

Moonlight

by Michaela Buzsaki Struchova

They were sitting on their usual 'concert' spot, right under the concert stage in the park that night. The soft light of the full moon was projecting itself on their faces through the grate just above them, fittingly to the musical piece they were listening to.

Catherine, leaning against him, her head on his shoulder, her eyes closed, her face revealing deep emotions. Vincent, embracing her lightly, leaning his cheek against the top of her head, his eyes closed as well.

The sombre piano tones of Beethoven's 1st Movement of his *Moonlight Sonata* were everything they were meant to be - haunting, beautiful, melancholic, emotional, ethereal. A piece of eternity captured in an unforgettable set of notes put on few sheets of paper.

Vincent felt how deeply moved she was. He lifted and tilted his head slightly to see her face, and he noticed tears escaping her closed eyes. He wondered whether it was just the unmatched beauty of the masterpiece of a genius, or whether she was thinking the same as he was. His arms fully encircled her body now as if to comfort her.

Catherine put her free arm around his waist but didn't open her eyes. The music was awakening so many varied emotions in her that she wasn't able to, not yet at least. But to share this moment with the man she loved meant everything to her, though she sensed that it must have been hard for him to listen to this particular piece as it awakened a painful memory for him.

A shadow fell over her heart and she looked up to see his face. Vincent's head was leaning against the wall now, and his eyes were staring into the semi-darkness of the tunnel, his mind miles away, it seemed.

"Are you thinking of Rolley?" Catherine asked gently.

Vincent looked down at her and then sighed before leaning his head back again.

"I can't *not* ...," he replied, deep sorrow colouring his voice.

It had been over two years since they tried to help a young man, a former short-term inhabitant of the tunnels, a childhood piano prodigy, get out of the jaws of drug addiction and street life. But because of the crime he indirectly caused as a boy, the man in him refused to accept help from those who loved him, and chose a life leading to slow death, as a punishment.

"So am I...," she whispered.

Vincent looked into her big green eyes and carefully wiped a tear from her cheek, then let his hand drop slowly to his side.

"I wish I knew how to help him." There was true despair in his deep gravelly voice. "I wish I knew if he was still... alive... although I am not sure if I'm ready to find out..."

"Me too... Sadly, sometimes all our love and effort is not enough, no matter how good and genuine our intentions. Sometimes those we love carry a burden too heavy for them and don't know how to deal with it,

yet refuse to share it. All we can do is hope that they will understand eventually and accept our open arms when the time is right."

Vincent looked into her eyes and saw what he was used to seeing in them right from the beginning - deep and ever-present compassion, but above all, *love*. Unable to resist her gentle words and gaze, he kissed her forehead and pulled her close to him again.

"Yes..."

"There is still hope," Catherine sighed. "Because he knows you keep him here."

Her hand moved to the place where his heart must have been.

"Right here," she whispered and could feel the calm beating of his gracious heart.

Vincent put his hand over hers gently. "Right where I keep *you*, Catherine..."

She looked up to him to meet his gaze and saw the blue in his eyes darken, the sparkles returning to them, reflecting feelings only love can channel. A tender smile appeared on his face.

Returning his sign of affection, Catherine suddenly felt a great urge to be even closer to him. Her face moved to his, and when they both closed their eyes, a soft lingering kiss landed on his lips. Vincent responded with equal softness yet depth, as well.

Meanwhile, the music had changed into the soothing tones of Mahler's *Adagietto* from his Symphony No.5.

When she pulled back slowly, Catherine observed the beloved leonine features of his face. She traced them slowly with her fingers from his forehead, down his flat nose, ending at the cleft and bottom lip of his exotic mouth. Vincent held his breath while she was doing that, his heartbeat rising with passion, awakening in his whole body. Then suddenly, she shook her head with a silent laugh.

"What is it, Catherine?" he asked, bemused, regaining hold of himself again.

"I still can't believe that this is real. That you are real, that *we* are real..." Her quiet voice echoed slightly in the Music Chamber, her look softened.

"It is real because we both wished it, more than anything..." He kissed her hand, resting in his.

A golden ring with a small white crystal set in it reflected the moonlight on her ring finger.

"And soon, there will be someone else to count our lucky stars.... and his," Catherine flashed a beaming smile at him, stars shining in her eyes.

"Or hers," Vincent added with a loving smile. He gently placed his hand on her abdomen.

"Or hers," she repeated and leaned her head against his shoulder again, covering his hand with hers.

The sweet sound of the strings above them was like a tender caress of a lover's hand. Whatever troubles had crossed their paths in the years before, they were all forgotten, vanishing in the uplifting piece of music. And yet again, the moonlight was the lovers' perfect companion.

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