

A HUMAN BEING

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(Episode Expansion – Season Two Episode 9 - Brothers)

With a smile, Devin and Catherine slowly descended the spiral staircase towards Vincent and Charles.

Devin held out his hand towards Charles.

“I know of a wonderful place, where we can watch the moon in peace, without anyone around us for miles.... Would you like to go there with me, Charles? Just you and me, as good friends do. I would like some company.”

Charles looked in wonder at the outstretched hand and then back to Devin’s face. His deformed lips stretched into a heartfelt smile, as he accepted his friend’s hand gratefully. They had just started ascending the stairs, passing by the visibly-moved and smiling Catherine, when Charles halted suddenly. He turned around to Vincent, who stood leaning against the wall watching them.

“Vincent... is... my good friend... too.”

Vincent smiled and spoke softly. “Always.”

Charles smiled widely again, his cruelly deformed face radiating with joy. Then he continued walking up with Devin, who gave a warm smile and a nod to his younger brother first.

Catherine walked down the remaining few steps towards Vincent and eagerly accepted his offered hand. For a moment, she was just gazing at him, smiling with so much admiration and love in her eyes that he could almost feel his insides trembling. She was looking for the right words to express how she felt about what she had witnessed only a little while ago. The interaction between Vincent and Charles touched her so deeply, that everything crossing her mind seemed to lack the true value of it.

After a moment, she said, moved, “The way you have with people... is truly remarkable...”

Vincent lowered his head almost shyly for a moment. Then he looked up at her again.

“I could feel his pain, Catherine. All his life, he has faced the same rejection as I have, so many times, from people who were afraid of my face...”

Catherine’s heart was aching for them both . She felt a stab of sharp pain at her heart, remembering Vincent’s story about the girl behind the car window, told just a few moments ago.

“I know what it feels like to long for fitting in... for sharing dreams and lives with others... for being able to walk freely without people’s judgement...”

He paused and sighed, suddenly unable to look into her eyes. “I know what it feels like when you long to be loved and don’t feel worthy of it...”

Catherine’s eyes filled with tears. Her hand slowly reached up to his stubbly cheek, cupped it and caressed it gently with her thumb. With a sigh, he closed his eyes briefly and opened them only once her hand slowly left his cheek again. It rested over his heart where he gently covered it with his own hand.

“Vincent, have I *ever* told you....” She paused for a moment, her emerald eyes piercing his deep blue ones. “... that you are the most human human being I have ever known?”

Vincent felt the squeeze of her other hand around his and swallowed, touched deeply by her words. *A human being...*

He regained his composure and smiled before his soft deep gravelly voice replied to her.

“Yes, Catherine. With every word... every look... every smile...” Their faces were merely inches away. “Every touch...”

He smiled again and the shade of his eyes seemed darker.

Catherine sighed with a smile and a tear ran down her cheek. Without warning, her arms flew around Vincent’s neck as she embraced him fiercely, burying her face in the crook of his neck.

“I love you...,” she whispered into his golden hair.

Vincent’s arms enclosed her even tighter and he kissed the top of her head for a bit longer than he usually would allow himself.

Catherine smiled and felt her body trembling under his arms and the warmth of his kiss in her hair. Then, she pulled back ever so slightly to see his eyes again, took his face gently into her hands and brought it down a bit, putting a lingering kiss on his forehead. She was badly tempted to kiss him on his unusual, but so inviting lips, but she didn’t want to take advantage of his vulnerability at that moment. But she needed to make him aware how much a man he was to her, so anything would do.

Vincent trembled under her kiss, electric impulse ran like a shock through his whole body. Yet, he never wanted it to stop and he let out a quiet sigh.

When their eyes met again, Catherine was still holding his face in her hands, and her fingers were softly trailing the outlines of his magnetic leonine features. Her eyes were following her fingers, as if she wanted to remember every single line of the face which was the dearest of anyone’s. They had never ventured into such an intimate gesture before, but they couldn’t help but to relish in the moment. Catherine was too filled with longing for a deeper way of showing him the enormous power of her love, Vincent was overwhelmed by his ever growing love and desire for the woman in front of him.

“So beautiful...,” she whispered, wonder and endless love mirrored in her eyes.

When Catherine stopped her gentle exploration, she let her hands slide down slowly, stopping them on his shoulders. Then she placed another tender kiss, this time on his cheek and embraced him with a sigh, laying her cheek against his chest, listening to his elevated heartbeat with a smile.

Vincent’s arms pulled her close, totally engrossed in the feel and love of her.

Dear God, when you decide to take me to you one day, please, let me die in her arms...

Catherine smiled into his chest, feeling his heartbeat gradually slowing down into a regular calming rhythm. She knew what effect her nearness had on him. Although she didn’t want to make him uncomfortable, she couldn’t help but to enjoy the way his body reacted every time they held each other close, their bodies pressing against each other. And it was getting harder for Vincent to suppress his natural reaction to the body of the woman he loved most in the world. When she touched his face, her fingers felt the heat rising in his skin, saw him holding his breath and those eyes... Oh God... those eyes would set a forest on fire....

I love you, so much...

When they had both calmed their emotions, Vincent spoke softly into her hair. “We should get going to catch up with them, Catherine...”

She just mumbled “Mmhm...,” still in a daze and reluctant to let go of his warmth and the distinctive scent she loved so much.

Vincent’s heart leapt and he smiled bemused, not letting go of her either. “Catherine... if we don’t go now, Father will surely send a search party for us.”

That returned her back to reality and she sighed when slowly pulling back from his embrace.

“We definitely don’t want *that*.”

Their eyes met again and the way his blue eyes pierced hers made her swallow hard.

How on Earth does he do that? Every time he looks at me like that, I forget to breathe...

Vincent read her feelings in her eyes and through their bond and he chuckled, taking her hand in his, ready to start walking up the staircase. She followed him without a word, yet couldn’t wipe a smile and a dreamy look from her face. Vincent knew that look and even after almost two years, it felt like a miracle to him - it was the look of a woman in deep and devoted love.

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