

Vignettes

Mirrors

by Angie

Note from author: These vignettes are written, and should be read, in episode productions order, not episode airing order.

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1- Pilot – Once Upon a Time in New York

After Vincent had left her balcony, Catherine found herself rerunning their conversation in her mind. He was certainly the most unique man she had ever met – and not just because of his appearance. He told her things no man she knew would ever admit to thinking about – fear, self-awareness, insecurity.

Then she remembered his words.

“I’ve seen your world. There’s no place for me in it. Your world is filled with frightened people ... and I remind them of what they’re most afraid of their aloneness.”

He said he’d “seen her world” - which meant he had probably met others. Her own reaction was typical, she guessed. She had been nervous in a strange place, but she had been safe - and there had been hints. She had felt his hand when he fed her soup. That curved mirror had shown her a distortion of both herself and Vincent.

She had been ashamed after he left, hurt by her reaction. Perhaps he had hoped she would be different.

Ironically, she had been the subject of similar horror when people saw her stitched face – and having police and press photos taken of her had been an ordeal that needed all her strength. Edie’s reaction to her picture in the police files had been typical. The pity had come later – and that was worse.

Vincent, she sensed, would not allow pity. She was sure the people he knew loved him and appreciated him. Pity drained its receiver. He had come to terms with his appearance long ago. Just the same, he didn’t have a mirror in his chamber. She understood why now. She had not wanted to look in a mirror either. She felt no different - and if she didn’t see her reflection she could pretend she was normal. Did Vincent think about his appearance much? She thought not.

She could look in a mirror now, but a close look revealed scar hairlines. A little makeup covered them and the remaining one, next to her ear, was hidden by her hair. But she still knew they were there, and that fact had changed her.

Mirrors, she decided, were brutally truthful. You couldn’t hide from them. Often the image you saw did not match what you saw in your mind’s eye. You saw only the outside, the superficial. A mirror could not look inside.

Eyes were supposed to be the mirrors of the soul. Vincent’ eyes were a brilliant blue and what she saw in them was compassion and honesty. She wanted to develop those qualities in herself.

Nothing was more important than truth. Vincent had taught her that – he lived it. She must too.

END

2. A Children's Story

What did children see when they looked at him? Vincent wondered.

He had been a little upset when Catherine made him stand in the shadows of the culverts as Eric began to awaken, but had complied rather than try to explain.

To be fair, to that point, she had never seen him with children. He had to remind himself that she had known very little about him, or his family, or his life in the tunnels. She had remembered her own reaction to her first sight of him.

Her careful introduction had probably made Eric curious about him, rather than fearful. The boy had reached out in wonder to touch his face, then asked if it was real. The answer had made Eric smile and Vincent had found himself smiling back at him.

All children knew stories of magical races – elves, fairies, pixies, and even some magical beasts. Perhaps they thought him one of those, become real.

Even babies seemed to find his face fascinating. Children, with their innate curiosity and honesty, untainted by adult fears, always sensed that he was not a threat. Appearances meant little to them and he loved them for it.

Eric, had asked the question he had asked himself often – that Catherine had also asked – how he had come to be. When Vincent told him he didn't know and never knew his parents, Eric had observed that he would know them when he saw them. It was a remark an orphan would make – that parents would be recognized as such. Would Vincent's be an older mirror image of his own face? He would never know. He had to live with his appearance, no matter how it had come to be.

In the mirror of a child's expression, he saw himself as he wanted to be seen, and accepted for what he was. He found peace.

END

3 - Siege

Catherine had changed him, Vincent realized. Through her eyes, he was seeing the world above differently.

He had overcome his natural reticence and shown his face, and given his name to a stranger - the old man, whose music had drawn him. What else could he have done? The old man's story had touched him and he had asked Catherine to help.

He had almost lost Catherine – had felt her falling in love with Elliot. She had seen something in Elliot at first – a romantic knight perhaps. But when she had discovered the truth, that he owned the building under siege, she had not hesitated to bring him to justice.

Vincent had never gone to the rescue of topsiders before, except helpers – had never considered himself in that role. There were so many injustices in her world and he could do so little, safely. He had preferred to sit atop a building and enjoy the beauty of the city at night. It would never look quite the same to him, now.

