

THY SWEET LOVE BRINGS

(Siege episode expansion)

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Catherine slammed the door of her apartment shut. She threw her briefcase on the coffee table and slumped on the couch, holding her head in her hands. She felt totally miserable. Since she found out the truth about Elliot Burch, she felt betrayed by him like she had never been betrayed by anyone. How could she have been so blind to trust him? She let herself be so swept up by the glitter of fancy dinners, sparkly social outings, and extravagant showings of his affection, that she totally overlooked his real character. He was clearly someone whose ambitions were more important to him than people.

Although she thought she'd spent all her tears that day already, she started crying again. This time, though, she wasn't crying for herself, but because her naivete hurt the most precious human being she had ever known - the true and only constant in her life - she'd hurt Vincent.

He put his trust in me and I couldn't even distinguish the real gold from glitter...

Catherine thought of the wonder and mystery that was Vincent. He was different from other men, indeed. But unlike his idea of difference, Catherine knew by now that it wasn't only his looks that distinguished him from other men, regardless of how exotic and magnetic they were.

It was foremost his nature and his character that made him stand out above and beyond any other man she had ever known. His honesty, loyalty, deep care for others' feelings and well-being, empathy, selflessness, wisdom, sense of justice, generosity, kind heart, gentleness, unmatched beautiful spirit and, above all, his enormous capacity to love was what made him different. One thought from Vincent mattered more to Catherine than a whole monologue from anyone else.

She'd truly known him only for a couple of months (ignoring the eight months until they met again after her horrible accident). Yet, whenever she saw him, she felt like a life-long friend had found his way to her again. He was so familiar, so warm, so welcomed to her heart...

Catherine's heart was aching. She was sad because her illusions of Elliot had been shattered, but even moreso, because she was afraid Vincent might never be able to find his way back to her. The thought of a life without him suddenly agonised her beyond measure.

When she calmed down, she walked to the bedroom, took her clothes off and got into the shower. She really needed a splash of cold water to shake her out of her reverie. Then, she would start again and hopefully patch the torn pieces of her dream, of *their* dream, back together.

Later, dressed in a nightgown and a silk robe, she still couldn't push the sadness and melancholy from her mind. Sleep was not in sight as she felt the pain of loneliness. She knew Vincent would know how she's feeling and she felt ashamed to burden him with her state when he must have been feeling even worse. She wished she could speak to him, to soothe his pain, but the truth was, she didn't know how. What could she say to him?

'I'm sorry that I almost fell in love with someone else and crushed your hopes, but I'm available now?'

It was pointless, her shame and guilt was overwhelming. She just didn't have the strength and the right words to face him and try to patch things up between them right now. And yet... She longed

to look into those deep blue eyes, to feel the hold of his strong yet gentle arms, the warmth of his embrace which brought her comfort, peace and the feeling of being... loved.

With a sigh, Catherine opened the French doors leading to her balcony and slowly walked out. The sadness and despair reflected on her face, her eyes staring into the night lights of the city. She thought she could find comfort in that one place in her world that belonged to *them*. But all she felt was a huge void because that place was missing *him*.

Absent-minded, she looked down and suddenly noticed a leather bound book on the bench. She picked it up, it was *'The Sonnets'* by *William Shakespeare*. Her heart trembled when she opened the book and read the beautifully handwritten note on the first page.

'Shakespeare knew everything...'

She gasped quietly and skipped to a page marked by a dried red rose with Sonnet Number 29 on it. As she started reading, her eyes started welling up.

When, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,

I all alone beweep my outcast state,

And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,

And look upon myself, and curse my fate,

Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,

Featured like him, like him with friends possess'd,

Desiring this man's art, and that man's scope,

With what I most enjoy contented least;

Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,

Haply, I think on thee, and then my state,

Like to the lark at break of day arising

From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate;

For thy sweet love remember'd such wealth brings,

That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

When she finished reading, the tears were flowing down her cheeks and she was sobbing, pressing the book to her heart as if it could substitute for the beautiful soul who left it there for her. What a noble soul. Nobody had ever proclaimed their love more beautifully to her than Vincent did in these lovely and deeply felt words of a poem. And nobody made her feel like he did.

'Vincent...' Catherine whispered longingly, still quietly sobbing with her head down.

She was so overcome by her emotions, that she startled when she heard the deep tender gravel voice behind her.

'I'm here...'

When Catherine turned to him, she shook her head, trying to find the words but failing miserably, her breath ragged among the sobs, her eyes pleading for forgiveness.

Vincent, himself in agony for days now, understood the emotions flowing to him through their bond. Her pleading eyes and tears were more than he could bear. He closed the distance between them and gathered her in his arms, gently but eagerly. When she returned his embrace tightly, her small hands clutching his vest, he smiled into her silky hair.

He knew she was upset at Elliot's betrayal, but he also knew that she was feeling guilty for having hurt him. He had felt her despair for hours and it touched him deeply. Now, there was relief slowly spreading through the bond with the knowledge that she hadn't lost *him*.

While his own hurt was still in the back of his mind, it wasn't as prominent any more. It was just quietly humming in the deepest part of his heart, slowly disappearing, being pushed out by his ever growing love for the woman in his arms.

Catherine's sobs subsided and she sighed into his chest, reveling in the familiar feel of soft wool and leather and his distinctive manly scent. Guilt and shame were still biting her as she spoke quietly.

'I was so afraid...'

'I know,' he answered softly.

She pulled back to look into his eyes, but remained in his embrace.

'No words can take back the pain I caused you. I can only beg for your forgiveness...'

Vincent took her hands in his and sighed.

'There is nothing to forgive, Catherine... You are entitled to meet and love anyone from your world... Anyone who can give you everything that ...' his voice broke, unable to go on, his eyes full of despair... *that I can't give you.*

'You give me so much more, Vincent, much more than I could ever get from any other man, Above or Below, I know that now... I've known all along. It just took me some time to truly see that...'

Those beautiful blue pools she loved so much were full of tears now, acknowledging the meaning of her words.

Catherine felt butterflies in her stomach. Suddenly, she knew where her heart stood for certain. It took meeting another man to recognize the truth in her own heart, but now she knew and she would not let go of it.

She smiled and spoke more calmly now.

'That sonnet was beautiful... Just like *you*...'

Vincent gazed at her and shook his head in disbelief with a little smile. So many words between them were left unspoken but they weren't needed. When he saw the joy, the care and love in her big green eyes, he knew he didn't need them. All that mattered was that they were here, together. And no matter what the future held for them, they would face it, together.

Unable to speak, he put his arms around her once more, leaning his cheek against the top of her head and breathing her in, the smile never leaving his face.

Catherine smiled in his embrace. She knew she was where she truly belonged.

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