

# Bowling for Vincent

(In honour of "our" Joe Maxwell - Jay Acovone)

Judith Nolan



*"There is never a time or place for true love. It happens accidentally, in a heartbeat, in a single flashing, throbbing moment..."*

*Sarah Dessen*



Catherine's borrowed car slammed to a halt on the shoulder of the roadway through Central Park. She hurried from the vehicle, barely pausing to lock it and pocket the keys.

It was almost midnight, but she knew the way instinctively, even in the dark. She ran downhill to the grassy bottom of the roadway's slope, picking up her pace to run full-tilt in the direction of the culvert. She was running back to Vincent. Nothing else mattered...

Sensing his love coming ever nearer, Vincent sprinted out of the tunnel entrance and skidded to a halt. He looked up expectantly, waiting for Catherine to run to him. He thought he'd lost her forever, and now she was returning to him. He felt as if his heart would burst with gratitude.

He had run all the way to the surface from the Great Falls. Through their shared bond, he'd already promised her he would do anything Catherine desired, if only she would never leave him again. *Anything and everything...*



Appearing at the top of the last slope, Catherine cried out when she saw him waiting for her. Increasing her already headlong pace, she sprinted downhill and into his open arms, throwing herself hard against the solid wall of his chest, her arms going around his neck.

They clung together for a precious split second. But the speed of her tumultuous arrival caught Vincent completely off-guard. For someone so small, Catherine took away both his breath and his balance in one solid hit. She knocked him backwards onto his butt, as they fell together, into a tangled heap.

Smothered in his mane and clutching his chest, Catherine gasped, "*Oh, forgive me... forgive me for doubting! What we have is all that matters. It's worth everything!*" She pulled back to stare down at him.

"*Everything!*" Vincent avowed, his strong arms holding her closer.

Captured, they gazed deeply into each other's eyes, freezing the moment of voiceless communion. Then, on a blind impulse... Vincent lifted his head and kissed her.

Breathless from running and falling with him, Catherine gasped for air before she began to kiss him back, deepening the erotic contact. Everything was there in that one kiss. Everything that had constantly lain between them, both said and unsaid.

“Everything...” Vincent whispered, after he pulled back fractionally to stare up at her, his eyes filled with wonder and confusion.

“Always...” Catherine breathed, knowing she had him at a complete disadvantage. This was uncharted territory. However, as much as she wished to stay this way, with him, forever, she knew they needed to get up, before someone saw them.

She lifted herself away reluctantly, moving back to rest on her knees, beside him. Vincent leapt to his feet and assisted her to rise.

“Are you all right?” He maintained his gentle grip on her upper arm as he stared down at her, bathed in moonlight.

“I have never felt more right than in this moment.” Catherine looked up into his shadowed face, unable to read his thoughts, but knowing them instinctively. She could feel him already pulling away from her, trying to rebuild his shattered walls. She couldn’t allow the magic of this moment to slip away. She could sense his confusion and wish to retreat, to process what had just happened between them.

“Meet me,” she said quickly. “Don’t think about it. Don’t try to analyse or dissect it. Just promise to meet me on my balcony, in an hour. Please, Vincent...”

“I...” He hesitated, taking a step backwards, and dropping his hand. Everything within him wanted to run.

“*Promise* me, you will do as I ask.” Catherine went after him, afraid to let him escape, this time. “I need to see you tonight...”

“Catherine...” Vincent stared at her, remembering the unspoken promise he’d made to her through their bond. He had promised anything and everything she desired, if only she would return to him. And now she was here... and he felt unable to resist...

“Very well...” He nodded quickly. “I promise I will be there.”

“Good...” Catherine reached to press a kiss to his cheek. “I’ll be waiting for you... don’t be late.”

She turned and ran back up the hill, before her love could find the words to tell her he’d changed his mind.





Catherine moved slowly around her balcony, lighting the last of many candles, to illuminate the darkness. On impulse, she decided to repeat the night of their first anniversary. She even dressed in the same long ivory and lace evening gown. Her crystal necklace nestled beneath its bodice.

Soft music drifted out from her living room. She paused to listen, then looked around, making sure everything was perfect. She was aware that more than an hour had passed, and that Vincent was late. But she refused to believe he had broken his promise to her.

“Be well, Vincent,” she said softly, as she shook out the taper she’d used to light the last candle.

In the same moment, she heard a rustling sound, and turned to find Vincent standing on the far end of the balcony. She gasped when she saw he was dressed in his formal white ruffled shirt. She loved the fact he’d also remembered the night of their first anniversary, and had taken the time to change. She saw he was standing very still, and she sensed his deep unease.

“I am so glad to see you.” She resisted the impulse to hurry to his side. She was aware this was vastly new territory, and they needed to take things slowly.

“There was a moment when my courage almost failed me...” Vincent sighed, as he shrugged apologetically. “Then I remembered how remarkable you are, and how much I owe you.”