Catherine had shown him that there was something he could do against injustice, in his way, as she could in hers. Her expression, when he exited via the apartment window after rousting the thugs, was one he would treasure forever. She had looked at him as if he were a knight come to the rescue. It had been almost surreal, as if he had been in a play. He remembered a quote from Hamlet;

“... to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, ...”

Catherine was his mirror, and in that light, he saw both himself and his nature as something different – and with more virtue than he had ever dreamed.

END

4 - Terrible Saviour

Vincent sat down heavily in his chair, weary in mind and body.

He had returned to Catherine, then escorted her back to her threshold, saying little, still blood-stained from his encounter with Jason. She had been quiet. Afterwards, he had gone to Father afterwards, who had cleaned, then taped close the slashes, which were not deep, without a word. The incident had raised questions about their security, and Father was distracted by that.

Vincent was more concerned about what he had seen in Jason. This was a man who used an animal mask and claw attachments to “right wrongs”. After seeing him, Vincent understood why Catherine had suspected himself of being the subway vigilante. How different was he, in reality? Jason had used his disguise to dispense a kind of justice. Hadn’t Vincent done the same thing to save Catherine and the old people from Elliot Burch’s thugs?

He and Jason knew instinctively that their fight had to be to the death. They could not both live, under the circumstances. But in those few moments, when his own life had hung in the balance, as he gripped the rotting boards of the bridge over the Abyss, Vincent had looked into his opponent’s eyes. Jason’s mask was gone and Vincent had seen that he understood - everything! He had wanted to meet Vincent and had captured Catherine, guessing that he would come to the rescue.

In those last few moments on the bridge Jason and he had been kindred spirits, almost brothers. Then, instead of forcing his opponent to loosen his grip and fall, Jason had jumped to grab a rope hanging over the Abyss – and fallen to his own death.

Vincent found himself wishing he’d had time to talk to Jason. They had seen each other as if in a mirror - alike on the outside, alien to those who could see no further, with their true selves hidden inside.

Jason had led a double life, but Vincent was only what he was. Jason had seen that too, and knew what it meant. It had humbled him, restrained him from making the killing blow.

Now Vincent was truly unique - again. There was no comfort in that thought.

END

5 - No Way Down

Catherine sat on the edge of Vincent's bed and listened as he told her of his experiences with the Silks gang. He was obviously still in some physical pain, but it was mental anguish that wouldn't let him rest. He lay in the middle of his bed and spoke softly, staring at the uneven stone wall opposite, as if it held answers.

He had wanted her there, and she had come, wanting to do anything she could to offset her sense of guilt at drawing him into a situation where he had almost been killed – and to let him know she cared deeply about him.

What seemed to be bothering him was the reaction of those who had captured and beaten him – that they had not seen a man, but a beast.

Catherine suspected the gang had quickly concluded that Vincent was more powerful than they – and had behaved like children goading a zoo animal trapped behind bars. Vincent had been chained, injured, and apparently almost blind – but they had thought him stupid as well.

Even in his weakened state, Vincent had been under no illusions about what he heard in their voices. He knew they intended to kill him – slowly.

"Why?" Vincent asked, his voice raw, without looking at her. "Why did they hate me so? I was nothing, unknown to them."

Catherine did not answer immediately and gathered her thoughts. She had seen the bodies of the Silks and had learned something about them from Isaac. The gang were the worst kind of lowlife. They had preyed on the weak and imposed their arbitrary justice, even on each other.

"Vincent, the Silks saw everyone 'through a glass darkly'. They ruled by fear and had convinced themselves they were the top of the food chain. When they captured you, you became the vindication, and a new target, for their power. Then, when you killed one of them and escaped, they couldn't let you live. You exposed them for what they were – just bullies in flashy suits."

"Was their reputation worth so much to them?"

"It was everything, Vincent. Without it they had nothing, meant nothing. You revealed the truth. They looked in a mirror and saw what they had become - parodies, mean, lame."

"Yes, except Howie. He saw through my silence to my need."

"He had no illusions about the gang. He knew you were more human than the others, Vincent, and therefore worth saving. He saw beneath your outward appearance to the truth."

END

6 - The Beast Within

Vincent was awash in emotions – happiness, relief, anger, remorse.

Mitch had brought back painful memories. What he had become was bad enough, but Mitch's remark about the "law of the jungle" had stung – as it was meant to. Vincent had said nothing. What could he say to that?

