

In Streams of Light

By Cindy Rae

For the Leonard Cohen Tribute Page on Treasure Chambers, 2016

All quotes, verses and lyrics cited here are his.

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In streams of light I clearly saw

The dust you seldom see,

Out of which the Nameless makes

A Name for one like me...

All busy in the sunlight

The flecks did float and dance,

And I was tumbled up with them

In formless circumstance.

– Love Itself



I have often prayed for you

like this:

"Let me have her"

-The Energy of Slaves



Vincent waited by the foot of the ladder.

Waited ... *Waiting.*

It was a day, and such a day. Such a day it was. A day begun in streams of light. The thought thrummed in his sensitive mind, and it crowded out most others.

He paced the narrow confines of the tunnel that led to the area just beneath her basement entrance, and waited.

Waited for her. Only her.

Her. She. The woman he loved.

It was as if every feminine noun and pronoun had but one name, in his universe.

Catherine. Her name... is Catherine.

He remembered the first moment she'd given him her name, her face all bandaged and torn. She'd said it with a stitched and swollen lip, and still he swore it was a choir's gift, to his waiting ears, his lonely heart.

Catherine. Catherine... Her name... is Catherine.

He paced to the end of the hallway, nervous energy forbidding him to be still. He reached the place he'd first said "good-bye" to her. The broken wall was near his hand, and he touched the rough, tumbledown stones, in memory, as he touched them in actuality.

He'd held her, here. Embraced her with a new lover's cautionary venturing. He'd placed his palm on her slender back, and even sensed her skin far beneath her battered coat, and all her layers, both fabric and not.

And he'd ... loved her.

Was it then? Just then? Or was it before that, even? he wondered.

His memory traced backward. Was it when he'd taken her hand to guide her back across the ditch-like gap between her world and his?

You can do it... Give me your hand.

And she had. Leaping for his one-handed assistance, she'd reached for his outstretched hand, because she'd been afraid to fall.

He knew she wouldn't.

Except that both of them had, ultimately. Irony.

Was that where he'd known? Known that he loved her?

Or was it buried somewhere in the middle of Great Expectations?

Or no, was it here, right here, when he'd first felt love slam into his chest, halt his breathing, open his heart and mind to possibilities he'd not dared to dream, and... change his life, forever?



Was it here, in this simple, nondescript spot that was barely even a place, in his world? It was, wasn't it?

It was.

He'd held her there as long as he'd dared, and then he'd let her go, when he'd known he had to, that first time. Let her go, into the mist of dancing, mote-diffused, light. He had. He'd done that. That first time.

The first of many such times.

He'd watched her walk into the dust-strewn light, watched fairy particles float in the air, and hopefully, bless her with whatever earthly magic they possessed.

He'd prayed for a blessing in them, for her. A blessing for her that she might continue to heal, to find her way, and stay safe. A blessing for him, that the way she found would eventually return her to his side, soon. A blessing for both of them that the impossible love he sensed blooming could endure. No, not just endure, but thrive, even.

Vincent took off the glove that covered his left hand and pressed his broad, wide, palm flat against the stones. He felt a memory, in his clawed fingertips.

I knew she was leaving me. But I knew I was falling in love with her. I knew.

He had.

The stones felt warm in the cool tunnel air, as only stones that hold a memory can. Vincent smiled at them, tugged his glove back on, then turned and settled his back against the rough brick, in the position he'd occupied the first time she'd ever said good-bye. He pressed his spine against the half-gone wall, and felt the past run through him.

They'd been standing right here. His hand had crept around her back, and bound her to him. For a moment. Just... a moment.

And her dainty, sweet palm had laid itself upon his chest and he'd...died, just a little, even as he'd been re-born.

He knew then, that he would forevermore divide his life into two parts: all the moments before that one, and all the moments after.

She was going away. I had to let her do that.

And yet....

And yet something inside told him she'd be back. Somehow. By some miracle, some reckoning, some chance, some force of nature, some turn of a friendly card, some hope, some wish on a falling star, some confluence of expected and unexpected events, some... gambler's roll of impossible dice, some... something, she'd be back. Back here. With him.

He turned back to the way she'd have to come down, and looked long at the narrow passage.

