

# Vignettes

## Mirrors

- by Angie

### 41: The Hollow Men

They walked silently, hand in hand, through the tunnels towards home. Vincent was trying to lift himself from the deepening depression. He couldn't shake a forboding that had been haunting him for several weeks. How much longer would his "justice" in the world above could escape notice, even with Catherine's help. He was glad she was holding his hand. He could feel her love for him and he clung to it like a drowning man clutched a piece of wood.

Catherine was thinking over the events of the past hour and could feel nothing but relief that the two men would no longer be killing prostitutes. They would never have been convicted – the warning from the commissioner had made that clear. It had been an unusual night, and suddenly she felt a frisson of humour run through her.

Vincent felt the change, stopped and turned to look at her, his eyebrows raising.

Catherine looked up and gave a him rueful smile.

"I'm sorry, Vincent. It was one of those silly thoughts, in reaction to ... stress."

"Do not apologize, Catherine. Tell me ... please."

She nodded and they resumed their walk.

"I was held captive when you dropped from the gods like ... like the *Phantom of the Opera*. The guy holding me was shocked - and I was almost too surprised to get away from him. What other talents do you keep hidden?"

"It is not talent that urges me to use my skills in such situations - but necessity," he corrected softly.

"Yet you are strong, true, brave, loving - gifted in ways other men could not imagine."

"Catherine, I would prefer fewer gifts and be able to walk the world as other men."

"You should never deny your gifts, Vincent - you taught me that. In your world everyone is valued and many see no more of the day above than you. Is it that you have no choice?"

Vincent sighed. "I wish we could enjoy the change of seasons in the Park, under the sun."

"Vincent, I'd rather have your love than walk in Eden alone!"

Vincent's mouth twitched. "I would not look good in a fig leaf."

Catherine had to dampen the heat she felt at that image. "You're fit, healthy and I can tell you're well ... um ... proportioned. Some day..." she stopped. This wasn't the turn she wanted their conversation to take - and it certainly wasn't the place. She realized they were now near her threshold. "I'm almost home, Vincent," she remarked, changing the subject.

"Yes. You could stay in our guest chamber if you wish."

"I'm fine, Vincent, just tired - and I need a shower." She turned to him and drew his hand up to her and kissed it. It had become a gesture she loved.

Vincent pulled her hand in his up to his mouth and kissed hers. He had no words for what she meant to him. Once again, she had made him remember his blessings.

"Good-night," he whispered over her hand, and looked into her eyes. She was looking at him with an expression that left no doubts about her love. "Perhaps on the weekend, we could have a picnic at the Falls," he suggested.

"I'd like that," she whispered. She reluctantly took back her hand and walked to the ladder. He waited until she was safely back in her world, then walked to his chamber.

A premonition of impending doom remained to nag him. Had he expected a different ending to this night's work? No. In this too, he had no choice. He was a creature of the dark, and darkness must be fought. Who else knew it so well? But he must not seek it out. He did not want to be an avenger. That thought gave him peace.

END

## 42: What Rough Beast

Alone in his dim chamber, Vincent forced himself to clear his mind and think. The feeling of foreboding had disappeared, to be replaced by deep depression.

Thinking back, he realized that he and Catherine should have pursued their questions about who had assaulted her in the Park, and why. Instead, the threat to their love had dominated their thinking.

It was tempting to blame Elliot – Catherine wanted to - but Vincent knew instinctively that Elliot would not have put her at risk, for any reason. He loved her.

However, their enemy knew them and was both methodical and ruthless. He sent men to their deaths, and was implicating Elliot. The reporter was just another pawn in the game – a game to expose himself.

Why did this person want him exposed, Vincent wondered. If it was to bring him to justice or kill him, they would have already done so. This man wanted him destroyed - but not that way. He knew Vincent walked a fine line between man and beast.

The plot was working. He could feel the darkness building up in him – that same darkness he had been trying to suppress for some months now. Every time he was forced to kill, it became stronger and harder to suppress. His despair was feeding it now. Worse, he had sent his love, his lifeline, away - again.

The tunnel community would be affected if he went mad. Their enemy knew this too. Only one man fit that profile. It explained the malevolence he sensed in all that had happened. Where was Paracelsus now? Looking for him would do no good if he didn't want to be found – and Vincent was sure the final blow was yet to come.

"I know what I am," Vincent murmured to himself. "Father does not and would not lie. No one can help me now. I cannot tell them what I suspect. I must solve this alone. They must remain calm. I will need their strength."

The madness within himself would grow, but he had to wait, and hope that he could control himself when the time came. He might have to retreat to the deep tunnels, far from everyone he loved, until ... the end.

He knew that keeping his mind clear would become increasingly difficult. He must do something, find a way to ... encourage ... reason. Catherine had brought him back to himself many times. She was the mirror of his love – but this time would be more difficult. He had to try to make provision for that. But how?

Vincent looked at his table and spotted a sheet of paper among the books. Catherine had brought him the words to a song several weeks ago, and let him listen to it on a cassette player. It had resonated with him, as it had with her.

He rose and picked up the piece of paper, re-read the words and heard the tune again in his mind. Immediately, he felt calmer. How could anything separate lovers, it seemed to ask. Love was eternal – their love would never die, no matter what came between them. He had told Catherine that, just a few hours ago.

Vincent folded the paper and slipped it into his journal. He must write his thoughts down soon, but first he must think of a way to trick himself into remembering the song. Yes, he must associate it with a poem both he and Catherine knew – and he knew just the one.

