

To Await Destiny

by Christine Cunningham

Vincent was restless. The feeling had been with him for a long time and he had found it increasingly difficult to settle to anything.

Father had monitored the situation, hoping it would resolve itself, but Vincent's erratic behaviour had begun to affect everyone else, so much so that he felt obliged to intervene.

"What is it with you, Vincent? Are you ill? You have us all on edge."

Father sat with him, doing his best to find out what could be so wrong. Even in his own chamber, Vincent could not sit still, pacing up and down, trying to put his thoughts in some semblance of order. He knew he was acting strangely and sought to alleviate Father's concern.

"I cannot say what is wrong, Father, as I do not really know, but I am sure it will pass." His statement was not altogether true. He knew full well what his problem was, but it was something he had to work out for himself. "I need some time alone, Father. Can you manage without me for a while?"

Father looked carefully at his son, coming to the conclusion that whatever his problem was, it was deep-rooted, although he was sad to learn that Vincent could not, or would not, confide in him.

"Very well, take as much time as you need. I do not like to see you this way."

After Father had reluctantly left the chamber, Vincent packed a few belongings and set off to the place he loved best. The journey took several hours, but once he had arrived, he breathed a sigh of relief. At last he was completely alone.

He loved his world and all the people in it, but sometimes they put so much pressure on him that he felt weighed down by it all, and he had no space left for himself. He knew they all loved him, and he knew they didn't mean to burden him. It was just that they sometimes forgot that he, Vincent, had needs of his own. which they could not always fulfill. He was not invincible, no matter how much others might think he was.

The chamber he had made years before was waiting, just as he had left it the last time. He unpacked his bag and prepared to settle in. The peace and tranquility of this private place began to work its potent magic almost immediately and Vincent slowly started to relax.

As he leaned down to light the candles, the pouch, which hung from a cord around his neck, entered his vision. Straightening, he opened the pouch and took out the rose.

"Oh Catherine! What are we to do? How much longer can we continue this way. Together, yet apart?"

He sat down on the bed and cradled the delicate rose in his hands.

He had known Catherine for over three years and from the very moment he had found her, he had bonded with her eternally, knowing he would never love another. She had grown to love him too, but their times together were so few. Moments stolen from time. It was not enough it would never be enough for either of them. But how could they go on? Was it even possible to deepen the relationship as both yearned to do?

The physical feelings he was experiencing had been growing stronger all the time and he finally

acknowledged that he wanted – **No** - he needed, to express his love for her the way all lovers were able to do.

With a last loving look at the rose, he gently replaced it in the pouch and rose to his feet.

Vincent's heart was capable of all the feelings and emotions that every human being on earth knows, and who could not agonize with him as he struggled so desperately to find he answers?

He left the chamber and went to his special thinking place. He found a comfortable spot and looked around him at the spectacular sight of a huge waterfall cascading down to a river far below. Vincent guarded this place fiercely. Catherine did not know of it, and as far as he knew, no one else Below had ever discovered it. He closed his eyes and allowed his memory free rein, playing back images of their shared times, whether they were in pain or in joy. Every second was precious to him. He remembered the way Catherine looked with the moonlight shining on her hair, the way she laughed when playing with the children, how strongly she fought for the underdog. But more than any of this, was the memory of the way she looked at him, as though he were the sun, the stars and the moon to her.

But really, their stolen moments were so pitifully few. He felt his eyes sting with tears, but he paid them no heed, letting them fall unchecked, streaking his cheeks with silver.

"It is not fair or just to make us suffer so," he cried.

But there was no one to hear his tortured words, only the cold, unrelenting rock walls of the massive cavern, and they mercilessly threw them back at him, echoing forlornly.

He sat there hour after hour, ignoring the cold and the hard rock biting into his back, just thinking and despairing. He had always believed that their love was an impossible dream, with insurmountable obstacles. At least it was what everyone told him, but was it really true?

There had to be a bridge to bring them truly together. If there was not, why then were they fated to meet at all? To let them come so far, with no hope of continuing, was too cruel.

And then there was his other self. That terrible demon which rose up and changed him into a creature of ugliness and fear. If he were to release all the pent up passion he held for Catherine, could it be that the demon would take possession and as a consequence inflict hurt on the one he held most dear? He could then very well lose what they already had, little though it was. It was a monumental risk to take and he trembled in fear of what might happen.

Catherine had tried to make him understand that everyone had a dark side and that one could not exist without the other. She likened it to a coin, saying that without a head and a tail, the coin was of no value, worthless. She told him that he must acknowledge his dark side, that it was part of who he was, and to deny it was to lessen himself.

He tried to instill some of her faith into his heart, knowing she was right, but also knowing that it would be one of the hardest tasks he would ever undertake. To accept himself and love himself. To be Vincent.

He got stiffly to his feet, still no nearer to finding the answers he sought. Returning to his chamber he fell back on the bed.

"Catherine," he whispered, "do I dare tell you of my feelings? I want to but I am so very afraid."

He closed his eyes and prayed as never before. "Please, let there be a time for us."

He stayed in his special place for a few more days and came to a decision. He would put all his faith and trust in the hands of destiny. To wait in silence until he was given a sign which would show him the way. He had to believe that he and Catherine would seal their love.

"Just let it be soon. Please."

Do not despair Vincent. It will be soon.

IT WAS MEANT TO BE