

A Miracle in Waiting

by Angie

"No thorns go as deep as a rose's"

- Algernon Charles Swinburne



As she often did when she met Vincent in the tunnel culvert entrance, Catherine passed over the spot where he had told her he had found her, that fateful, foggy night in April. She, of course, could not remember much – merely the dreadful sensation of being cut with a very sharp, very large knife in the van, and passing out before being thrown. There was pain, a nightmare of it, but she knew nothing more until she had woken up in Vincent's bed below, her head and eyes completely wrapped in bandages. The pain, at least was real. It meant she was alive, beyond all expectations.

After her father had died and she had returned above after a sojourn of healing in the tunnels, she had sat in a large tree nearby and basked in the late fall sunshine – a kind of memorial to her father's memory. She had climbed down to an afternoon that seemed balmy for September, but put her coat back on. As she made her way back across the lawn towards her apartment building, she was suddenly stopped by a beautiful scent, one she knew was roses.

She looked around, expecting to see a neat bed of them somewhere, but there was nothing of the sort. Instead there was a small cascade of wild roses over the banks of the culvert. She went over to look at them more closely, and inhaled their scent. She realized they were well past their prime, and that quite a few had already formed hips. She had an idea then, and carefully used her fingernails to snip off two of the ripest-looking hips. Then she went to the fateful spot, and stomped two deep holes into the ground with her boot heel, grateful that a recent rain had made it soft. She dropped the hips into the holes and covered them up with soil as best she could, again using her heels. She didn't know if the hips would sprout, but she hoped so. She decided to watch the spot closely in the spring.

Events however, overtook her, and Fate did not allow her the spring she anticipated. She was captured by Gabriel and spent that spring looking out the window of a high building somewhere, waiting for her child to be born.

But she thought of Vincent every day, and once even remembered the two rose hips she had buried, sending a wish that they would grow and he would see them.

*There is a pain—so utter—
It swallows substance up—
Then covers the Abyss with Trance—
So Memory can step
Around—across—upon it—
As one within a Swoon—
Goes safely—where an open eye—
Would drop Him—Bone by Bone.*

- Emily Dickinson



Vincent stood in the shadow of the trees, as he had that foggy night years ago. This time though, he had baby Jacob with him. The child had inherited at least some of Vincent's empathic sense, and was awake and aware that something important was happening, despite the late hour. Vincent couldn't hope to block his emotions from his son, and didn't wish to. He wanted his ... their ... son to understand the importance of this place – and in due course, the date too, April 12th.

Like that other night, it was again foggy and chilly. Vincent closed his eyes. He could recall very clearly what he had heard that night; the roar of a vehicle engine, somewhat muffled by the fog, but intruding obscenely on the silence of the park. He remembered shrinking back into the cover of the trees as the vehicle, a van, got closer and hearing it slow down, just slightly. Then without completely stopping, there was the sound of the van door being slid open. He had seen something being tossed out, then the door slamming as the vehicle roared away into the night.

Vincent opened his eyes and looked at the spot where he had first found Catherine. Almost without thought, he moved towards that spot again, across the wet grass on the slope near the culvert, and over to the patch of grass not far from the road. Just as before, there was some illumination from a nearby light standard

Jacob, still, silent, but alert, rested in his father's arms, as if waiting for something. Vincent arrived at the spot, and knelt down where what had been tossed out of the van had come to rest, after rolling over several times. Of course, he had realized it was a person almost from the start, and the way the body had fallen had not given him hope of finding any life in it. Nevertheless, he had turned it over, for it was face down, and he had gasped in shock. Even in the hazy light, he could see that the woman's face was cut across several times and bleeding. She was wearing a soft, dark coat, and her bare legs terminated in high-heeled

shoes. But most importantly, she had been alive!

Now Vincent looked around him, taking in the scene again, as he had not done that night, being most concerned with getting the woman below, where Father could perhaps save her life. He had no doubt that she was in danger of dying, but he could sense she was strong with a will to live. Father would probably not believe him about the latter, but that didn't matter.

Vincent crouched down and ran a hand over the area where she had lain, holding baby Jacob in the crook of his other arm. His hand found a slight depression, and then another one, followed quickly by a sharp prick on his palm. He bent over to see the spot more clearly and discovered a tiny, coiled tendril, its stem covered with very small sharp thorns. Near the ground, his inquiring fingers told him there was a very tiny bud, small and hard. In the second depression, he felt a second tendril. He couldn't see any details in the dim light, but he didn't need to. He knew exactly what it was, and marvelled that such a thing could exist, just here, where he had been remembering a long ago night.

Then he closed his eyes and let his other senses take over. With a gasp, he sat down abruptly, seeing the image of a woman wearing a white gown, staring out of a window high above the city. She was wistful – and he knew she was thinking of him. Then he heard her voice tell him about the two little rosehips she had planted ... for them.



Vincent dropped his head and let his tears fall freely. *Oh Catherine*, he whispered silently to her memory.

Then his son wriggled in his arm, and Vincent opened his eyes. He took a moment to gather his voice.

"Look Jacob," he whispered to his son. "A rose for your mother, my Catherine. We will come again in a few weeks to see if it has bloomed."

He shifted onto his knee pads and rose to his feet with a grunt. Looking around, nothing had changed, but the fog, instead of being a dank blanket, now seemed to be a shining mist, promising joys to come, still hidden, but sure to be revealed in due course.

Jacob sensing the peace in the man holding him, reached up a chubby hand and stroked his father's furry cheek. Vincent looked down at the baby and smiled, stroking his son's face in turn, before planting a kiss on his head.

He turned his back on the road and headed for the culvert, knowing full well that Father would not be at ease until they both returned.

Later, in his chamber, Vincent recalled a poem by Emily Dickinson, a poet whose work had often spoken to him of late.

*I meant to find Her when I came—
Death—had the same design—
But the Success—was His—it seems—
And the Surrender—Mine—*

*I meant to tell Her how I longed
For just this single time—
But Death had told Her so the first—
And she had past, with Him—*

*To wander—now—is my Repose—
To rest—To rest would be
A privilege of Hurricane
To Memory—and Me.*

He smiled a little grimly at the appropriateness of the lines, but remembered the tiny rose tendrils.

“No thorns go as deep as a rose’s,” Vincent quoted softly to himself. He went to bed with a lighter heart.

END