“And you promised me you would come here tonight.” Catherine walked slowly towards him. “It will be all right, Vincent.”

“I feel blessed that you have returned to me.” He stared down at her, unwilling to break the moment. “After all I said. After I told you we could not go on, and I urged you to... find another to love...” His chin sank to his chest, pain haunting his expression. “I meant it... then... even though it felt as if my heart was breaking...” He drew his next breath on a great shudder that wracked his whole body.

“I know you were trying to make life easier for me, Vincent. And I love you for that.” Catherine grasped his forearm. “But, surely you know you could never truly lose me. No matter what comes between us. I know that now. You must believe me.”

Vincent took in the beauty of her face. “I wish...”

“What...?” Catherine shook his arm gently, when he stopped speaking. “What is it that you find so hard to say?”

“That moment... the intimacy we shared... back at the drainage tunnel...” he whispered brokenly. “I couldn’t... I didn’t want it to end,” he finished, in a great rush of breath.

“Oh, Vincent...” Catherine moved closer, finding the solid warmth of him. “Aside from the terrible possibility of our being discovered there, nor did I...”

“Yes...” Vincent huffed a small laugh. “That would have been... unfortunate.”

“But here, we are alone.” Catherine raised one hand to cup his cheek. “And I have locked all the doors.”

“All of them...?” Vincent teased gently, looking up towards the doors leading inside.

“All, except them...” Catherine smiled, her thumb just touching the corner of his unique mouth.

“Good...” Vincent breathed, seeming to give her unspoken permission to take them further than they had ever gone before.

“It’s warmer inside...” Catherine returned her hand to his forearm. “The fireplace is working well.”

“So I can see...” Vincent gazed through the gauzy curtains to the flickering flames of her electric fire.

“I’ll admit it’s nothing like how things are done Below.” Catherine shrugged. “But if you’re willing to try...”

“I...” Vincent paused to draw several long breaths. “I would... like that.”

“I’m glad...” Catherine linked her fingers through his, drawing him slowly forward, as she walked backwards in front of him.

She reached the doors to her living room and fumbled behind her back to open them. The gauzy curtains billowed out to envelop her, but she maintained her grip on Vincent’s fingers, drawing him ever forward, through the curtains. His boots landed on the doorsill. Catherine didn’t hesitate. She continued to draw him in with her, and suddenly they were both standing on the step leading down into the fire-lit room.

“Shall I close the doors?” she asked softly, allowing Vincent the time to adjust to his new surroundings.

“I think I can manage that.” He turned and snagged the door handles, closing them together, against the chill night air.

As he turned back to her, Catherine settled her hands on his wrist. She encouraged him down into the shadowed room. In the background, the soft music changed to a

plaintive love song. Catherine half-turned her head to listen. *“Cause I'm your lady and you are my man...whenever you reach for me, I'll do all that I can...”*

“The power of love,” she whispered, absorbing meaning of the words.

Vincent stood still, watching her listen to the song. *‘When the world outside's too much to take... that all ends when I'm with you...’*

He reached for her, turning Catherine to face him, with his hands on her shoulders. “Truly, everything outside ends when I am with you.” He looked around the living room. “I never expected in a million years to be here, with you, like this. It has always been a distant dream.”

“I had to wait until you were ready to take the next step,” Catherine admitted honestly. “That was quite a step we took tonight.”

“Yes...” Vincent nodded. “Until this very moment, I had no true idea of what to do. Tonight has been a... revelation.”

“I’m glad.” Catherine looked up at him through her lowered lashes. “I believe you said that you didn’t wish our moment, back there at the drainage tunnel, to end...”

“I did say that...” Vincent whispered, his hands dropping to her slim waist and drawing her nearer. “In that moment, I truly allowed myself to dream...”

“I am here and I am real, Vincent.” Catherine placed her hands over his, encouraging him closer. “There is no longer any need to dream about what could be. This is all real.”

“I know it now. I made you a promise, Catherine. I promised that if you ever returned to me, I would do anything and everything, you asked of me.”

“I felt that, Vincent. When I was running back to you, I sensed you calling out to me.”

*‘We're heading for something, somewhere I've never been. Sometimes I am frightened but I'm ready to learn about the power of love...’*

“I am truly ready to learn, Catherine.” Vincent nodded, his gaze on her parted lips.

“If you are willing to teach me...”

“I think this is a lesson we can learn together, Vincent...” she whispered, drawing his head down to hers, and placing her mouth softly over his.

*‘Cause I'm your lady and you are my man...Whenever you reach for me, I'm gonna do all that I can. We're heading for something, somewhere I've never been... sometimes I am frightened, but I'm ready to learn of the power of love... Ooh, the power of love...’*







*"Love is that condition in which the happiness of another person is essential to your own..."*

*Robert A. Heinlein*



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eiFre0FK-s0>

