

# Gifting the Rose...

Judith Nolan



*“Every heart sings a song, incomplete, until another heart whispers back. Those who wish to sing always find a song. At the touch of a lover, everyone becomes a poet.”*

*Plato*

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## **Author's Note:**

*The BATB episode **A Children's Story**, is second to the Pilot in the Production Order. Viewed in its proper sequence, we see that, for only the second time, Vincent comes down onto Catherine's balcony. Why does he do this, if the note he leaves is so important? Why not use Kipper, as a more practical, and certain, way of delivery?*

*Through their bond, he was aware Catherine is not at home. He's forced to leave his message as a note, with the rose. Does he decide to wait for her, or leave again, hoping she will arrive in time to find his note? It's very important that she reads it, and hurries to meet him, as he has instructed... so why leave it to chance that she will find it, in time?*

*Or is there a deeper, more urgent, need at play, here?*



*“Why are you persisting with this reckless obsession? She can only bring you unhappiness, Foolish One. Remember what Father said...”*

“I did not ask for *your* advice,” Vincent snapped, trying to ignore the distracting voice of his Dark Self muttering in the back of his mind.

It had been some weeks since the darker half of his soul had made its unwelcome return to his consciousness. Vincent’s present state of emotional agitation had loosened the mental shackles he’d succeeded in imposing upon the dark shade. He did not welcome the intrusion. Not now.

Perched on the edge of the roof of Catherine’s building, Vincent looked down onto her darkened balcony. No squares of welcoming light marked the tiles. There was no sign of habitation, no evidence she was at home. Once more, he reached for her within their bond, finding only frustration and consternation.

He pressed one hand to the hastily written note he carried inside his cloak. He would have preferred to deliver his message verbally. But the hour was now very late, and he was aware Catherine had been delayed by the mountain of work she must complete.

He could not gauge how soon she would be home. It could be hours yet... His only choice had been to write her a note, before he left his chamber earlier in the night. Before he decided to ask Verity for the gift of a rose. It had been an impulse he may still regret.

“Catherine...” He sighed with disappointment. His heart sank.

He moved back from the edge and hunkered down below the ledge. Turning his back to the wind, he considered his next move. If the matter of the children was not so urgent...

*“And giving her a rose? A love token? What’s that all about? Surely you, of all people, should know better. I arrived in time to hear Verity’s foolish dream of a budding romance. One that can never be. We both know that, if nothing else.”*

“A single rose stands for simplicity. It is merely a symbol of my admiration for her, nothing more. It’s the note that is important. I wish--”

*“Now, we both know that’s a lie! You forget, Hopeless Dreamer, how well I know you. I am a part of every one of your thoughts. Lie to yourself, if you wish, but never to me. I live with the consequences of every one of your actions.”*

“As do I. I never asked for you to be born. I was content with my solitary life. And the peace of certainty.”

*“There you go again, thinking you know everything. We’re both aware I was born, in the very moment Lisa denied you. The exact second she turned from you, rejecting your advances. It was my hand that tried to stay her. My claws that marked her soft skin. My open-handed swipe that would’ve crippled Father with one slash, if you’d but released me. But, despite your surprise at my appearance, your will was too strong, even for such a callow youth. I detest these shackles you have me bound in. Set me free.”*

“Never. And my will is even stronger now.” Vincent rose to his feet, turning back to the roof edge. “I don’t know why we’re even having this conversation.”

*“Because you need someone to talk to. Verity’s okay, but her ideas are coloured by a woman’s weak point of view. You’re desperate for someone who understands your dilemma. Father won’t do, so here I am, ready and waiting to advise. And you know you’re frantic to understand. You know it’s not for some urgent message that you seek her out, again. That could have been given to her by other means than this. You’ve always been a dreamer. A seeker after things that can never be yours...”*

“I stand in need of her help with an urgent matter. There is no more than that. You have no part in any of this.”

*“And yet, each time you gaze upon her loveliness, we both know your heart breaks a little more. It happens every time. You’ve come*

*here, just to torture yourself. It's an obsession that must end. Or I will end it, for both of us..."*

Vincent swirled back, snarling. "You will *never* touch her! I forbid it!"

*"Ah, there is the passion, the burning need to be a part of someone else! Someone warm and feminine. There are women, who live in the tunnels, and who would be willing to go to your bed - if you would only ask them. They're available, if you must assuage those urges you try so hard to suppress. But, no, we're out here, in the dark, chasing a pipe-dream. Again! What do you need with some soft, city woman? She lives, and breathes, in the light. Your place is in the darkness, where you're safe, with me. She will only bring you down, in the end."*

"You know nothing of what I want. Or what she is like. She is nothing, to you. Leave me be. Or I will banish you again. I have done so, before."

