

Here and Beyond

(Catherine's Letter to Vincent)

by Michaela Buzsaki Struchova

Dear Vincent,

It's been three days since that almost fatal night. I'm lying here in my bed, unable to sleep, writing these words to you. Yet again, staring at the dark ceiling above me like so many times before. However, it feels different this time. This time I truly only just escaped Death... And yet again, it was you who stole me from his icy hands, bringing me back to life - to you...

I still shiver, thinking about the moment, when I realised there was no way I could make it out of the car boot alone. It's strange, but at that moment, I understood all the people who just barely survived a horrible event. They say that when you think you're about to die, you see glimpses of your life passing by in quick succession in your mind's eye. The happiest memories, the most exciting experiences, and especially the most beloved faces....

At the moment when I thought I was about to die, I had those glimpses, too. I saw brief happy moments from my childhood with my parents, the day of my college graduation, the thrilling and enormously fulfilling moment of successfully finishing my first case in the D.A.'s office. I saw the smiling faces of Nancy, Jenny and Peter, Joe and his chocolate cheese nuggets. Mouse and Jamie chasing Arthur around William's kitchen, Pascal with his beloved pipes. The excited faces of the children in the nursery, and Mary, telling a bedtime story to them. Father, reaching his hand out to my cheek when he awakened after the explosion during the cave-in...

Then, I saw you, Vincent... I saw your face hiding in the shadows of the hood when I truly looked into your eyes for the first time. The expression of wonder and such deep love in those eyes when I kissed you so much later... I felt your hand holding mine when walking around the park at night, your arms enveloping me in your always safe and warm embrace. I heard your voice reading to me and leading

me to where everything shimmers and floats. A succession of so many shared moments that mean everything in the world to me because you were part of them...

And then, I was blinded by a milky light, surrounding me like a soft and comforting blanket, inviting me to come forward, walk into it, become one with it. It appeared even more tempting when I suddenly spotted the figures of my mother and father, reaching their hands out to me, calling me to follow them... I couldn't believe I was really dying. But that terrible longing to see my parents again, that alone was more than enough to make me want to follow them for a moment, oblivious to everything else. Suddenly, I felt as light as a feather; it was as if all the earthly burdens were gone from my shoulders, and I was being lifted to somewhere where no worries ever reach. I started walking towards them. And for a moment, I could swear I even saw Ellie's and Winslow's faces in the distance...

But as always, you and Heaven knew better - it was not my time yet. For my time with you is not over yet; it is just at its beginning. It's a true miracle, Vincent... almost unbelievable how you always manage to find me even in the darkest times when it seems that Fate wishes to separate us for good...

Our bond is something I've always cherished deeply, with almost sacred respect. I may not feel it as strongly as you, but I hold it deep in my heart as a special gift that I was given by some very fortunate accident - to guide my life, to lead me out of the darkness of my solitude, to remind me that there are things in life that cannot be bought, traded or inherited. They must be deserved. I don't know how I deserved this bond, how I deserved you, Vincent, but I know I will never take it, you or our love for granted...

When you pulled me out of that car and brought me to the shore, I was still unconscious of the world, but I thought I was dreaming. I was in your arms, and suddenly I felt your warm, soft lips on mine... Now I know that it wasn't a dream. I know that if your lips haven't touched mine, I would not be lying in my bed tonight, for my lungs would not have cleared themselves up; my body would have given in to the cold and oxygen deprivation. But as always, you changed everything...

For so many nights, I have been thinking about you, about us. How far will Fate test us, Vincent? So many close calls, so many moments of fear... Do you know what is strange, though? Ever since we found out about the Watcher, I was afraid, yes. And I know you felt it, no matter how much I tried to hide it from you. But all that time, I was more scared for you than for myself. I was the main target, and still, I was terrified so much more that he would hurt you. I guess that's what true

love does - it blinds you to any of your own discomforts and worries and makes you focus almost entirely on those of the one you love.

The thought of being separated from you triggered something in me that I truly believe helped me to return to you from the white light... The faint pull I felt from you, the sudden thought of you not walking beside me, the chill freezing my heart suddenly became unbearable, and at the moment when your lips touched mine, I knew I had to return home... Even in another world, I could not exist without you.

I'm lying here and holding your crystal in my hand. My fingers are testing its smooth surface, gliding along the polished edges, and feeling the warmth radiating from it, entering my bloodstream. It is as if I was holding your own heart in my hand. That thought makes me smile, for I recall that is exactly what you told me tonight, "My heart is forever yours, Catherine... You will always hold it in your hands, wherever you are..."

Wherever I am... Now I know that it is not only here on Earth, but I'm sure I will hold it in Heaven one day, as well. For after that horrific experience at the lake, I am certain that nothing can ever separate us...

Vincent... Did I ever tell you that it is my favourite name in the whole world? I don't think it was before I knew you, but since then, it is. There are so many things I wish to tell you, so many I already did, but still, love is an endless well of words and expressions that cry to come out and be heard...

There is one thing, though, that I did tell you, and I will repeat it until the end of my days, here and beyond.

I love you...

Forever,

Catherine