

Forgive Me...

Episode expansion of: **Once Upon a Time in New York**

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My Beloved Catherine,

I sit here, beside your hospital bed, writing you a letter that you will never read. Because I will never show it to you, because it will shock you. You have been through enough.

But, I need to put my thoughts down, because they haunt my dreams, making it almost impossible to sleep. It has become a habit, to sit here through the long hours of the night, trying to find the right words as I watch you sleep.

I'm still coming to terms with what happened to you, during those ten, awful days you were missing. Oh, my beloved child, when I first saw you again, when I saw your ruined face, my heart nearly broke. It's the role of all good parents, to protect their children, at all costs. I failed you in that, as I feel I have in many things, since your mother died. I miss her guiding hand, and loving counsel.

Yesterday, Catherine, I asked you to forgive me. You said 'no', telling me there's nothing to forgive. You said you're grateful to have survived that awful attack. You also told me that what you endured has made you stronger and better. You looked upon it as some sort of blessing.

Secretly, I was horrified, even as I struggled to understand. I feel I played an unwitting part in what happened to you that night. Despite what you said, I must beg your forgiveness, for everything.

That day, in my office, you told me you'd dated worse than Tom. I was completely mystified. He seems a very nice young man, and I thought you enjoyed dating him. But then, I never understood how unhappy you'd become with the whole idea of working with me at the firm. I was wilfully blind, because I needed you with me. I could not see past that fact. I could not lose you as well.

I swore, when you disappeared, that once you were safely home again, I would do everything in my power to make everything right with you. I will keep that promise, no matter what happens now. I've filled your room with huge vases of flowers. I guess I'm trying to mask my own failings with things of beauty and perfume. But their heavy scent clogs my throat.

Amazingly, you told me last night, that you still wish to practice law. I have vowed to support you. You said you wanted to make a difference in the world. You told me you're thinking of joining the D.A.'s office. I will admit my heart quailed at the very idea. It's not the kind of work I ever imagined for my little girl. But you were so serious, so determined that it's what you want to do, I cannot deny you.

Catherine, Dr Sanderly told me tonight, that when you came around, after the operation, he asked you if there was anything he could do for you. As he was leaving the room, he thought he heard you say that he could read you the last chapter of Great Expectations.

The good doctor admitted he was deeply mystified. He was sure he'd misheard you. He dismissed it, thinking such an odd request was due to the strong sedative he'd given you. He thought no more of it, until I asked him

if you'd said anything about where you were held. Your ongoing refusal to tell us anything, is the most confusing puzzle of all.

Tonight, in your sleep, you reached out your hand, as if searching for something, or someone. You murmured something I didn't catch. Was it the name of one of your captors? But you seemed completely unafraid, almost welcoming. None of this makes any sense to me. If I asked you about the Dickens book, would you tell me the truth?

You now seem to have deep secrets to which I'm not party. Once you would have told me everything. But, you still refuse to say anything of where you were held, or by whom. Nothing the police can pin down, or allow them to make an arrest. It's as if you have deliberately blanked the whole event from your mind, or are hiding something too dreadful to speak about.

Ultimately, perhaps that's for the best. Maybe it's better not to know, even if it galls me that someone out there has gotten away with what they did to you.

I don't begin to understand any of it. Perhaps I'm not meant to do so. Maybe this is my lot, to be left wondering. I must be strong for you, to allow your body and mind to heal. That's why I'm here, to watch over you.

But, I too have a secret that I cannot share with you, because it is truly too bizarre. Tonight, I could swear I felt the eyes of another, also watching you, even though we're alone in this room. In the darkest hours of the night, it's a feeling that has crawled up and down my spine, like fingers of doubt. Or is it simply my lack of sleep playing tricks on my mind?

I would swear on my life I saw a large shadow pass by the window, again. With the curtains drawn, I couldn't claim it was even real. I blinked, and it was gone. Your room is five floors above the ground, so I'm forced to admit it's all just too fanciful.

But, I could have sworn someone looked in, for the briefest of moments. A great sense of loss and sadness travelled with that shadow.

Catherine, in that same moment, you stirred again, and murmured something I couldn't catch. It was almost as if you were subconsciously aware of that unseen presence, and yearned towards it.

Now, I don't know what to think, or how to feel. So I will sit here, writing this letter, as I continue to guard your sleep. It is all I can do for now.

Sleep, my beloved daughter, sleep and heal. I will always be here... I could never leave you alone and helpless, ever again...

Your loving father,

Charles