

# CATHERINE'S CHOICE

by Allison

"Catherine. Thank you for coming to see me."

"Your message said it concerned Vincent. I came as soon as I could."

"Vincent is down in the lower chambers with a work crew. It will be several hours before he returns."

"You don't want him to know we're meeting?"

"Not yet."

"I see. What do you need, Father?"

*"So like Vincent."*

Catherine blushed.

"I want you to come below...permanently... to be with Vincent."

"Father!"

"The council has already agreed and preparations are being made to expand Vincent's chamber so you and he can have some... privacy... if you agree."

"But my job... my friends..."

"Your JOB isn't worth your life, Catherine. You've had too many close calls. If Vincent were to ever lose you... he would not survive. He has already told me so."

"Me too." Catherine remembered Vincent's words after Mitch shot her.

"Catherine, I know I've been against you and Vincent in the past - and I regret it. Vincent walks a delicate balance..."

Catherine started to say something.

"No, no. Let me finish, please. He constantly worries when you are above during the day, where he cannot reach you if anything occurred. Your love is so inextricably linked, that the danger would destroy him sooner or later."

"I want to be with him more than anything. But..."

"Who or what do you love most? What or whom loves you most? Be near that. Let it change who you are, forever, and never regret any of that change. No one person can travel everywhere or seize every opportunity. So seize the one you love. No other choice makes any sense, considering."

Father walked over and placed a hand on Catherine's shoulder.

"The alternative is to break things off with Vincent completely. Never see him. Forget the tunnels and us. Your work will ultimately put us at risk or get Vincent killed."

Catherine gave Father a stricken look, then looked away.

"You both have had too many close calls... The watcher, Mitch..."

that professor... You could do something else, but knowing you, I doubt that would be a possibility."

Catherine nodded in agreement.

Father drew his glasses slowly down off the bridge of his nose. He pressed his free hand over his eyes for a moment, obviously in pain about what he was about to say. The final argument.

Catherine watched him closely. She knew this man, now, almost as well as she knew Vincent. She was aware of his burning need, his drive to save his son at any cost, no matter how painful. What could he say now to persuade her he knew what was best?

Jacob looked up, his grey eyes filled with an iconic look of self-disbelief. He shook his head slowly, a long sigh escaping him.

"Catherine, put yourself in Vincent's shoes for a moment, please. Hear me out on this. If you died trying to save him, then where would he be?"

The corners of the old man's mouth turned out in grief.

"Alone forever. There is no coming back from that. There can be no forever, if you were parted by death. You two live or die together; you are now that inextricably linked, on so many levels. I know you would die for him. But Catherine, are you now prepared to live for him, with him? Are you ready to make the dream you have always spoken of a reality?"

"You're right, Father. We have had too many chances to lose one another. It has to stop. It's the only way to keep Vincent safe and in my life. I have to give up my life above."

"You won't regret it, Catherine. We'll make sure you have as full a

life here as you had above. You can tell your boss you're taking some time off, going away for a while."

"What about my friends?"

"Your friends we can introduce to Vincent and to us. I trust you, Catherine. You've never betrayed us, and if your friends are as steadfast as you, they won't betray us either."

"When do we tell Vincent?"

"Tell me what?" Vincent asked as he came into the room.

"That Catherine has decided to move below permanently. To be with you," Father said.

Vincent looked at Catherine in shock. "You have?!"

His mind was a whirl wind of possibilities. His dreams were finally coming true.

"If you will have me, Vincent."

"Of course, he will have you," Father declared.

"What about the council?" Vincent asked.

"It has already been decided," Father told him.

Vincent looked at Catherine. "Are you sure about this?"

She looked at Father who nodded.

"I'm sure. We'll have our 'Happy Life', Vincent. We will."

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