

With Courage and Care

(Catherine's Letter to Vincent)

by Michaela Buzsaki Struchova

Dear Vincent,

There are no words enough to express how grateful I am to you for allowing me to spend those few days with you. When I learned of dad's stroke, I felt as if the ground had shifted beneath my feet, and when he died, everything seemed out of place, unreal, pointless, empty. Everything, apart from you...

I tried so hard to keep it together, recover on my own, but Joe was right. It takes a lot more than three days... To process, accept and learn to live with the knowledge that those who we loved and who loved us will never truly leave us, although we will never see or talk to them in this life again. They just move to another space, remaining a part of us forever, though.

There was only one place I could go to get to the point of acceptance of this knowledge. There is only one person in my life, who I trust with my whole being, who understands my feelings like no one else, who never judges me but opens my eyes to the truth. The one person who always makes me feel safe, welcome and loved...

I know how difficult it was for you to have me so close for a longer time, Vincent. Please, believe me when I say I did not wish to cause you any pain with my presence. We have come so far in the almost two years since we first met, being closer to each other than we've ever been, feeling so much deeper than we've ever had...

You always tell me I have strength in me and most of the time, I believe you. This time though, I felt like all my strength deserted me, leaving me astray, like an abandoned ship after a raging storm on the sea. It came to a point where every place I went to, everyone I met and everything I did, seemed so unfamiliar and useless that I couldn't go on like that anymore. At that moment, I didn't lie to you, when I said there was nothing for me up there...

I know you were leaving me space to mourn, just like I know you were never truly far away from me. The rose I found on the bench of my balcony the morning after Daddy passed away gave me more comfort than any embrace and kind words I received from everyone else...

I remember the first time you left me a rose on the balcony. We hadn't seen each other for a few weeks back then, and I was missing you terribly, wondering why you hadn't reached out to me again. And then I found the rose and your note...

Vincent, can you even imagine what it meant to me? That was when I truly and fully understood how much I need you in my life... You have given me more roses since then, but that one will always remain a special memory for me. It gave me back the hope that I could be a part of you and you a part of me for as long as time and fate will allow it if we go with courage and care...

When I begged you to take me Below, I was desperate. Not just because I lost my way and saw no true meaning of my life Above anymore, but mostly because I was longing for your nearness. So badly that it almost scared me... I know it must have scared you, too, but you braved it with such grace and courage that I could not have loved you more at the moment when you said "Come," and took me down to the tunnels...

We have walked on the thin ice of our tamed passion for so long now, that sometimes I get overwhelmed with it. I forget myself, unable to resist that pull, that magnificent power you have over me, wishing for us finally to be truly together...

I don't know where I found the strength not to ask you to stay with me on that first night when I came Below. Every fibre of my body was screaming for it, but I knew it wasn't meant to be like that. It was neither the right time nor the right situation surrounding it. And I know you were not ready yet... I'm sure you felt it within me, even though your lips didn't say it out loud. The look in your eyes was more eloquent than any words could ever be...

And yet, you came to me later in the time of my deep sorrow and held me in your arms long into the night until I fell asleep... How did it make you feel, Vincent? Our bodies were lying so close to each other, my weary head resting on your chest, listening to the beating of your heart. It was beating only a little faster than usually, and yet I could feel a shift in it, radiating something calming and exciting at the same time. To me, it was the sweetest feeling I have ever experienced so far in my life...

During those blessed days that I spent in your nearness, I got a glimpse of what it would be like to live in your world with you. To have the chance of not having to count the hours of the day until I get to see you again; not hating the clock, when after such a short precious time, you have to leave my balcony and return home to the tunnels.

You knew better than me that I wasn't ready yet to take that ground-breaking step and come to live with you in your world, no matter what I said at the Waterfalls that day. But Vincent, the moment when you allowed your heart to speak over your reason, in that so singular, unguarded moment, and told me you didn't want me to go back, my heart was pounding so much that it almost burst out of my chest. To hear you say those words, knowing that you want to share your life with me in every way, means everything to me, more than you could ever imagine...

I may not be ready for it yet; as you say, I am a woman of both worlds, and there is still so much I need and can do living Above. But I want you to know that I have not given up on our dream. I am certain that one day soon, the time comes when I will be ready, and nothing will ever separate us anymore...

I did find my strength to go back to my world in the end. A world which I so badly wish could become your world as well one day. You helped me to find it, just like countless times before. But surely, you must have known, felt it deep down inside your precious heart, that there was no way I could have left you with just an embrace and a goodbye as I did so many times before. Not after those days we spent together; not after all that you've done for me; not after being so close to each other...

There were so many times we were so close... Times of quiet contemplation or unexpected spontaneous joy. Ever since that night when you took me to the Music Chamber for the first time, and our musical experience got heightened by that glorious rainstorm, I couldn't stop thinking about it... The parting at the threshold afterwards almost undid me. It was a moment when I almost gave in to my need and desire, wishing almost painfully that you were bolder and less cautious...

Ever since that night, a fire has been burning in me which I cannot tame, no matter what I do. And I know there is the same flame burning within you. All I need to do is look into your beguiling eyes...

Your words have always been wise, and therefore, I will follow you in going with courage and with care. But it is courage that brought us where we are, Vincent, and I believe it will be courage that will guide us to the place we were always meant to be, no matter what you might think now.

Thank you, Vincent... For being who you are, for being strong for me and teaching me how to find my own strength. Thank you for not leaving me alone when I needed you most, despite the sacrifice you had to make. And most of all, thank you for having the courage and will to walk with me on the unknown, sometimes difficult yet so beautiful road that is the life we share in our own way...

Love is the strangest thing. One minute it makes you laugh, the other it makes you suffer, but most of the time, it gives you the wings to carry all the weight of the

world, knowing that you are not alone and that come what may, there will always be arms to catch you and never let you fall.

That is what I feel when I'm with you, Vincent. I feel like I can do anything, no matter how impossible, because I have you beside me. We may exist as individuals, but together, we live, and most certainly, we love...

I am sitting on my bed, browsing through old family photos, looking at the smiling faces of my mother and father, who are finally together again. They lived and loved as well, and their love transcended time and separation, for Daddy never let the memory of the love of his life slip away, not until the day he left the Earth.

I feel so happy knowing that he had the chance to learn about you, about us. And I'm sure he is at peace, knowing that his daughter is following his legacy of devoted and eternal love in her own life.

I will stand for us, Vincent, and carry our light, no matter how long and how far I have to go. For it is what I live and breathe for, in the hope that one day, we will carry that light together...

Forever,

Catherine

