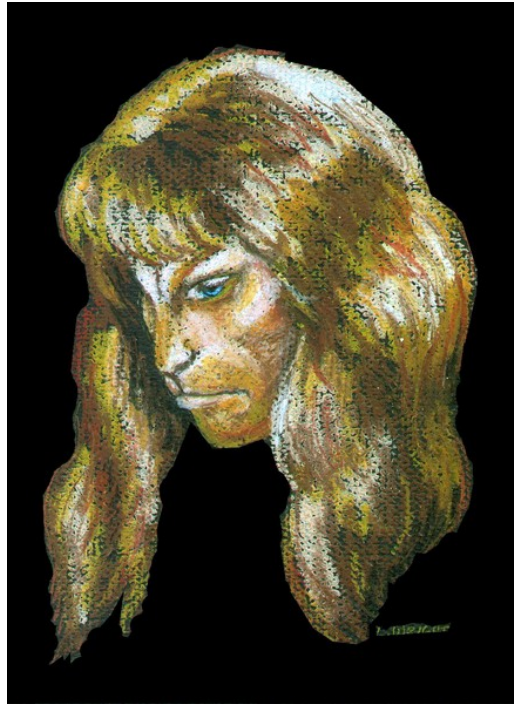


No Dominion

By Cindy Rae

Dedicated to the amazing talent of Lynn Wright



And death shall have no dominion.
Dead mean naked they shall be one
With the man in the wind and the west moon;
When their bones are picked clean and the clean bones gone,
They shall have stars at elbow and foot;
Though they go mad they shall be sane,
Though they sink through the sea they shall rise again;
Though lovers be lost love shall not;
And death shall have no dominion.

Dylan Thomas

"Though lovers be lost, love shall not; And death shall have no dominion."

Her voice. Hers. Catherine's.

Her name... is Catherine. It was a thought that had sung inside his head the first day she'd given the word to him. Catherine. Three syllables, to change your life, forever.

"Dead mean naked they shall be one..."

Her voice. Hers. The beautiful voice that could be breathless, so often, and firm at other times. Soft now. Rhythmic. Repeating, as she cadenced over each line of the old poem. It was an *a cappella* song, by now, each line melding into the next one. She only stopped so she could begin again.

"... and death shall have no dominion."

No dominion. He heard it both at the beginning and at the end of the poem, the repetition of the words ringing both in his ears and in his heart.

Had he died? He had.

And not stayed dead, just as she had not. But could now find no way back, save to follow the breathless intonations of her beautiful, trusted voice.

His mind drifted, searching for purchase. It played with nearly every word she said.

Dominions. Kingdoms. The words raced through Vincent's fevered brain.

Kingdoms. A Kingdom by the sea. Kingdoms and territories. Territories and Principalities. Principalities. Principles. Principles like love, and honor. And Principals, like John Pater, and Father and Elliot and him. Principal characters. Catherine. Catherine and Lisa. No, not Lisa. Only Catherine. Only Catherine.

He began to feel his body sinking down.

"Though they sink through the sea, they shall rise again. Though lovers be lost, love...."

Sinking. And sinking, and sinking. Down. Down. Down and down some more. Too far to reach the surface again. Too far to draw breath. Drowning. Dying. Again.

""Though lovers be lost..."

Lost. Lost and found. Lost and not found. Lost and found, and lost again. Just...lost. Lost in the tunnels. The ways change, Catherine. If you need the words, hear them. I am not the monster you seek.

Who was that? Jason Walker? Jason Walker disguised as a beast? It was so long ago...

If you need the words, hear them. I am not the monster you seek...

I'm the monster that seeks you.



"...they shall rise again; Though lovers be lost..."

Lost in the darkness, lost to the Other, to the Dark One. The Dark One. Narcissa's name for Paracelsus.

Paracelsus, was he here? No. Yes. No, Father was here. No, not Father. John Pater. "They all knew. Fire and copper, on your tongue..."

"They shall have stars at elbow and foot. Though they go mad, they shall be sane. Though they..."

Catherine's voice. Again and again. The soothing veil. The anchoring tie. Returning to her voice, to her words, *No, not her words, my words*. The words he'd given her, the ones he'd wanted her to have above all the other words he knew, when he'd felt himself slipping away.

