

# IMPRESSIONS

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"Together Forever 2024: I Have Spread My Dreams".*



## 1. Reverie

[Debussy - Rêverie \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

The sight was one to behold - the glittering sunlight made the Mirror Pool look like hundreds of fairies decided to stretch their light feet and dance on it that late afternoon. He couldn't take his deep blue eyes off the water that was glowing as if on fire.

*So precious, filling your heart with wonder, and so often overlooked - the beauty of the universe,* Vincent thought, as his fingers gently raked through the cool, flickering liquid at his feet.

How many times did he dive into the pool as a boy, sharing moments of innocent joy and fun with his friends and never noticing how much beauty it was hiding? As a child, one lives in the moment, in the active present and doesn't ponder about the wonders of the world. Vincent was grown up now, though, and pondering was one of his favourite things to do, especially daydreaming. However, it was no wonder; a being like him, albeit human, was much more sensitive towards the world around, attuned to its sights and sounds, as they were so essential to his existence.

He looked up toward the chimney-like opening above the pool, leading to the world Above. The bright sun rays penetrated it with force, and Vincent was enjoying the spectacle, knowing that it would end as soon as the sun moved further to the west on its daily journey. He savoured each moment like this with the utmost care, treasuring it in his memory forever.

*Everything passes, the good, the bad, the beautiful, the ugly, the mighty, the weak...  
Everything leaves its footprints in the sands of eternity but then moves on, with  
nothing but the footprints remaining. The hands of time don't wait for a moment.*

*Or maybe they do, at least sometimes,* he contradicted himself, a small smile appearing on his unique face.

His eyes found the shimmering liquid surface again, and his mind's eye revealed an image of himself lying peacefully in his bed, with two golden-haired boys resting on each side of him. They were all asleep, without a care in the world.

The image morphed into another one, showing the boys running happily around The Great Hall. The taller one called to him, "*Come, Daddy, Santa was here!*", passing an older, grey-haired and bearded man, supported by his walking stick on one side and by a kind-faced woman with silvery hair on the other.

And then... their heads turned as they heard a gentle but cheerful voice behind them say, "*Don't get your hopes up too high! You know Santa has a lot of children to visit around the world...*"

That voice, the light in the bright and expressive emerald eyes, that smile that could light up the whole Great Hall... Vincent couldn't help but smile as well.

These moments... Not even time could erase them from his mind, no matter how far into the future. Their footprints would sit firmly in his memory, making them timeless.

"Vincent..."

There... that voice again... He turned his head, surprised how deep in thought he was that he didn't feel her coming. Or perhaps he did...

"Catherine..." The name on his lips sounded like a dream he was afraid of waking up from.

"I'm here," she said as he rose to his feet. "As agreed," she added, raising her eyebrows, smiling.

"Good." Vincent chuckled, fully in the present now, reaching for the hand of his wife of seven years. "Come, I want to show you something," he said, and with a look full of devotion, he led her away from the Mirror Pool.

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## 2. *The Girl With The Flaxen Hair*

[Claude Debussy: The Girl with the Flaxen Hair - YouTube](#)

They walked in the long stony tunnels like a hundred times before, holding hands and enjoying that familiar comfort of each other's company that hadn't faded even in the more than ten years they had known each other. The flickering light of the torches on the walls shared its warmth with them, resembling the characteristic warmth of their hearts, chasing away any dark shadow that might have been lurking behind any bend.

"Are you going to tell me where we are going or shall I look forward to a surprise?" Catherine asked with undisguised mirth.

Vincent chuckled. "A surprise is what you are getting indeed."

"You keep surprising me every day and in every way," she replied, with admiration and a beaming smile. "But as I can never get enough of you, I will gladly follow you wherever you lead me."

Her cheerful mood, carefree sparks in her eyes and the long waves of her blond hair that fell freely over her shoulders made her look even younger than her almost thirty-eight years. The gentle and luminous expression on her face, the soft quality of her voice that caressed his ears and the excitement and joy with which she did everything inspired him to no end, making his lips smile and his heart soar.

"The girl with the flaxen hair," Vincent said dreamily, studying her profile as he glanced at her again.

Catherine was suddenly excited. "Oh, is it a concert?"

Her eyes widened with anticipation and thrill. With two little sons, they had much less time to enjoy private music moments in the Music Chamber, as they used to years ago. Even as they were walking, when Jacob Junior and little Charles were spending time with their grandfather in his quarters and surrounded by their favourite books, Catherine's mind travelled briefly to them.

