conceived, I had known that she was a girl.

Devin told us that he was told of the name through a dream he'd had several nights ago, and that he never questioned his dreams. He believed in them and always held on to those beliefs, so that I, for one, had no intention of questioning his motives. Catherine agreed that an uncle should be afforded certain privileges, and naming the baby should indeed be one of them. So at noon today, our child was given a name, Arielle Chandler Wells.

I should record at this time the statistics of Arielle's birth. She arrived precisely at dawn, on this the twelfth day of April. She weighed seven pounds, eleven ounces and measures twenty inches. Her beautiful, bright eyes are sky blue; and even though she has little hair, its color can only be described as gold. Yes, gold, like mine.

They awaken now, my Queen and my Princess. I can feel each of them through the bond, and in my heart. I hope our little girl will soon know how much she means to me... to Catherine... to all of us Below. She is our symbol of hope, of unending courage. She is our future. She is living proof of a love they said could never be.

To my dear Catherine, whose deep love for me has given the wings to fly above my own doubts and fears... You were right all along, Catherine. Our love knows no limits, it is deserving of everything. And now we have everything. We have our world, we have each other, and we have Arielle.

To Arielle, whose birth is the ultimate evidence of possibility and fulfilled dreams....I promise you with all that I am, that I will protect you, watch over you, and love you till my last breath.

END