

TWO SOULS

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(Episode Expansion – Season 2 Episode 11 – The Outsiders)

“Are you all right??” Catherine inquired, worried when she fell to the ground next to Vincent holding him close. He was exhausted and breathing heavily leaning against the rocky wall.

He had just killed four men trying to hurt Catherine with a knife. The Outsiders. Savage beings, vicious, uncompromising, terribly dangerous, half-mad, thirsty for violence and blood. He was protecting Catherine and all the beloved people in the tunnels. Why was he feeling like this then?

Vincent’s thoughts were interrupted when he heard a clinking sound and light footsteps. He looked to his right, Catherine turned her head too seeing him become alert.

A few metres away from them, the last of the Outsiders, a little long-haired boy of about ten years, all dirty in ragged clothes with a mad look was staring at them. The clinking sound came from his shaky hands holding a gun.

My gun! Catherine thought and remembered how she lost it when the Outsiders caught her. Jacob asked her to bring it for them in case of emergency, to protect Vincent from having to do the worst.

Vincent slowly stood up and when Catherine followed him, he put his hand protectively on her shoulder and stepped in front of her.

“Don’t be afraid... You’re safe here,” he spoke quietly to the child, with a kind expression on his face. Within a minute, he had changed from a raging Beast into a loving parent-type human being worried about the safety of even a strange child.

Catherine had a sudden bad feeling in her stomach and started ever so slowly taking step by step in a half circle, trying to approach the child from the side.

“You’re safe here!” the boy repeated like a parrot, his hands holding the gun shaking violently and pointing it at Vincent with his eyes never leaving Vincent’s.

Just a little closer.....

Catherine’s mind was feverishly trying to work out how to disarm the child in a quick but safe way.

Vincent was very slowly closing the gap between he and the child, still with a kind though worried expression, as Catherine was closing in from the side. Her eyes went back and forth from Vincent to the boy and her nerves were stretched to the limit.

Suddenly, the gun went off and a loud bang penetrated the tunnels.

“NO!!... No!!” Catherine screamed, terrified. feeling a freezing chill in her heart and in a second, she disarmed the boy and pushed him heavily aside.

In horror, she turned toward Vincent and saw him standing leaning against the wall. She gasped.

She ran to him and was desperately checking his chest for any bullet wound, breathing heavily and loudly as if she had just run ten miles.

“My God....” Her brain was clouded with fear like she had never known before, not even when her own life had been almost cut off.

When she found no wound on his chest, a giant boulder fell off her heart and a loud sigh of relief escaped her mouth.

Vincent leaned his forehead against hers in a resigned and relieved manner and when she cupped his face with one hand and pulled him close with the other, kissing him on his cheek and hiding her face in his neck still gasping for air, he put his right arm around her shoulder pulling her head closer. He closed his eyes and suddenly, he felt the weight of the whole world in his heart...

Jacob's skilled hands had just finished bandaging Vincent's left arm and putting it in a sling.

Vincent was lucky, he has gone straight through the upper part of his arm, without damaging any vital nerves or shattering bones. He was sitting in a chair in Father's study when Father treated him, his head bowed down. He hadn't said a word since he and Catherine returned after the incident.

Catherine was standing nearby, looking worried. When Jacob had finished, he took his medical bag, looked at Catherine, gave her a silent nod, as if saying *'He'll be all right,'* and left the chamber.

The silence after was almost deafening.

"Talk to me, Vincent," Catherine pleaded looking at him seriously.

Without lifting the head, he said quietly, "There's nothing to say."

She tried to encourage him.

"What you did... was necessary... Let me share your pain."

Suddenly, he looked up at her sharply, observing her for a moment before saying in the same quiet and cold tone.

"How can you even look at me?"

"Because I know you," replied Catherine immediately. "I know who you are...." she insisted.

Vincent bowed his head down again.

"You don't know me..."

Catherine wasn't losing hope, though. "Vincent, there are dark places in all of us."

His head still down, he said, defeated by the reality, "But part of me feeds off this darkness, and I'm lost in it..."

The sound of total despair and shame in his voice almost broke her.

Then he said plainly. "Leave me now."

Catherine's eyes widened in disbelief as she tilted her head slightly. *He has NEVER sent me away like this before...*

Vincent felt what she thought, looked up at her and said pleading.

"Please..."

She straightened her head up again and her look got softer, when trying to channel through to him the importance of her words when she whispered.

"I love you."

Vincent held her look for a few seconds, then closed his eyes with a sigh and bowed his head again without further response.

Catherine suddenly felt very cold. Not because she would think he didn't love her any more, but because it was the first time she'd felt she wasn't able to help him in fighting his own demons.

Resigned, she walked past him and climbing the few steps, left the chamber. while Vincent leaned his head back on the chair with a heavy sigh and heart so full of pain he almost couldn't breathe.

When Catherine reached the threshold to the basement of her apartment building, she turned around one more time. Her eyes full of tears, hoping to see the figure of the man she loved most in the world by her side again. She hoped in vain.

Why? Why won't you let me share it? Your pain is my pain, your demons are my demons... Why?

Catherine didn't sleep well that night. Her mind kept returning to the earlier events of that day, and especially their conclusion. She couldn't help but think she had failed, that her love wasn't enough for Vincent to find strength and accept what he had to do, when he had to do it, to accept the part of him which might seem inhuman to him, but which helped him to protect the people he loved and made him one complete extraordinary human being.

