

I Wished That It Was You

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Note: Certain dialogue was taken from the episode 'A Kingdom by the Sea' from the series 'Beauty and the Beast' written by George R.R. Martin.

On that quite cool but pleasant late May evening, Catherine was kneeling at the big flowerpot on her balcony, planting a rosebush. It was a mixed colour bush of what was, hopefully, to grow into red and white roses. There were already some buds, but they were still closed.

She has never done any gardening in her life. All the mini trees on her balcony were delivered straight from the gardeners, already planted. She didn't have to move a finger, the same with the plants in her apartment. However, she was enjoying this little manual work, contributing with her own hands to the creation of something, which she hoped would become lovely. Something she could share with someone special...

Catherine was smiling all the time, working with almost childlike enthusiasm. While dreaming about the outcome, she was a bit clumsy when manoeuvring the small gardening shears and pricked her finger on one of the growing rose's thorns.

"Ouch!! Damnit!" she cursed, holding her finger and seeing a trickle of blood on it.
"Catherine! Are you hurt?"

Her head shot immediately to the right corner of the balcony, where she heard the soft, gravelly voice coming from. Her amazement had no boundaries as her lips stretched to an astonished smile.

"How long have you been..."

"Only a moment," Vincent interrupted her, almost apologetically when he approached her. "You were so absorbed in your work, I didn't want to intrude."

Almost in embarrassment, Catherine looked at the roses and chuckled with a wide smile.
"I must have appeared pretty ridiculous..."

"No," Vincent contradicted with a bemused smile. "You looked... determined."

She knew that Vincent would never diminish her effort at doing something good and that he would never laugh at her. He always found the right encouraging words. One of the many things why she loved him so much.

As she turned her look to the rosebush again, Vincent kneeled by her side, observing in turns Catherine and the bush.

Catherine couldn't wipe the big grin from her face.

"The terrace gets so much morning sun; I thought a rosebush might do well here."

"Roses," Vincent acknowledged, thinking how fitting for Catherine - the flowers of passion.

"The man at the nursery said this is a special bush; if I don't kill it with my gardening..." She chuckled but was interrupted by Vincent.

"Catherine... your hand!"

Before they both even realised it, he quickly but gently took her hand, and his unique warm lips pressed a soft lingering kiss on her pricked finger.

Catherine almost sighed at his touch, feeling millions of butterflies in her stomach, a flush in her cheeks, her heart rate rising, her body trembling slightly, her mouth unable to respond.

When Vincent lifted his head, surprised by his own boldness, his face was just inches away from hers. Suddenly, he found himself unable to move away from it. Her almost ethereal beauty was like a glowing candle; her light heating up the blood in his veins like a volcano, drawing him to her like a moth to a flame. For a moment, he felt he couldn't fight it anymore, he didn't want to. His only and desperate wish was to surrender to his passion like he briefly did that terrifying night when he saved her from drowning...

The moment Vincent's gaze met Catherine's moved look, her heart skipped a few beats, her emerald eyes turned darker, her breathing became shallow, and she felt an overwhelming pull towards him. His striking leonine facial features were mesmerising, and in those now darkened, incredibly deep blue eyes, she suddenly saw a burning fire - especially when they dropped from her eyes to her lips and lingered there for a moment.

Just do it, Vincent... By God, please do it... Her mind and soul was willing him to do what they both desired so desperately, convinced he could hear her thoughts through their Bond. The air around them suddenly became hot, and the electricity of the moment was almost palpable in it.

Vincent suddenly looked down and started pulling away, but Catherine's hand quickly grabbed his chin to face her again. *No! Stop fighting it, I beg you....*

The touch of her fingers sent an almost electric shiver down his spine. *Dear God, those eyes...*

He not only felt but also clearly saw the burning passion in them, the almost physically painful desire for continuing where they had left off a few weeks ago. He felt her body heating up; her eyes were dark and sparkly, her mouth so ready for sharing love...

His own mouth was half-opened, partially in awe and partially.... *All right, Catherine, you won... I can't fight it any---*

A knock on the front door broke the intense silence of anticipation between them.

Catherine's head jerked towards the door. Then, she released Vincent's chin and, with an almost angry look, turned back to the rosebush, visibly upset by the disturbance. *Why on Earth right now?!*

Vincent closed his eyes, unsure whether in disappointment or relief, then bowed his head and sighed.

"I... I should go..."

"No! Don't, please..." Catherine begged him, her eyes pleading.

Vincent hesitated at her look for a second. "You have visitors..."

"Not for long! Wait..."

She rose and walked quickly to the French door, closing them behind her after glancing one more time at Vincent and smiling in excitement.

"Catherine!" he called, but she was inside already.

He retreated to the corner of the balcony, closed his eyes and waited. Only then, he realised, he was trembling.