Were they so very different, Vincent now asked himself. Did killing, even for a good cause, justify it? Was he really just another Mitch, but with more acceptable motives and different weapons – a kind of fogged mirror image?

Earlier, Father had wondered aloud how they could have gone so wrong with Mitch when he was a boy. Perhaps the question should be reversed, Vincent mused.

Why had Mitch turned against his father and his family below? He had wanted to escape the tunnels - but he had not hesitated to use them as a sanctuary when he needed them.

Mitch thought of himself first, always and his face reflected the life he had chosen – hard, ruthless and humourless.

Then he had shot Catherine - and Vincent had tracked him down for vengeance. It was hard for him to admit that, but it was the truth.

Mitch had begged for mercy - but it wasn't mercy that prompted Vincent to let him live. Catherine had awoken and wanted him – and then Mitch no longer mattered at all.

That, he decided, was what set them apart. Mitch would never have let him live if their positions had been reversed. He would have taken advantage of an opponent's weakness without a second thought.

Vincent knew he couldn't live without Catherine. Her reaction when she saw him at her bedside, then told him her dream, had given him great happiness. It was worth everything.

She could vanquish the darkness and anger inside him with a thought – and that gave him new hope. If she could tame the beast Mitch had seen, perhaps they were not alike after all.

END

7- Masques

Vincent walked slowly back to his chamber, still half ensorcelled by the magic of Halloween. Sitting with Catherine by the Brooklyn Bridge, as the sun rose, was the grand finale to a night of wonders. He had walked the world above like anyone else – and with someone he loved. He could hardly believe it.

He had also met Brigit O'Donnell and spoken with her, discovered they had much in common, and been able to thank her for the inspiration her book had given him. He had also spoken to her of Catherine, in a manner he had never done with anyone, not even Father – and she had understood!

Had she known his face was not a mask? He suspected she had and that it either hadn't mattered, or she preferred not to destroy the magic of the moment. After all, he had helped her escape into the park for a few precious minutes.

They had talked like old friends and she had not asked questions. She seemed to accept many things without question, much as he himself did. Questions carried an obligation – to listen to the answer and to try to understand it. He often found answers only led to more questions. Brigit implied that it was better to accept the gifts life gave, than to question them too closely and risk losing them.

She had not been afraid of him, then or later. Perhaps, as St Jerome said, she had seen his mind mirrored in his face and his heart's secrets behind his eyes.

Catherine too saw behind his face – the face he tried not to think about. It was the one part of himself he couldn't hide easily. People had to accept that for what it was – and he had to hope they saw the truth behind the face.

Two women from above had now seen him in a different way to the rest of that world, as though in a different mirror – one he had not known existed – and they had let him know it. It was a priceless gift.

END

8 – Nor Iron Bars a Cage

Father had often warned him that his forays above held great risk for him, but he had not realized the extent of the danger – or how vulnerable he was when in emotional turmoil. It was his own fault that he had been captured.

His captors had seen him as a specimen, something to dissect and experiment upon. They had not regarded him as a thinking being at all. Perhaps they had not wanted to because of what that would mean to their plans. Their world was soulless in the pursuit of knowledge. They were not evil men, just coldly logical in their work - and blind to anything which did not fit their perception.

Despair had engulfed him. He knew he could not escape, except in death. With Catherine gone, and caged, there was nothing left to live for. But Father had told her he was missing and she had found him.

When he had heard her voice, felt her touch, he was sliding into oblivion. He had thought he was dreaming. They were not given much time to enjoy their reunion before they fought together against the two men. He had killed one and the other, injured by his partner, had seen him as a person at last, but lived only long enough to apologize.

He had striven all his life to be accepted for his human qualities – only to have them denied when it mattered most. Those men had not looked beneath the visage.

But Catherine reminded him that he must have faith. What he had seen in her eyes, felt along their bond, was an affirmation, a confirmation. She saw a friend, a person – a man!

Later, safe again in his chamber, she had read him Wordsworth's *Surprised by Joy*. What could he say to that? He had been rendered speechless. He could not take his eyes off her and only hoped that she saw his love for her. She had smiled and he had mirrored that smile with one of his own.