How often had he seen her walk down that path, both coming and going? How many times, like an angel, wrapped in light? How often, now, in the brief handful of years they'd been together?



He didn't know. And it seemed a subtle sin to him that he'd lost count, as time has slipped its way past them.

The first time she'd left him, a scarf had been pulled up over her shattered face, an artifice meant to hide her attack from those Above.

Had he told her she was beautiful, even in her scars? He wasn't sure he ever had.

Had he told her he could see inside her spirit, even then, and felt her stirring, inside of him?
Had he?

I did, didn't I? At some point? Blue eyes searched for a memory from a thousand days ago.

He didn't think he had. No, he was sure he hadn't. That was a conversation he'd saved for her balcony.

But he had told her.

I feel the things you're feeling when you do.

One night, she'd walked down the narrow, dusty aisle dripping wet with rain, and covered in a clingy blue dress that loved every curve of her body. Her drenched pearls looked freshly fetched from the ocean, and her hair was a tawny mane down her back, as unkempt and wild as his had ever thought of being.

She'd felt... beautiful. In absolutely every way. A homeward bound Aphrodite in water-logged teal silk.

Had he told her he'd thought of Byron, then, as he'd watched her leave? How "She Walks in Beauty" must have followed her home that night, just as the faded strains of Schubert had walked with him? Had he said it? He didn't know if he had.

He would, now. He would.

I will be able to, he realized.

Had he told her that the time they'd left each other after the cave in, filthy and dirt streaked, he didn't think he could love her more? That she'd used the word, *that* word, that "love" word? The one that meant his aloneness was truly banished to the deepest reaches of the farthest hell, and it was she who'd done the banishing?

Had he told her how his unblinking eyes had all but devoured her as she'd had to go, after telling him firmly, "It was love?"

He wasn't sure he had. Nor would. Some secrets he thought he just might keep. Though not so many of those as there had once been between them, he was sure.

His booted footfalls stirred the ground with his pacing passage. Sand shifted under his heavy feet. His cape swung out on every turn, and his ears rang, with the sound of pounding blood.

His heart was a trip-hammer in his mighty chest. Well, of course it was. After all, she'd started it to beating again.

In more ways than one.

From the far end of the passageway, he looked back toward her still-empty ladder. Dust motes continued to dance in the light, and the light looked sun born, even though he knew that wasn't possible.

That was quite all right. They weren't possible, either.

Except that they were. They were possible.

He could love her, could touch her, could embrace and care for her. Could? He'd done so, had been doing so for years.

You couldn't say a thing was impossible, when you were living it, day by day. You just couldn't. It was an already defeated argument.

They were possible.

Vincent felt the hope in that, and it made him feel... just a touch invincible.

They were possible.

He could even kiss her, though he admitted they'd only had a sparse handful of those.

Now we will have all the time we need for such things. All the time we need for... everything. Everything we can dare, and that which we only get by chance. It will be ours. It will all be ours.

It was a humbling, exhilarating thought, that time itself was finally an ally, rather than some sort of invisible foe.

Except for *now*, of course. Now, time was a source of botheration, for him. The ticking of his internal clock was pushing his nerves to the edge, as he was forced to wait for her, and reminisce about all this little narrow strip of ground had been to them.

A creaking hinge broke the silence of his loud musings, and he knew what the sound portended.

She was coming. Not just coming. She was here. The wait was over.

He closed the distance to her ladder, her beautiful legs coming down first, as always. Had he ever told her she had beautiful legs? Would he, one day? It seemed so intimate, so personal a confession. Did he dare?

Perhaps. Perhaps he dared.

Some day.

He took a single step back, aware she needed room for her descent.

A suede-booted foot stepped down a rung, and he anticipated her, waiting to help her climb down. He'd expected to *need* to help her, expected her to struggle, some, even. He thought that she'd bring down something heavy. Or some *things* heavy.

But she wasn't, and her descent was customarily smooth, as she continued to lower herself away from her world, and into his. She was her usual self, and a simple bag swung on her arm. A purse. And not even one of her larger ones.

Had something happened? Something unexpected? Would there be yet another delay, in their plans?

If there was, there was no indication from her that anything was amiss. If anything, the bond between them was nearly singing hymns, to his sensitive brain.

She was happy. So happy.

