



Those Who Have Been To Hell

By JessicaRae

The darkness wrapped around him with arms of pain, an ache in his heart the only physical token of their presence. The cold concrete beneath him sent a dull warning through his bones that the morning would bring a chill that would linger past morning teatime. But he ignored it.

The twinkling stars above, so warm and smiling on most nights, now hung like diamonds of sharp glass, their smile gone, replaced with judgement. The blackness beyond them reached into the yawning depths of space as far as the eye could follow. Emptiness loitered behind the diamond specks, mirroring the void inside his heart. Judgement for what he was and would always be.

“Vincent?”

A voice tender and gentle behind him broke the hold of the night, and he turned a passive smile toward her. He could never express his unworthiness, not to this angel that saw through every wall he built for himself.

“Catherine.” His voice was as soft as hers, as if they were both afraid the spell of the night would be broken if they dared call more desperately.

“You came.” She sounded relieved, instead of surprised, and he stepped closer, welcoming her embrace. It touched the wound of the last hours, and he felt himself relax into the welcome acceptance.

“Of course,” he replied, not to admonish her for unbelief, but to concur with her observation.

“I wasn’t afraid.” She spoke as if she were defending whatever emotions that had brought him to her balcony, and he chuckled softly, the evening’s pain draining through his feet into the brick beneath them.

“No,” he nodded above her. “You were not afraid.”

“I was worried though,” she continued quickly, feeling the way his shoulders tensed, as if to protect her from the admission of her own troubles.

“What about?” he asked, his voice a rumble in her ear as she rested her head upon the rough cloth that hung between her and his heart. She hesitated.

He leaned backward, his eyes glittering in the porchlight, as he searched for her face. He waited, barely breathing, and she met his gaze confidently.

“I was worried about you,” she replied softly, running her hands along the folds of his shirt. “I was worried that everything – he – said – would hurt you.”

“Dearest Catherine,” he breathed, a sigh filled with pain and internal sadness.

“You never need to fear that the barbs of the wicked will hurt me. I know what I am. I do not look to them for my soul’s peace. I look to the things that are lovely, the things that can not be blackened by the hate of those that do not choose the light.”

“You went through all of that to save me,” she whispered, looking up into the face that upon first sight she feared and did not understand. Now she gazed up at him as if he were the most precious nobility in the world. “You did that for me, always trying to rescue me or defend me. Vincent, how can I help you?”

He closed his eyes and took her in his arms again, willing the tear that leapt to his eye to remain in her hidden corner. How could she help him? Oh, how she already had!

“Catherine,” he breathed into the night, the longing and love a clear melody in his tone. “You have saved me more than you know. You brought out the good in me that I could not see for myself. You saved me from a worse enemy than Paracelsus.”

She raised her head to meet his gaze, confusion on her gentle face. “And who would that be?”

He carefully brushed a hand along her face, the familiar smile playing with his features. She thought for a moment he would not respond, and she grasped the moving hand in her own, pressing it to her heart.

“Vincent, who?”

“Myself,” he whispered softly. “You have saved me from myself. No matter the enemies that come against us, what we have will never be weak enough to crumble under merely their words.”

“But they can be so evil, so dark,” she responded faintly, and he held her closer to drive his love between her and the memories.

“I know,” he breathed in her ear, his voice steady, although both of their hearts were beating quickly as the scenes of the battle they had just come through. “But they are just black words, with no powers at all to change what has been and what will be. Those that have been through hell no longer have to fear the devil.”

Follow-up to “To Reign in Hell”

S1Ep20

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