

A STUDY OF BEGGAR'S COMET

by Lyn Roewade

This is such an interesting episode, and we learn a lot about three major characters in particular. I'd like to discuss some highlights. Some action continues right along, and other scenes seem to be happening in similar time frames. The name of this episode is taken from Shakespeare's *'Julius Caesar.'*

The first time we see Diana in this, she is still with Mark. They are comfortable together, friendly and relaxed with little apparent passion. I don't think it ever was a *'great'* love affair, but it seems to me that this is probably the best relationship she has had so far. They talk about Hailey's Comet, using her telescope on the roof.

But she is all business when Joe Maxwell and Detective Hughes interrogate a former bodyguard of Elliot Burch's; the man was *'bought'* long ago by Gabriel. It's a lead, and Joe has to follow it up. Diana does not believe the man, and calls it a *'set-up.'* She invites Joe to her loft. Later she interviews Burch to make inquiries, but he's reluctant to speak. She knows he's holding back about that night at the carousel. Even when she names Vincent, she gets no information. I believe, however, that his body language gives him away to her then.

When Joe visits, she shows him the rosebush she's saved, and is nurturing back to life. She explains that the kind of death that Moreno underwent, began appearing only after Catherine started work in the DA's office. I think it has begun to occur to her, not as yet fully-formulated, that all such deaths were people who in some way threatened Catherine, deserved to die, and that this could conceivably include Moreno. Diana has figured out so much in her unusual, obviously empathic mind - how Vincent didn't kill Catherine but brought her home because he loved her, and had been her protector. Things add up for Diana, and most other people - not being able to keep up with her mind - get irritable.

Joe says, *'You sound like you know this guy.'* Diana replies, *'Sometimes I feel like I do.'*

So strong is her awareness that Vincent is a hidden personality, that she even suggests Catherine might have imagined this character. Joe, unaware of the undertones, is a little annoyed. When he leaves, she softly apologizes to the dead woman, as she too is trying to protect Vincent, even though she has never met him.

No wonder she found him so easy to talk to, and understood him so clearly at later times, her *'extraordinary'* mind has reached out to him sympathetically already.

She's reading in one short scene, and says the line aloud; *'The paths of glory lead but to the grave...'* her *'grave.'* Combining this with her already established interest in comet-watching, she goes to the cemetery. After some time, Vincent stumbles and collapses, unconscious, at Catherine's grave. Diana goes to him, turns him over, and sees him for the very first time.

I found this to be a beautiful moment. Not for one second - although she could never have known what he looked like - was there any horror or revulsion, or *'pitying'* curiosity. Some surprise, naturally, then, acceptance and sympathy. Somehow, I didn't fear for Vincent then, in this fascinating reversal of the situation in the pilot episode two and a half years previously - with a difference. Having nothing personal to

hide, Diana could simply have called an ambulance, or the police, or Joe Maxwell - but she didn't.

Through a passing encounter with an elderly street musician, Clarence, Elliot Burch meets with Vincent at the '*Compass Rose*.' A large boat at her moorings. Remember, Elliot has already seen Vincent. Although that whole business at the carousel must have been very frightening for him, he had looked at Vincent only with amazement, pain and sorrow (*for Moreno's bullets that he took, saving Elliot*). I get the distinct feeling that these two men could, under better circumstances, have become friends. Certainly they take to each other, and they don't bother with small-talk.

Elliot; '*So, it begins again.*'

Vincent; '*It never ended.*'

Elliot seems to know what is relevant, yet doesn't hesitate to confide in Vincent about how Gabriel is ruining him. Elliot loves construction, Gabriel desires destruction. In this episode, Elliot is definitely '*a good guy.*' (*Anything bad we 'may' have thought about him earlier, pales into insignificance beside Gabriel's evil*) He shares his thoughts with Vincent, using a sand-castle and sea metaphor; he is risking everything, and his dreams are being cruelly and systematically destroyed. Vincent assures him that '*dreams can be dreamt again,*' and reminds him that Catherine had said he was a fighter. Elliot wryly shares some very mature insight, saying, '*Catherine was wrong about many things.*' If course he'd love her and sincerely offered her marriage - but it was an adult love. She was human and had flaws, and he knew this and loved her as she was.

Gabriel finally maneuvers Elliot into jail, sending his man Pope with the bail money. At Cathy's grave, Gabriel talks to him, revealing quite a lot of knowledge of Elliot's life. Carefully, gradually, he works to turn Elliot against Vincent; he also says that he himself can restore all material losses. Elliot is in mental agony here. Gabriel's words pierce his heart, and doubts torment him. Later, via old Clarence, he passes a message for Vincent to meet him again at the '*Compass Rose.*'

When they meet, Elliot knows that danger is out there waiting for Vincent, and '*begins*' the process of betrayal. But he has the capacity to admire, as well as to like this man, whose sincerity and goodness very soon win him back. Sinking to his knees as though to impart a confidence, becomes the subtle movement conveying his profound apology. The sniper shoots; Elliot warns Vincent, and now in his turn takes the bullets. He hands back Snow's ring, and there's a short dialogue. With shades of the wry humor which characterized their conversations as they came to know one another.

Elliot: '*Take this and go!*'

Vincent (*not moving*): '*You wouldn't leave me.*'

Elliot (*too emphatically*): '*Damn right I would!*'

Vincent (*ironically*): '*Lying again?*'

But at this point, Gabriel instructs Pope to blow up the boat. What was such a promising friendship is over; or is it?

Vincent himself, I think, finds Elliot easier to speak to than he's expected. He knows from that time at the carousel, that Elliot is not only helping him for Cathy's sake, that now it is more spiritual. Vincent would never impose on another just because he (*Vincent*) had saved that person's life - he'd done that sort of thing for years, and took himself for granted. Throughout this episode, I got the impression that he found the meetings with Elliot to be pleasant as well as useful.

In the Great Hall, talking to Father, Vincent lets us hear of his love for his family and the tunnel world. He says, *'This is the only home I've ever known,'* so poignantly. Grieving over deaths *'he'* feels were due to his presence (*rather than to other's villainy*), he exiles himself for their protection. He and Father have an emotional parting, which is always hard on both, and which they hope is only temporary. I couldn't help adding this to my private list of all that suffering that Vincent has been through. Some people who have lost sight of the true focus, disregard all *'he'* has endured, but it is a formidable list. Sadly, he tells Father (*and us*) *'We cannot always choose the roads we walk.'*

In the last scene on the ill-fated *'Compass Rose,'* we see the meeting which Vincent tells Mouse meant *'hope'* to him. Once again, Vincent seems to be deprived of a friend, first by a near-betrayal, and when that fails, by explosion.

For me, the episode ended on a tentative note of hope. Vincent is at least alive, although badly hurt. But, as I said, there is an opposite-gender situation, reminiscent of the first-ever episode. Maybe this will be the new, devoted and trustworthy Helper and friend that Vincent needs. Right here, many lights appear *'for the future.'*

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