She jumped off the bottom rung, and turned to him, flying into his nearby arms like a long-lost child, seeking a secure homecoming.

Or like a lover. Like a bride.

His huge arms went around her. Again.

"Catherine?" he asked, as the purse that could barely be called a tote bag was all that slid down her arm. "Is something wrong?" he inquired, looking back up the ladder as if some large box or steamer trunk might be about to slide down on them.

None was.

Her smile was glorious. "Wrong? No! Why... what in the world could be wrong, *now*?" Her beloved green eyes shone with love and delight.

He eyed her meager bag. It was less than half full, and not large, to begin with.

"It's just... I thought there would be... more?" he said, inspecting her belongings. He recognized the battered slipcase on the book of sonnets he'd given her, and a framed photograph of her parents, with their first Winterfest program tucked behind it. The stub of a candle from that same celebration. A trinket box she used to hold his anniversary crystal. There wasn't so much more.

Her radiant smile wouldn't dim, however, and refused to even falter.

"You know, when I thought I'd be leaving for Providence, that time, there was. There was more. So much more. There were boxes, and suitcases, and strapping tape, and cartons with labels..."

She shook her head, and it set her soft hair to dancing. "But this time..."

"This time?" he prompted, knowing that there had never been a time quite like *this*, between them.

She held up her bag and produced its one other book.

Great Expectations, by Charles Dickens. The aged, white leather cover was inscribed with maroon "CD" initials. It was the very copy he'd brought to her the night they'd reunited. The night she'd convinced him to remain, sitting on her balcony, while she read him the last chapter. The last chapter, before dawn had come licking its way back to New York City.

"No shadow of another parting from you," she paraphrased, dropping it back into her simple bag. It didn't even have side pockets, or a zipper. "We can read it together again, if you like. As a matter of fact, I rather think we should."

He raised a wordless eyebrow at her.

"I promise you I looked through everything I own. I think I have all I need, right here." She patted the bag.

"Catherine... I would never ask you to—"

"Since we have a... a new journey ahead of us, I thought I'd travel light." She shot him a conspirator's grin. "Shall we go? Is that all right?"

Was it? Was it all right? His clawed, foreign hands, (her hands, she still insisted,) rifled through her belongings, again. The second search produced no more revelations than the first one had.

Was it all right that she'd consented to stay, to come and live in his world, bringing nothing with her but the clothes on her back, a precious photograph of her parents, and...

And every single trinket, gift, and cast off thing he'd ever given her? And not one thing else?

Was that all right?

No. No, it was not "all right."

It was... perfect.

He settled her few treasures back inside her sparse luggage, blue eyes meeting green, and full of understanding. He took the too-light bundle from her gentle hands, offering to carry it for her.

His smile was a subtle one. "I think we can find room," he intoned, feeling as unburdened as she obviously did.

They looked like a pair of vagabond pilgrims, ready for their next adventure.

She tugged his great head down so that his hair mingled with hers, and she went up on tiptoe.

"I thought we might," she whispered in his ear, right before she kissed him softly on the lips.

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*And summoned now to deal
With your invincible defeat,
You live your life as if it's real...*

A thousand kisses deep.

– A Thousand Kisses Deep

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I legislate from the fortress of my disappointments, with a set jaw. Overthrow this even terror with a sweet remembrance: when I was with you, when my soul delighted you, when I was what you wanted. My heart sings of your longing for me, and my thoughts climb down to marvel at your mercy. I do not fear as you gather up my days. Your name is the sweetness of time, and you carry me close into the night, speaking consolations, drawing down lights from the sky, saying, "See how the night has no terror for one who remembers the Name."

- Book of Mercy

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"From bitter searching of the heart,

*quickened with passion and with pain
we rise
to play a greater part
this is the faith from which we start.”
-Villanelle for our Time*

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*We are so lightly here. It is in love that we are made. In love we disappear.
-Boogie Street*

All quotes featured in this fiction are from the decades-rich catalogue of songs and poetry left to us by the inimitable Leonard Cohen. Sad to say, it is a wealth of creativity I am just discovering now, and I thank my BatB friends for prompting me to look in this direction, for inspiration.

We are all a part of each other.

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No matter where you are when you decide to travel lightly, I wish you love. ~ Cindy