Quickly, he wrote the name of the poem and its author on a piece of letter paper, then under it the name of the song. After a moment's thought he wrote at the top of the page, "When I am lost in my darkness, remember this..." and signed his name at the bottom. He folded the letter, poured a little wax from his candle over the flap, pressed his finger into it, then addressed it to Catherine. He would leave it on her balcony table after she had gone to bed tonight.

It was all he could do. He hoped it would be enough.

END

### 43. Ceremony of Innocence

Vincent was resting on his bed his back turned towards her, so Catherine decided to return briefly to her apartment. She had to phone Joe and make some excuse for why she wasn't at work. By now the blood in the penthouse would have been identified and Elliot would have made a statement.

She quietly left the tunnels and up the ladder to her threshold, trying not to look at the place where Vincent had confronted her abductors and Spirko. In her apartment, she left Joe a message, knowing he would be out, merely saying she didn't feel well. That was true enough. Her stomach was churning with worry for Vincent.

She took a long hot shower, put on her housecoat to cool off, and made herself a cup of tea. She would go below again very soon, but she needed a little time to think.

Vincent's words about mirrors in the soul haunted her. He had said he could not live with what he saw in his own. She was not sure she could accept what she saw in her own. She was partly responsible for many of the terrible killings that he had committed – yet, he was still the man she loved. She would soon move to a department where such risks were not required - and hoped it would be soon enough.

With a sigh, Catherine walked onto her balcony and stared at the lights of the towers across the park. Why was her life so complicated? Why was Vincent's first reaction to stress to shut her out? She sat down on the chair at her table and stared at the rose plant. Surely she and he could find a way for their worlds to co-exist, as the roses did!

She was about to go back inside when she spotted something white under the pot and realized it was a letter. She extracted it carefully and saw her name in Vincent's handwriting. When had he left this here? She hadn't been on her balcony for several days. She was going to open it, then wondered if she should, given the events of that day.

Then the phone rang. She ran inside, putting the letter quickly onto her vanity table, then waited to hear if the person left a message. She really didn't want to talk to anyone. It was Joe, of course.

"Cathy, it's Joe. I just finished interviewing Burch. I don't know how you do it, Radcliffe, but apparently you can see through walls. Burch told me you didn't look good when he took you home. Call me when you feel better. No, better yet ... take tomorrow off and relax!"

Catherine sighed with relief, then chuckled. He was so generous - tomorrow was Saturday! She had lost track of the days.

She had to return below. She changed into jeans and a sweater, grabbed a jacket and took the elevator down to the basement and slipped through the threshold entry. Walking quickly down the tunnels, she knew she had to convince him that mirrors could deceive, but never love. She saw him as he was, not as she wished him to be. He had to believe that.

Halfway to his chamber, she remembered his letter and grimaced. She should have brought it with her! Well, it would keep. Its author was her concern now. She sent him a golden thread of love, hoped he could feel it.

Vincent sensed Catherine returning. Suddenly his thoughts spun around like carousel horses and he clenched his fists, unable to stop the dark whirlpool from sucking him in. Once he thought he saw a bright filament, then heard the snippet of a tune. Both disappeared, leaving him alone in the looming darkness all around him. He fought the black oblivion in silence, with all that he was, aching for something he could no longer define, but which he knew was all that mattered.

END

## 44. The Rest is Silence

Catherine remembered Vincent's letter after he left her and reading it almost sent her after him. The message was plain. He had made a word association key to help her help him when he needed it most. He had quoted Dylan Thomas as he lay sick in her apartment for three days, but she had not understood. Could she have saved him from his pain? Was he going to get worse?

She went to work in the morning and left the office more or less on time, to find the note waiting for her inside her door. Father was waiting for her inside the culvert entry and after finding Vincent gone, they followed Pascal deep below, where they could hear Vincent roaring out his pain and torment. Mouse, pressed against the cave wall, had nothing to say, but his face expressed his distress as she and Father passed alone into the tunnel entrance. She tried to send Vincent her love to calm him. She was sure he wouldn't hurt her, but how was she to quiet him enough so that he would hear the key? Would it work?

Father tried to dissuade her from going in, but she told him Vincent was her life. She began walking. Vincent's anguish tore at her heart. She must not fail him now.

The tunnel was low, uneven and very dim. The light from Father's torch ended before she reached the end, and she had to feel her way along the walls. Then they abruptly ended and she entered a cave, dimly lit from something in the walls. There was enough light to see that Vincent wasn't waiting for her, but his roaring filled it like a physical blow. She strained forward, trying to see him.

Then she saw him extract himself from the shadows and rush towards her, on the attack. She had expected this – Father had warned her. She had planned her response during the long walk down.

"Vincent!" she shouted with real fear in her voice - fear for him, not herself. He looked so dark and dishevelled, even in the dim light, that she didn't have to pretend. He stopped abruptly just in front of her, an arm still raised to strike. His expression, barely visible, seemed one of shock. Then he collapsed at her feet.

Quickly, she knelt beside him and felt his chest to make sure he was breathing. He was and she could feel his heartbeat. It was now or never. She whispered into his ear:

*"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"*

There was no response, but she sensed he had heard her. Now for the second part of the key. She decided to sing it softly to him. It might reach him when words alone could not.

*"No need to wonder if I ever think of you  
The same moon shines  
The same wind blows  
For both of us, and time is but a paper moon...  
Be not gone*

*Though I'm gone  
It's just as though I hold the flower that touches you  
A new life grows  
The blossom knows  
There's no one else could warm my heart as much as you...  
Be not gone*