

A Leap of Faith

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“Life is a gamble. There are no sureties. If you want something badly, you'd have to trust your heart and your instincts... and then take a leap of faith.”

~ Alyssa Urbano

Now he sensed Catherine was tiring and worried. He knew she was unused to walking such long distances, but to not cross here meant an even longer trek to the surface. He doubted she had the stamina to make it. It would soon be dawn in the world Above and he was well aware she had a stressful working day ahead of her.

“It’s all right...” Vincent encouraged her to jump across. “Do not look down. You will be fine.”

Catherine compressed her lips ruefully. "I think it's too late to tell me that..." Staring down into the steamy pit, she rubbed her damp palms down the front of her jeans. "You told me this would get easier..." She looked up at him accusingly. "It still isn't easy."

"It will become easier in time." Vincent shrugged. "I'm sorry, but it is the quickest way to the surface. We must hurry now, or you will be late."

His heart jumped at the wanton idea of leaping back across the pit and scooping her up into his arms. Holding her tight against his chest he knew he could make the return journey. But, as he found the first time she had hugged him, releasing her again was the hard part. He wanted to hold her close now and never let her go. Carrying her all the way to her threshold was fast becoming a distraction he couldn't easily escape.

Unaware of his inner turmoil, Catherine studied her options. "It looks wider than before. Are you sure we came this way last time?"

Overhead a single light burned fitfully, doing little to dispel the gloom. Their elongated shadows danced on the curve of the old brick walls above and behind them. An underground wind swirled up from somewhere far below. Steam curled lazily within the pit between the pipes, faintly hissing like a dying dinosaur in the darkness. None of it inspired confidence. Vincent leapt across the yawning chasm, from the flattened top of one massive steam pipe to the other, with the ease and grace of long practice. He landed soundlessly before turning, his voluminous cloak a brief swirl of black wool before it settled back against his booted heels.

"Catherine?" He frowned, seeming puzzled that she had not immediately followed him across. "What is it?"

They had come this way before on their long trek back to the secret entrance below Catherine's apartment building, but for a beginner such as his love, the way could be confusing and long. .

"Yes, Catherine, I am sure." Vincent firmly suppressed the desire to rescue her. She must learn to make the journey by herself in case of emergencies. He reached out across the gulf between them. "You know you can do it. I have faith in you. Give me your hand..."

"Very well..." Catherine shuffled her feet to the curved edge of the pipe, leaning out as far as she dared, her searching fingers making contact with his massive hand. Springing up onto her toes, like the ballerina she had once longed to be, until she was sternly informed she would not grow tall enough, she extended one foot and sprang lightly across the gulf between them, surprising even herself with how easy it was.

"I knew you could do it," Vincent commented softly, allowing himself the small luxury of continuing to hold her hand, even as he leaned back against the wall behind him to allow her room to pass in front of him.

"A leap of pure faith..." Catherine smiled at him in relief, liking the feel of her small hand lost somewhere in his. "And with your hand to guide me..." She turned back to him, trying to see his expression in the gloom.

Vincent's palm was hairless and warm, rounded and firm. She swore she could feel his pulse leaping against her touch, just like hers. Did he feel the same as she did? She longed to hug him close again, as she had done that first time he appeared on her balcony, but he seemed to be consciously avoiding all bodily contact except for his continued grip

on her hand. The passing wind dragged the hem of his cloak around her legs, and she was grateful for the warmth.

She wished she could tell Vincent what she was thinking and feeling, but she didn't know how. This new, secret world of banked passions and unknown trails into which she had inadvertently stumbled, was confusing. And she had no idea how to progress through its many twists and turns. But then she had never tumbled headlong into love before.

Their intimate mood was suddenly broken when Vincent turned, pulling his cloak from its entanglement around Catherine's legs, and releasing her hand from his grip as he passed her. He proceeded to lead her upwards towards her world Above.

Silently, each lost within their own thoughts, they began to climb the metallic rise of the spiral staircase...

THE END