

# Vincent's Seven Selves

by Angie

*In the stillest hour of the night, as I lay half asleep, my seven selves sat together and thus conversed  
in whispers*

*- Kahlil Gibran, The Madman:*

I have been reading Kahlil Gibran, and it he seems to speak to me. He attempted parables to define the many shades of men. They speak to me - a being he could never imagine - so perhaps I am not so different to men after all.

*But why should I be here, O God, I a green seed of unfulfilled passion, a mad tempest that seeketh  
neither east nor west, a bewildered fragment from a burnt planet?*

So often have I wondered exactly that. Why am I here? What woman gave birth to me and why was I abandoned? Why did the Fates decree that I be found and given a home and people who love me?

Gibran understand me, better than the man who has known me since childhood. His seven selves are in me ... and they all despair and want to rebel.

The First Self says *'I have dwelt all these years, with naught to do but renew his pain by day and recreate his sorrow by night.'*

Ah, the pain. Yes, the pain is real. The knowledge that I am different, that I may never know what other men take for granted. Can I even understand it?

The Second Self says: *'It is given to me to be (the) joyous self. I laugh his laughter and sing his happy hours, and with thrice winged feet I dance his brighter thoughts.'*

Can even joy be wearisome? Perhaps because it so contrasts with the First Self it is unsatisfactory. I know this feeling well. Other's joy serves only to remind me of my aloneness.

The Third Self says: *'What of me, the love-ridden self, the flaming brand of wild passion and fantastic desires? I the love-sick self ...'*

Indeed, I am love ridden. I love Catherine with all that I am, yet my fantastic desires are but dreams ...

The Fourth Self says: *'I, am the most miserable, for naught was given me but odious hatred and destructive loathing. It is I, the tempest-like self, the one born in the black caves of Hell, who would protest ..'*

I know that black cave of Hell. That is where I went when Paracelsus drove me mad with his drugs, and where I went when the madness overcame me. I loathed all that I am, then, and wanted naught but destruction.

The Fifth Self says: *'I, the thinking self, the fanciful self, the self of hunger and thirst, the one doomed to wander without rest in search of unknown things and things not yet created..'*

Indeed, I know the endless search, the hopeless inquiry, the unknown that will always live in me .... the doom that I face.

The Sixth Self says: *'I, the working self, the pitiful labourer, who, with patient hands, and longing eyes, fashion the days into images and give the formless elements new and eternal forms ... I, the solitary one.'*

Yes, even among those who love me, who keep me safe, I must work - and in working I help them. Yet, I will never know a bridal chamber, of the kind I help to create for others. I see their happiness and satisfaction, but I do not share it. I cannot. I am always alone.

The Seventh Self says: *'How strange that you all would rebel against this man, because each and every one of you has a preordained fate to fulfill. Ah! could I but be like one of you, a self with a determined lot! But I have none, I am the do-nothing self, the one who sits in the dumb, empty nowhere and nowhen, while you are busy re-creating life. Is it you or I, neighbours, who should rebel?'*

I sit in my chamber, doing nothing but thinking and writing these thoughts in my journal. It is not an existence I would wish on anyone. Yet how else am I to reconcile the long watches of the night? Even when I go above, I am alone, wrapped in my cloak of shadow.

*'When the seventh self thus spake the other six selves looked with pity upon him but said nothing more; and as the night grew deeper one after the other went to sleep enfolded with a new and happy submission.*

*But the seventh self remained watching and gazing at nothingness, which is behind all things.'*

Such is the definition of a madman, Gibran says. Am I mad, or just unable to take action that will change my existence? What does my future hold? Can I bear to go on this way?

*'Here I sit between my brother the mountain and my sister the sea.  
We three are one in loneliness, and the love that binds us together  
is deep and strong and strange.'*

Yet, I need not sit here. I can find solace with Catherine. She knows I love her, yet we have not ... no, I have not ... gone further than hugs and chaste kisses.

I hang my head in shame. I seem unable to make a move that would bind us tightly, to take the step that would elevate me above the madman, the split personality, the indecisive ... man that I am.

Should I go to her? I can almost smell her scent now, and close my eyes to remember the feel of her in my arms.

I feel a light touch on my face and open my eyes. She is here!

I rise from my chair and hold her close, so close, wanting to be one with her against the world.

"Vincent," she whispers into my chest. She can sense my turmoil. Our bond is strong now, since she came to me in that dark place where my madness ruled me.

I am beyond words. I move my hands down her back and hug her warmth, her undoubted humanity, to me. I make a decision. I look down at her and allow the passion, the love I have for her full reign. I hear her breath catch as she looks into my eyes.

There is no need for words now. I think of the words of the madman, and understand at last.

*'For the first time the sun kissed my own naked face and my soul was inflamed with love for the sun, and I wanted my masks no more.'*

Catherine is my sun. I will want ... need ... nothing more. I can reconcile myself with one question.

"Catherine, may I make love to you?" I ask, my voice a whisper.

"Yes, Vincent," she answers, and I know now that all my selves can meld into one. I need them all - and the seventh will not wait alone in the dead watches of the night.

We will all watch, or none.

END