No, not mine, not mine either. Dylan Thomas' words. It was Dylan Thomas wasn't it? In that book? That little book I destroyed my chambers trying to find?



"...sink through the sea, they shall rise aga..."

The sea. The sea. The sea, the falls, the Nameless River, A distant shore... the Mirror Pool. The Mirror Pool, where we say good-bye. Goodbye, Ellie. Are there stars at your elbows and at your feet, poor, lost, little girl? Eric misses you. I miss you, Ellie. I brought him down, brought down the sailor who killed you.

My fault. Mine. Did no one remember the fault was mine? Does Eric? I didn't know. No one did. We all didn't know... until we did.

"... and Death shall have no dominion. Dead mean naked they shall be one, with the man in the wind and the west moon..."

She was repeating it, again and again.



The man in the wind. How many nights, have I been that, as I climbed to her balcony? How many nights had the west moon shimmered, as I climbed to her? Too many. Too many nights, standing on her balcony, watching the path of the moon. Never the sun. Well, almost never.

The sun at last, their last morning, together. Whatever happens, whatever comes. Just remember I love you. We are something that has never been.

"When the bones are picked clean, and the clean bones gone, They shall have stars at elbow and foot; Though they go mad, they shall be sane."

Be sane. Be sane, be sane, be sane, please, please dear god, let me be sane. Be sane for her. For all of them, for myself, but for her, most of all.

"Maybe the worst is passed," she'd said.

Vain, and pitiful hope.

Don't you know you can't love her, she can't love you, if you can't stay sane? Stay sane. Stay sane. Please. Please. I love you, Catherine, I love you so much. Whatever happens. Whatever comes. I love you.

"Though lovers be lost, love shall not. And Death shall have no dominion."

Love. Lovers. You and I have never been lovers. Never been...

"And Death shall have no Dominion."

Her voice was growing raspier. Tired. Weak, yet still strong. So strong, his Catherine. She'd had to be, after all he had put her through. *Life. Death. Snatching her from death, as her mother stood in its doorway, to welcome her. Becoming Death, as he meted out wrath with his vengeance.*

His dark side wasn't Evil, or Impulse, or Passion, or Protection. His Dark side was Death. And it was very, very uncompromising. He felt himself sinking, again. Back down. Down. Down to where the Other waited for him. Down to where she could not reach. Sinking. Sinking down.

"Though they sink through the sea, they shall rise again."

Rise again. And again, back to the sound of her sweet, sweet voice. How many times? How many times, rising, now? Seven? Twelve? A hundred? How many times had she pulled him back up, by the lure of her beautiful, beloved voice? He didn't know.

He knew she loved his voice. Knew the bond trembled with something like joy, every time he said her name, her beautiful name, and it touched her ear, and his as well. *We are something that has never been, Catherine. I love you.*

"They shall have stars at elbow and foot."

Stars. Stars in the mirror pool. Stars peeking down in the Concert Chamber. Stars, spangled across the sky, on her terrace. Crush the shell that holds her fears and cast it to the night, to the stars. Throw it out past the moon. The first time I saw the moon. Stars at my elbow from her balcony. Stars at my feet, from the bridge.



I scorn to change my state with kings. Stars. The North Star. North and South. South and North. Everywhere South of Oz and North of Shangri La. Stars. Starry, starry night. Star light, star bright, first star I see tonight. I wish I may...

"With the man in the wind..."

I wish I might, have the wish I wish tonight...

What did I wish for? Is it a secret? Will it not come true, if I tell her? If I tell her...what? Did I remember to wish, at all? Wish upon a star. A birthday wish. Blow out the candles, and make a wish...

The candles.

The candles.

So many of those, Below.

Everywhere, in the tunnels, all the light there was, in his chambers.

Push back the dark. A dozen candles, on her balcony, on our anniversary. A hundred, at Winterfest. Darkness is only the absence of light... only the absence of light. Shall I lead you through the dark, Catherine? "There is no darkness, Vincent, when you are with me..." I know she said it.

"Though lovers be lost, love shall not; And death shall have no dominion."

She was tiring, but not faltering. She began again, and he heard her stop for just a moment, to take a sip of water. The glass clinked on the night stand, and she kept reading it, or just reciting, by now.

"They shall have stars..."

