

April 12th Reflections

by Angie

Till I loved, I never lived

- Emily Dickinson

Unusually, Catherine had got home on time for a change. It was early spring, and she felt a little restless – too much so to just lay in bed and catch up on sleep. She took a shower, changed into a pair of pyjamas, and decided to read. Vincent, she was sure, would not come tonight. He had said he was very busy working in an area where they were hoping to carve out new chambers. It always amazed her to think of him working in the wee hours of the night – but of course, they did not worry themselves about the rhythms of the world above. They worked around the clock at need.

Catherine picked up a book of Emily Dickinson's poems and settled on one of her loveseats, feet drawn up. She browsed it - at first, just reading one here and there as the words attracted her. Then she stopped and sat up straighter in astonishment. The first stanza had got her attention, but the rest of it was equally riveting.

*"I live with Him—I see His face—
I go no more away
For Visitor—or Sundown—
Death's single privacy"*

It was almost as if the poet had known a night lover, one who could not come during the day - one she equated with the privacy of death, but then Emily seemed a bit obsessed with endings. Certainly, death would have stalked Vincent had he appeared at any time except at night.

*"The Only One—forestalling Mine—
And that—by Right that He
Presents a Claim invisible—
No wedlock—granted Me—"*

No indeed, Catherine thought ruefully. Vincent did have a claim on her, whether he wished to admit it or not. He was her 'only one'. She would marry him, if he asked, but she knew that was unlikely ... given what their lives had been like since he had found her in the park. And

that anniversary was now immanent, as the next stanza brought home to her.

*"I live with Him—I hear His Voice—
I stand alive—Today—
To witness to the Certainty
Of Immortality—"*

Well, she didn't exactly 'live' with him, but he was a part of her, as she was of him. In its way, their bond was much more personal than a joint abode. And yes, it did make her feel immortal, in a sense, to be so connected, so intimate. She knew Vincent would always come to her aid, although now she had moved to Trials and out of Investigation, to ensure that wasn't necessary. He wasn't immortal and she feared for him. Without him, there was nothing, just as she had told Father that dreadful time when Vincent had been ill and had retreated far below.

*"Taught Me—by Time—the lower Way—
Conviction—Every day—
That Life like This—is stopless—
Be Judgment—what it may—"*

Catherine smiled. Vincent had made sure she had memorized the basic layout of the 'lower way' ... the tunnels over the past years – able to find her way, even when the ways changed.

Their life ... and love ... was indeed stopless. Not even Father dared to judge either of them now - not that he had shown any inclination to lately.

Of course, stopless had another meaning ... that their love might continue to move forward. She wanted that ... very much. Vincent seemed closer since his illness, more willing to be physically near too. He often held her so tight, she could feel his muscled chest ... and other body parts he usually tried to shield from her. Yes, Vincent was certainly moving forward, in his own way.

April 12th. She sighed. Another year would soon be upon them. The last had been no less challenging than the one before. Perhaps the new one would give them more time to enjoy each other, in new ways. She closed her eyes to dream, just a little ...

.... and woke to a voice she loved whispering in her ear.

"I think of love, and you, and my heart grows full and warm, and my breath stands still... I can feel a sunshine stealing into my soul and making it all summer, and every thorn, a rose."

Catherine looked into Vincent's eyes.

"Is that in here?" she asked patting the book in her hands.

He smiled, then cradled her hands in his.

"Probably not, Catherine. It was in one of her letters, ones now in the care of Harvard University."

He sighed deeply, but happily. "I never thought I would have the opportunity to tell a woman

that, Catherine.”

“But you memorized it and saved it somewhere safe, just in case.”

“Even I can have dreams, my love.”

“No one deserves to have them come true more than you, Vincent.”

Vincent gave her a smile.

“Emily wrote often of love, but it seems to have evaded her.”

“Yes,” Catherine agreed. “A lesson to us all. Better to have even a little of it, than to write about it and not have it – or lose it – as the case may be.”

“But we have all lost it sometime, Catherine. Even I. I am the more fortunate, since I found it again ... with you.”

“I have had many opportunities, but never truly found it ... until you found me, Vincent.”

“Not even with Elliot Burch?” he teased.

Catherine took a while to answer. She knew the question was not as innocent as he pretended.

“I have made mistakes,” she said at last, softly. “He wasn't the first. He's an attractive man – I can't deny it. But when I discovered the ... truth ... suddenly, I realized how stupid I had been. Mistaking an attractive cover for substance.”

“Whereas, I do not have that problem,” Vincent pointed out wryly.

Catherine put down the book and grasped both his hands, pulling on them to urge him off the floor, where he had been kneeling all this time, to sit beside her. He obliged her. When he was seated, she looked him in the eyes.

“Vincent, you are proof that what's inside is all that matters. Where would I be if that heart of yours had not urged you to save me? Dead most likely. Just another statistic for the park to bury. Another sad tale, a death no one could solve.”

“As I too would be, had I not been found by Anna,” Vincent agreed.

“There, you see? You paid it forward, and I was lucky enough to be the recipient.”

“And now?” Vincent asked, his eyes twinkling. “Where do we go from here, my love.”

“I think we both know the answer to that,” she answered, her mouth tilted into a wry smile.

Vincent dropped his head, but she could still see his smile. My, he was bold tonight! Must be the spring air, she thought.

He raised his head up to look at her again.

“You have been remarkably patient,” he commented softly.

“You are worth it,” she whispered.

He rose then and pulled her to her feet. Together they crossed the threshold into her bedroom.

April 12th would have something more to remember henceforth, was Catherine's fleeting thought ... before other matters distracted her.

END