Vincent smiled and tilted his head, still keeping his dreamy look.

"You remind me of her," he replied, revelling again in the image of the youthful happiness by his side.

Catherine stopped, lost in his eyes that never failed to enchant and transport her into otherworldly realms.

"You know we promised the boys an evening walk before bedtime," she said quietly, helpless to resist the power drawing her closer to him. "So you better show me my surprise before you beguile me completely and I won't be able to move any further and we won't even make it to dinner with our children."

Her last words faded into a whisper as she leaned into his broad chest and kissed him.

The sudden sound of a familiar piano melody emerged from both of their memories, floating above them in an imaginary, intimate concert, bringing them closer yet again - as light as a feather, as uplifting as the bright, summer morning sun, as cheerful as a children's laughter on a spring meadow.

"Can you hear it, Vincent?" she asked when they, reluctantly, pulled apart an inch.

"The music?" he replied with a question of his own. "Yes... Every time I'm with you, Catherine."

His hand travelled into her hair, exploring for the hundredth time its silky softness and its highlights, letting it run gently between his fingers. Seeing her closing her eyes, tilting her head and drifting into a mood he had known very well, he chuckled. She leaned her cheek against his chest while her hands decided to explore herself – their languid strokes on his back made his heart rate accelerate.

*Not here... Not now... This is not why you brought her here...*

He allowed himself one more fleeting kiss before painstakingly regaining self-control and taking her hand again. Inwardly, he laughed when she frowned slightly with discontent as he pulled away, but then opened her eyes and forced herself back to reality.

"Come," he said, smiling. "Your surprise is waiting."

Catherine couldn't frown anymore. The interrupted magic of the moment between them was replaced by anticipation. She smiled again and pleasantly light-headed, followed him further into the tunnels.

After all, the magic never ceased with Vincent...

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### *3. Clair de Lune*

[Debussy: Suite bergamasque, L. 75 - III. Clair de lune - YouTube](#)

Silence. Absolute stillness was the first thing that struck Catherine as they reached their destination and entered a wide, circular chamber, cast in semi-darkness. It was empty but for one object, a large one, standing in the middle with a singular ray of light illuminating it from above. That was the second thing she became aware of and it made her gasp. There, in this empty and silent space stood, majestically as in the centre of a stage, a grand piano...

Catherine couldn't contain her amazement. Of course, she knew there were a lot of musical instruments in the tunnels, having attended concerts in Father's study for years, mainly organised by the children. But she had never seen anyone playing the piano Below, despite being familiar with the story of Rolley's piano that Mouse had assembled for him.

"Is that...?" she asked, her mouth still open.

"Rolley's piano, yes," Vincent confirmed, smiling. "This is where I found him when he finally returned to us. He was playing it that evening."

Catherine noticed the changed expression on his face; memories veiled his eyes in many emotions.

"I remember you telling me about it," she remarked softly. "I'm so happy that he found the strength to get back on the right track again. Music has helped him with it. *You* helped him."

Her warm smile chased the melancholy away from Vincent's eyes.

"He found it himself, by remembering what he loves the most in the world." He pointed his hand at the instrument. "Playing the piano."

Catherine's smile widened, and her eyes dreamily wandered back to the majestic black instrument in front of her. She walked over to it, and her hands very gently, carefully glided along its curves, examining its polished surface that reflected the light from Above and gave it an almost otherworldly appearance.

"It looks as if it has never been abandoned... As if it was... new," she mused, knitting her eyebrows. As far as she remembered, Rolley hadn't played on it for the last five years at least.

Vincent tilted his head, smiling. "Mouse comes here once a week with his 'cleaning gizmos'." He chuckled. "He said he spent too much time assembling it to let it go to waste. He also regularly tests the sound of each key. In fact, he has become quite an expert since Eli shared his piano tuning knowledge with him."

Catherine laughed; then her smile faded.

"You are wondering why I never showed it to you and why Rolley never plays it." As always, Vincent read her emotions perfectly.

Her look at him confirmed his words as she slightly raised her eyebrows. "I'm sure you had your reason." It wasn't a reproach, merely a conviction. Catherine knew he would never keep secrets from her unless there was a plausible explanation.

Vincent took a few steps to join her at the piano. "It was Rolley's wish," he admitted, his fingers gently examining the keyboard. "I told him he could play this piano again, anytime he wished. But he told me that the memory of the incident with Mrs Kendrick

was still painful to him, and if he played it, it would bring the pain back. He thought that if it was left in peace, Mrs Kendrick could rest in peace as well. So, after that night, he never set foot in this chamber again.”