Stars, again. *Twinkle, twinkle, little star. How I wonder what you are. Up above the world so high. Like her balcony, up high. Like a diamond in the... no. No, not a diamond...*

A crystal.

A crystal from the deepest caverns, suspended on a chain, around her beautiful neck. A crystal for her. An ivory rose, for me. Roses. She was planting roses. How long had I been there, watching you, Catherine? How long, indeed? Will you ever not be surprised to see me standing there? Will I ever not be surprised, that I found the courage to come to this balcony, at all? Great Expectations. No shadow of another parting from you....



"... love shall not be lost..."

Did Shakespeare know everything? Or did Dylan Thomas?

Breathe.

"...And Death shall have no Dominion."

Breathe. Deeply. Breathe. Just breathe. Breathe her in.

"Vincent?" Her voice. Saying his name. *God, she is here. Thank you. Thank you, Catherine. Thank you for being on your side of the river. I promise I will help you cross. Father will pray for both of us. He said he would.*

"I can't help but marvel at your courage."

Neither can I. There is so much strength in her...

"Vincent?"

Vincent felt himself rise again, and this time, he did not sink back down. The motion carried him up. Up toward life. Up toward her.

He sat up and felt the air fill his lungs.

Breathe. Just breathe. Breathe in life. Breathe in her. Do it.



The first deep breath, after the long climb back. Air. Air and the wind and her. He laid back down, feeling his body live, again, feeling the sweet rush of cool tunnel air, as it filled his chest, and consciousness took hold.

Slowly, almost painfully, eyelids that felt weighted by stones forced themselves open. He was in a bed he had no memory of being carried to. His own.

"You found it. You found the book," he rasped, eyes barely slitting open, just enough to take in her bedraggled, dust streaked, beloved form. Nerveless fingers brought the volume near and set it into his hand.

"It seemed important to you. You kept repeating it, while you were sick. I love you." She was a soft balm to a battered soul.

"You've been reading it to me. For hours." His voice was parched. So was hers. His was worse. He'd been screaming, after all, before he'd dropped. No, not screaming. Roaring. Men screamed. Animals roared.

"Not hours. Days." she told him, brushing back the hair of his bangs, gently. "It seemed like it was all you wanted, was this, at the end. So I just..." she didn't finish the sentence. Couldn't. But he could.

"You brought it to me. And made sure I had it, when I needed it. I needed it, Catherine. Needed the words. Needed you. Needed you to bring them to me. Needed to hear you say them. Needed you to believe them, when I wasn't sure if I did." His throat hurt. But his eyes were full of her.

"I'm not sure what I believed." she said honestly, her green eyes beyond sorrowful. "But I clung to them, for you. Whatever happens. Whatever comes," she told him, holding a cup of water to his cracked lips. He sipped. Slowly.

"Though they go mad they shall be sane," he quoted. "I love you, Catherine. I love you so much." His blue eyes were clear, for the first time.

"Father thinks Paracelsus gave you something. Something to make you hallucinate, like he did before. Something to drive you mad," she said.

"It doesn't matter," he replied, twining her fingers with his. Her palm was so small. "I will always find my way back to you, my Catherine. Always push Death back, to be with you. Keep the wind at my elbow, the stars at my feet. Always rise... at the sound of your voice." His own was weak. But it was there.

"Do you want me to read to you, some more?" she asked, opening the book to the page it now fell to, by force of the crack in the binding. She'd been reading the passage to him for three days.

"Come here." He took the book away and tugged her across the mattress, until she settled down next to him. Holding the battered leather volume in one hand, he wrapped his arm around her, and kept one hand clasped with hers.

"Though they sink through the sea..." he began, brushing her forehead with a kiss.

"They shall rise again," she answered.

"Though lovers be lost?"

"Love shall not." It was a whispered certainty.

The last line, they finished together.

"And death shall have no dominion."

---Fin---

I confess that I do not know how artists do what they do. That I can even watch them create, and in that moment, I think I understand. But then look away, and look back again, and it's all a mystery to me, still. There's something magical in it. And it's a magic I don't possess.

But Lord, I love it.

I can't do the things Lynn has done, and continues to do. But I can be heart-stoppingly impressed by it.

And I am.

For all the pictures worth a thousand words, and more, thank you, Lynn.

--

No matter where you are in your own work of art, I wish you love ~ Cindy