She felt utterly helpless and could feel his pain like a knife in her heart which she was unable to pull out. She gave up the countless attempts to sleep at 5 am, got up, and by 6:25 am, she was already at work, going through her current cases. The problem was, she could barely focus.

Down Below, Jacob entered Vincent's chamber to check on his wound that morning. He was worried about his son's state of mind, as he hadn't spoken a word since Catherine had left. Jacob knew what was eating him up, like a parasite he was unable to get rid of. And he also knew that no matter what he would say or do, Vincent had to go through this alone. Neither his, nor Catherine's, or anyone else's love could help him. At least now, because of his injury, he couldn't just disappear in the deepest tunnels for days or weeks to process what he had done.

As he was silently changing Vincent's bandages, he looked at him a few times. Vincent's usually lively and interested blue eyes seemed empty and lifeless. His face was paler than usual, a resigned look on it. When Father finished his work, he couldn't bear it any more.

"You cannot do this, Vincent," he said resolved.

His son looked up at him with a question in his eyes.

"This self-beating up, making yourself into the image of a monster unworthy of anyone and anything."

Vincent's calm and cold reply sent a chill down Jacob's spine.

"I *am* a monster."

Jacob's eyebrows frowned and he spoke almost in anger now.

"You are *not* a monster! You may be a beast when you protect your loved ones but *not* a monster! We couldn't *love* a monster!"

Vincent stood up sharply and started pacing around his chamber, feeling his anger rising.

"How? *How* can you love me?! How can *she* love me? Can't you all see what I am? What I've done?!"

Jacob felt such a sorrow and pain coming over him, seeing his beloved son destroying himself with guilt and self-loathing, that his legs got weak and he had to sit down on Vincent's bed leaning heavily on his walking stick in the process. After a few moments, he said quietly.

"No, because we can only see *who* you are – the best, most loyal and most cherished of friends to everyone. The most wonderful and wisest teacher to our children. The bravest defender of all the weak and helpless ones. The most precious, loving and beloved son a father could ever have..."

His voice broke slightly at the last words and his vision got a bit blurry all of sudden.

Vincent stopped pacing with his back to Father and took a deep breath before exhaling again.

"And the noblest, kindest, most courageous and beautifully-spirited man to the woman who would give her last breath, in order to protect you because despite what you think, she said you are the best of what it means to be human," Jacob concluded.

Very slowly, Vincent turned to face him. The look at him almost broke Jacob's heart.

Vincent was crying... Silent but unstoppable stream of tears was running down his face trying to process all the emotional turmoil inside of him, finally giving up on his anger, shame and despair and acknowledging the truth beyond knowledge. The truth of love...

Jacob stood up, approached him and pulled his beloved son into his arms. Vincent collapsed in his father's embrace and let the flow of his emotions free run.

Catherine got out of the lift on the 18th floor and walked towards her apartment. She stayed very late at work that day and then walked for ages in the streets, to get her head straight. She unlocked the door and was so absent-minded, that as she entered the flat, she dropped her keys.

She bent down with a sigh, but her mood quickly shifted when she spotted a small envelope with her name and no address on it right behind the door – someone had slipped it under from outside. Seeing the familiar lyrical handwriting, she opened it hastily, read the hand-written note in it and looked at her wrist watch. She threw her briefcase on the sofa, locked the door behind her again and darted back to the lift. The words from the note in the envelope were burning in her mind.

Ten o'clock. I'll be waiting...

V.

P.S. I'm sorry but I can't come the usual way yet.

When she climbed down the ladder and looked at the threshold, her heart started pounding, Vincent was standing there in half shadow, silently, calmly.

Catherine walked towards him, not rushing as she wasn't sure what to expect. When she came close enough to see his face clearly, the dark shadows under his beautiful eyes said he had been crying, and her heart sank from feeling his enormous pain.

"Catherine, I didn't mean to hurt you... I felt lost in myself.... I couldn't understand how ... believe that you could still... love me after what you had seen...."

Catherine sighed and walked to him.

"Vincent, I know who you are, I know *both* sides of you, they are both a part of the man I love. And if that dark side is haunting you and drawing you to despair, I want to be by your side overcoming your fear of it, until you accept the whole of you. I know it's not easy and it will be a long road to get there, but you are not alone in it, Vincent, not any more. I am a part of you, I want to share it with you..."

Vincent's deep blue pools pierced right through her into her soul. "I can't make it alone...." His voice broke and her heart went out to him.

"I thought that once you realised what I had done, that I might lose you... Please, forgive me..." he said almost whispering, begging, praying...

Catherine shook her head, smiled with a bittersweet expression, gently ran her fingers across the bandage on his arm, as if trying to take some of the hurt away from him and put her arms around his neck pulling him close, carefully.

He put his healthy arm around her tightly and laid his head on her shoulder. She could hear him exhale with relief. Suddenly, Vincent remembered her words from some time ago.

'Don't you know? You could never lose me, Vincent, we can never lose each other, as long as we remember...'

"As long as we remember love...", Vincent said quietly and when Catherine pulled back slightly and gave him a loving look, she could see his eyes smiling.

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