How had it come to this? Catherine was trying hard to process the events of the last two days and nights.

When they were interrupted so inappropriately that evening - the CIA barged into her apartment demanding answers to the whereabouts of Elliot Burch. They gave her a real fright when they burst onto the balcony, but luckily Vincent had heard them and disappeared into the darkness of the night before they could see him. Since then, everything had been a roller-coaster.

Elliot asking her for help, Vincent persuading her to give it as he owed Elliot his life. Moving Elliot's father secretly from the hospital. Taking him with Elliot to his helicopter to bring him to a safe place, only to watch the helicopter explode in front of their eyes. Then, being chased by, and hiding from, killers who were chasing Elliot. Elliot showing his softer side, revealing his painful memories of his father.

And then the kiss. Yes, the kiss which Elliot initiated in the heat of the moment, catching her by surprise, saying, "In case, we don't survive this."

Then more of being chased by killers, only to be rescued by Vincent, again...

The agonising wait in the safety of the tunnel below, while the lion roars were raging above them, and then, the silence, when Catherine sighed in relief and said "It's over..." and led Elliot out of the tunnels to the Central Park exit, leaving him there to go out alone.

Elliot tried to rekindle their relationship, but Catherine denied any possibility of it because, as he guessed correctly, there was someone else in her life.

Too much had happened in that short time, but she was glad it was over.

She was walking through the warm orange light of the tunnels towards Vincent's chamber. Why didn't he come for her? Was he all right?

She started worrying; a very unsettling feeling inside her was bringing out fear, that something might have happened to him up there Above and she hadn't realised it. Catherine had been too eager for Elliot to leave, so she had been focusing on finding the way out of the tunnels for him as quick as possible, before walking back to see Vincent.

Finally, she saw the entrance to his chamber and entered, not knowing what to expect. Vincent was sitting in his usual place, an antique velvet-padded high-chair, deep in thought, staring at some insignificant spot on the stone floor. He looked like a king on a throne, majestic, beautiful.... and depressed.

"Vincent," Catherine spoke in relief, but at the same time, she noticed the bandage on his left hand. "You're hurt..."

She kneeled next to him and gently took his injured hand in hers.

"It's the kind of hurt that heals easily..." Vincent replied, and her ears were almost hurting from the sadness in his voice.

"Tell me what you're feeling," Catherine asked softly, looking at him worried.

Vincent sighed and looked at the chessboard on the table in front of him.

"Elliot...is a king in your world," he said with a resigned tone.

"Yes, in a way," Catherine replied, slowly guessing where this conversation was leading.

Vincent positioned the figure of the King next to the Queen figure on the chessboard. He paused for a moment and then continued.

"He can offer you so much... Power to do great good, beauties undreamed of..." He looked at Catherine with sorrow written all over his face.

"He can walk beside you in the daylight..."

Vincent took a deep breath and then sighed again, breaking the eye contact with Catherine, as if looking for the courage to continue.

"Last night I felt your fear for him... the sorrows you shared, your joy when you knew he was alive when death was nearest... when he..."

The words got stuck in his throat. Catherine helped him quietly. "When he kissed me."

Vincent briefly closed his eyes in pain, remembering how clear he had felt it, how much it had cut him like a knife in his heart.

"Yes... I felt... *that* too."

He couldn't bear to look at her again. His heart was breaking; he felt helpless, unworthy of her love, forever doomed to remain the Beast from the Tunnels, living, no... surviving and dying in agonising solitude, after he had known the magic of true love and lost it...

Catherine, looked away for a moment and relaxed in a way, sitting back on her heels. She felt relieved, but Vincent couldn't know that and the reason for it, not yet at least. *Oh Vincent, still? You still don't want to believe?*

A faint smile crossed her lips for a few seconds before she looked up to him again.

"I've never felt closer to Elliot than I did last night. I saw so much of what he's always kept hidden, the boy he once was, the man he could be... We almost died together... And when he kissed me, just for an instant... some small part of me responded. And I wished..."

Catherine stopped as Vincent suddenly looked at her, and she could feel his heart sinking in despair. That is why she couldn't keep it hidden, not this time.

"I wished that it was.... *you*."

She almost whispered the last word, still holding his hand, her eyes focused on his. Her gaze was so intense, so full of love, deeply buried desire and unspoken longing that through their bond - he felt it almost vibrating in his heart.

Only now, when reconnecting with her eyes, Vincent finally understood and, at the same time, almost couldn't believe his ears. He turned his face more towards hers, transfixed by her gaze. That powerful pull, the never fully satisfied craving to be as close to her as possible, was burning him up.