“Instead, he enrolled for piano lessons and later became a teacher at the local music school, teaching underprivileged children,”

Catherine added with a proud smile. “He managed to turn pain into passion, passing it on to the next generation.”

“And doing it very well.”

They remained quiet for a moment, admiring the piano that meant so much to a little boy once – a boy who went through Hell and back to find not only his talent, but also himself again.

“Do you remember our conversation a few days ago, Catherine?” Vincent inquired then with an enigmatic smile.

“I suppose you mean the one where I mentioned I would love to learn to play the piano?”

“Yes. You said that you’ve always loved the sound of it but never thought of wanting lessons when you were a child.”

Catherine smiled. “And when I grew up, I never had time for it,” she added.

Vincent lowered his eyes, still smiling. He turned around, back toward the chamber entrance.

“It’s about time we did something about it,” a soft voice suddenly spoke.

Catherine turned around as well, and her eyes widened with joy – the familiar figure of a young man she knew appeared from the shadow.

“Rolley!”

He took a few steps to join them, looking quite different than when Catherine saw him last – he was wearing a blue shirt, dark brown trousers and a casual brown jacket. She thought how much more mature he appeared. His face was a reflection of contentment and peace.

They hugged, delighted to see each other again.

“I’ve heard on the pipes that someone is looking for a piano teacher,” Rolley said.

Catherine opened her mouth and looked at Vincent.

“I asked a simple question, and Rolley answered it, that’s all.” He shrugged innocently.

“You mean that you would... teach me?” The young woman asked the piano expert, amazed. “But I thought...”

“It’s fine,” Rolley interrupted her. “I know what I said to Vincent, but I was thinking that if by teaching someone to play, I would make Mrs Kendrick proud, then by using this piano for it, I could pay tribute to her.” His before cheerful face bore a fleeting trace of sadness.

“And so you shall,” Vincent remarked. “That’s if the student accepts the offer.”

Both men looked at Catherine, raising their eyebrows in silent question. Her eyes travelled from them to the piano and back at both men.

“How could I say no to the best piano teacher I know?” she asked, confirming her agreement with a glowing face.

“The *only* teacher you know,” Rolley corrected her with a small smile.

“Still the best,” Catherine wouldn’t be convinced of anything else. “And I accept with all my heart!”

She hugged her new teacher, already imagining herself playing for Vincent one day. The man in her thoughts felt her thrill right to his bones.

*There are so few special things I can offer you, Catherine..., he thought. I’m happy this surprise brings joy to your heart and light into your eyes...*

He couldn’t take his eyes off her, bubbling from excitement and anticipation. Ever since their first encounter years ago, Vincent had loved making Catherine happy, and this feeling had never diminished. He knew now she didn’t desire golden halls or travelling the whole world. They both appreciated the little gifts that are the most precious. Vincent felt happy and proud of giving her another one of those that day.

“Thank you so much, Rolley,” Catherine said. “You have no idea how much this means to me.”

“I think I do,” answered the young man quietly. “I remember how much joy lessons with Mrs Kendrick brought me... Being able to do what we love and having people supporting us is a gift that keeps on giving.”

They both smiled, but Catherine suddenly looked pensive.

“What is it, Catherine?” Vincent inquired.

“I...” She looked at the piano, then back at her teacher – her eyes reflected caution. “Would you play something for us?” she asked.

Rolley glanced at the instrument and smiled. There was no sadness in his eyes this time.

“With pleasure.”

He walked over to take his seat, while Catherine and Vincent stood nearby, watching him in an embrace. Rolley gently laid his fingers on the keyboard and soon, the tones of a soft and dreamy melody brought the grand piano to life again. The music was uplifting, flowing gently like a calm forest stream on a magical summer night.

Vincent’s small smile widened.

*How appropriate, he thought. The journey began with Moonlight Sonata, bringing sorrowful memories, and now, the circle closes with Debussy and his music which carries light, gentleness and love. Two faces of the moon, appearing at different times of our lives, casting a different light on all of them...*

Peace descended upon the hearts of the three people in the chamber, who were aware of nothing but the enchanting music and the beam of light illuminating the instrument and the player from above. They kept the memory of that moment among their greatest treasures, turning a bitter memory into a sweet one, and filling their hearts with the timeless beauty of *Clair de Lune*...