He could not live above – that had not changed - but now he knew the true reason. It wasn't only his appearance which set him apart, but his very nature – nurtured by his tunnel family. No mirror could show that truth.

END

9. Song of Orpheus

Vincent was angry at Father for Catherine's sake and upset for his own. Catherine had finally told him what was bothering her, when he pleaded with her. Father's remarks were unforgivable. How could he say such things after Catherine had saved him?

Vincent watched Father as they played a game of chess. Margaret had died two weeks week before, but he didn't seem to be concentrating on the board. His game was even worse than usual.

Other questions burned in him. How could Father have accepted Margaret's loss so completely? Where did he find the strength to try and forget her? Vincent found the thought of losing Catherine impossible to imagine. He now knew himself unable to bear such a parting. He'd had recently that fact illustrated in no uncertain terms – until she had saved him from a cage and death.

"Check!"

Vincent started and looked at the board. He looked at the old man and saw the ghost of a smile play around his lips. Father had made a coup - and knew it.

He looked up and caught Vincent looking at him.

"I saw your expression, Vincent, and knew that you could only be ruminating about what I told Catherine. I said it because I worry about you both. Vincent nodded and took another look at the chess board. He moved a rook.

"Check."

Father looked at the board and sighed. They knew each other too well, Vincent reflected. Their chess games were not a battle of wills, but a time to reflect. Father cautiously moved a knight.

He hadn't mentioned his other remark, the one that stung. Perhaps there was nothing to say. Vincent knew his differences were real - no mirror could deny them. But Father had never said anything of the sort to his face. Truly, they didn't know what else he was. Even the two scientists had not been able to discover that, apparently. He moved a bishop.

"Check and mate."

Vincent allowed himself a small smile of victory. Father stared at the board in disbelief, then looked at his son, who was watching him intently.

"Vincent, I think you play a harder game when you're distracted. Don't let what I told Catherine rankle. I was still angry at the world. Then Margaret proved to me that true love is eternal and compassionate - but heeds no rules."

Father sighed.

"Chess, on the other hand, has definite rules and no mercy. I thought I might at least manage a stalemate."

"You have great patience," Father continued, "but that wouldn't have helped me during those lost years. Even without faith in man's laws, I had hope, and that can sustain a heart. You're very fortunate. Catherine is a remarkable woman. I wish you both joy – although I can't promise not to worry."

"As in chess, so in life, Father," Vincent said softly. "Our love is forever and we cannot change that. There can be no turning back. We must go forward to whatever awaits us."

"Accepting that will be easier than playing chess with you," remarked Father ruefully.

"Yes," Vincent agreed.

They both chuckled.

END

10 – Dark Spirit

Thinking back over the events of the last few days, Vincent was dismayed at how close he had come to losing Catherine to something ...intangible.

Catherine had become caught in a web of deceit and black magic and he had not been able to counter it. How could he fight an idea – a superstition?

He had been able to offer her little comfort at the height of the trouble. He could only try to send her calm along their bond, hoping to give her strength against the confusion he could feel in her.

Seeing an image of himself drawn in blood on her apartment wall had been ... disturbing. He knew the image was not meant to represent him – how could it? But neither of them could deny the resemblance. It had served its purpose – to make her more afraid, gullible, biddable. He had not been able to imagine why that was important to someone.

Later, Vincent had sensed that she had been drugged and was being manipulated. She had been unable to rationalize what she was experiencing and become a pawn. Still, he had been helpless.

When she began hallucinating and had told him to go away, her rejection had hit him like a physical blow, but he had sensed that she was now very afraid. He knew she needed help – and not the kind she was being driven towards.

Narcissa had disturbed him further, but he had taken her advice and watched over Catherine. That fatal night she had seen someone else in her mirror – a priestess, or even a goddess, perhaps. He had followed her when she left her apartment and seen her tormentor engulfed by flames as he rescued her.

Later, on her balcony, he found her sitting and holding the shell – the shell that was now benign, but had earlier come between them. He had said nothing, and neither had she - but her eyes told him everything and he knew his own mirrored those emotions. She let him take the shell from her and he squeezed it into powder while she watched.

She now knew he would never desert her, that he would protect her beyond reason, beyond belief. What he felt along the bond, as she put her head on his shoulder that night, was something deeper. Words were no longer necessary between them.

END