*"I will freely admit, those are frustrating times when you've succeeded in locking me away for long periods. But my return is inevitable. Like tonight. Your much-vaunted guard was down, and voilá! It does mean I'm forced to catch up on all that has happened in between times. If I'd been there to redirect your boots, that April night, we would not be here now, trying to decide what to do... To go down, or not to go down... ah, now there's the rub, eh, my sweet prince?"*

"I *do not* need you. Or your advice." Vincent clenched his fists, trying to ignore his Other Self. But, he could not dismiss the truth of His dark words.

He leaned to place one hand on the roof ledge and swung over, climbing down to drop softly onto Catherine's balcony. His knees flexed with the landing, and then he straightened to his full height.

All that stirred was the chill night wind sighing across the foliage of Catherine's planter. It teased at his mane as he approached the closed balcony doors. No lights shone inside, all was still in darkness.

Catherine should be on her way home by now. The shimmering bond, always a tensile line between them, told him she was safe. She longed to come home, but the demands of her work kept her chained to her desk. He wondered if she hoped to see him. He knew too much time had passed since their last encounter. Would she begin to forget any dreams she might have of being a part of him, like he had said he'd do? He had no idea.

"Catherine..." Vincent leaned to place one hand flat on the window pane. He pressed hard. "Be well..." Words of love trembled on his tongue, but he did not voice them.

*"Do you remember, Vincent? It was just over there, that you named me, for the first time..."*

"You do not have a name..."

*"Yes, I do! Don't you remember, even that little bit? I was impressed. You said, and I quote, 'you remind people of what they're most afraid of...' do you remember what it was?"*

"Their aloneness..." Vincent replied, absently.

*"There you go. Was that so hard? I like it. It has power. Aloneness. I'd never had a name, until that night. I think it suits me very well. All names must have power, don't they? Vincent, the Conqueror..."*

"I did not name you. You assume too much. You are nothing to me." Vincent turned from the dark glass, pushing his hand inside his cloak, feeling for the note, and the rose that Verity had given him.

*"You are everything, to me. You needed me, and I was there. Don't you see, Vincent? I will always be here, for you. We're a part of each other. The Yin and the Yang of it. Blood brothers from an unknown mother. You need me, now. Remember how I kept your soul alive, when all others abandoned you to the howling darkness of despair that came, after Lisa ran from you..."*

"I will allow I may have needed you, once..." Vincent placed the note on Catherine's outside table. "But, I do not need you, now. Remember those chains that you hate so much?"

He did not leave the rose. He pushed it carefully back into his pocket.

*“Coward! You can be so predictable. You bore me, sometimes. I dare you to leave it for her...for her to find, and wonder about the meaning...”*

“She knows. A single red rose conveys respect and admiration.”

*“You can be so blind, at times, brother, mine. You know you could’ve sent Kipper with that urgent note of yours. Delivered it right to her, at her desk. Job done. And yet, you persist in this foolishness. You really want to see her, alone. You think she wants you, as you want her...”*

“I needed to see that she is well...” Vincent walked to the balcony, and looked down into the shadowed pathways of the park far below. “For the last time.”

*“Remember what you said to Verity. That when you see Catherine, you’re filled with a happiness sweeter than anything you’ve ever known. But, you’re also reminded of a life that can never be. You can never be together. It’s an impossible relationship. Your words. Let’s go Below and forget all about her. Why go on torturing yourself, man?”*

“Why, indeed...” Vincent looked up to the scudding clouds obscuring the moon far above. “Perhaps, because I truly have no choice.”

Reaching into his cloak pocket again, he withdrew the rose, placing over the envelope on the table. He moved away, before he changed his mind. He reached to scale the wall again, returning to the roof.

*“Hey, Vincent! Why the rose? What did I say? What made you change your mind?”*

“Because I am sick of talking to myself. I need something more. Aloneness has no place in this relationship.”

*“Says who? Wait, where are you going? Aren’t you going to wait for her? I want to see her again. She’s really pretty...”*

"I have been waiting all my life. A few more hours will not hurt. I will see her soon enough. I drew her a map of how to find me, beyond the bridge..."

He dropped down onto the roof, and his long-limbed pace gathered speed. "And I will be meeting her, alone."

Mentally, he rattled the much-needed chains of intellectual confinement, and heard Aloneness snarl his chagrin.

*"Reckless Lover! She will be the end of you, my brother!"*

"Perhaps she already is. But, if that is to be my fate, then I freely accept it."

*"I will not allow it! If you choose that path, what will become of me...?"*

"I neither know, nor care." Vincent tightened the mental chains, and the carping voice inside his head was choked into brooding silence.

He looked back up to the moon, as he headed into the park and crossed the bridge.

"Soon. Come to me soon, Catherine. I have so much to tell you, so much to ask. We have a battle to fight... and I do not think I can fight it alone..."





*"I love you as certain dark things are to be loved,  
in secret, between the shadow and the soul..."*

***Pablo Neruda***