Yes, he remembered very clearly the short yet so sweet and tormenting moment of their shared heat weeks ago and how he pleaded with her to be patient with him. But he also remembered, in a flashback, the way she'd gazed at him a few days ago at the rosebush on her balcony, after he had kissed her hand pricked by the rose. He had dropped his guard for a moment, and his heart had been racing so fast, he was sure she could hear it.

Then the door knock came, and all hell broke loose. He knew how hard it was for her to contain her desire for him for so long, for years, because *he* asked her to...

There was no door in Vincent's chamber and nobody knocking to spoil the moment now. It was as if the time stood still for a moment for them. Neither of them was able to move or to speak. All they both were doing

was gazing into each other's eyes, speaking the unspoken words, sharing the unexpressed desires, which they (or Vincent) had been trying to suppress since that one night a few weeks ago. The immeasurable weight of that burden was almost crushing them.

Then, Catherine broke the silence by slowly standing up, stepping close to Vincent and bending over to look straight into his wondrous sapphire eyes, supporting her weight with one hand on the side of the chair.

"When will you finally understand? *You* gave me the power to do good by opening my eyes to compassion for people in need and giving me the strength to help them. *You* showed me beauties undreamed of - the Waterfalls, the Crystal Chamber, the Whispering Gallery, the Great Hall with the tapestries, the Mirror Pool, your whole world....

"*You* walk beside me with every step I make night or day because you are in my heart whenever and wherever I go... *You* are my life, Vincent. Without you, there is nothing...." Her last words got almost lost in a whisper, and a tear ran down her cheek.

Vincent couldn't find words to express how he was feeling at that moment.

There are no words... he thought.

He had given her the freedom to have a fulfilled life Above, several times, and yet she had refused to do so. She had seen the darkest part of him many times, and yet, she had never run away and always stood by his side, bringing him back from the abyss of his own despair.

He had given her the freedom to choose someone from her own world, and yet, she had chosen *him* with all her being, whatever that might bring with it.

The more he tried to let her go, the tighter she held on to him, trying to make him see that he was the only one who could make her happy. They were like magnets, desperately clinging on to each other despite all the efforts to separate them.

There was only one thing he could do, the only thing he *wanted* to do with every fibre of his body. His barriers were crumbling down like a house of cards, and he didn't worry about building them up again. He couldn't, for her, or for himself, not anymore... They would not go down all the way that night, but he was more than eager to show her that he did want to move toward love, more than anything, until they finally reached the point they had both dreamed about for so long.

Vincent slowly stood up without breaking the deep eye contact with Catherine, who stepped back a little to give him space. She was still holding his hurt hand in hers, as if making sure nothing can break their fragile connection.

Suddenly, she felt small in front of him; it seemed as if his confidence returned. He was strong and majestic again, and she felt weak in her knees at the beautiful sight of him. Her Lancelot was back, risen like Phoenix from the ashes of his own burned pain.

"Catherine...," he whispered with so much tenderness in his voice that she felt like flying. He carefully wiped the tear from her cheek with his thumb and gently caressed it. Catherine closed her eyes with a smile and leaned her face into his palm. When she opened her eyes again, she saw in his suddenly darkened eyes what she yearned for, for such a long time - his own determination to cross that invisible line of his own resistance which had been keeping them apart for so long. And he was smiling...

In a second, his face slowly neared hers, and she could feel his warm breath on her flushed skin. Her heart was pounding almost too fast, and when his lips softly but lovingly touched hers, she felt like melting.

At last...

As if afraid he would stop too soon, her hand slipped behind his neck, pulling him closer. She felt his strong arms around her body tightening his hold on her.

No, this time, it wouldn't be just a feather-light touch of their lips after a supposed breakup, or a brief kiss to say 'thank you'. Nor would it be a result of heightened drama and adrenaline. This time, it would be real, as real as it could be from both. Two souls who belong together and want, and can seal, their love with the most magical seal there can be.

When they finally broke the deep and soul-binding kiss and stood in a tight embrace, Catherine let out a sigh and buried her face in his hair, falling over his shoulder. She remembered the very first time, doing the same thing at the threshold of her building basement, more than two years before. Back then, they thought they were saying goodbye forever. Now, they were binding their lives together forever. She couldn't get enough of that familiar smell of candle wax, old leather and summer rain surrounding him, feeling the blood rushing in her veins, her heart beating fast, for him...

Vincent, resting his cheek on the top of her head and with his eyes closed, couldn't stop smiling. Every fibre of his body was vibrating with joy, happiness beyond his comprehension, blessing and a feeling of excitement and enormous unexpected peace at the same time. He felt that whatever came next, no matter how difficult, they would make it through together. Anything was possible, and nothing was impossible...

"Forever..." Vincent heard himself whispering into her hair.

Catherine pulled back and looked at him with tears in her eyes and a smile.

"Forever..." she said quietly, and her lips asked him for another kiss.

END