

# South of Oz and North of Shangri-La

Prequel to: **Promises of Someday**

Judith Nolan



**Vincent,**

**I've left this note for you, in the only place I know it'll be safe. In the bottom of your armoire, under your best treasure, the toy carousel I gave you. I'm going away, and I feel such a coward. But, I just can't tell you face to face. It'd make it too hard to leave, and I need to go. Think the best of me, Brother, when you discover I've gone. I couldn't stand it, if I knew you hated me.**

**I'm writing this now, because I want you to understand what happened to me, and why I must leave the tunnels. You know how I've always dreamed of seeing the mountains, and sailing the raging seas. I want to go places where no-one has ever been. See the palaces, shining golden in the sun. Books are no longer enough.**

**I've always thought I could never leave you behind, but the old man has made it impossible for me to stay. It'll be the end of one of us, if I can't get away and live my own life. He finds endless fault in everything I do and say. He always has. I've no idea why, or what I've done to so offend him, that he barely looks at me now. I feel crippled by his displeasure.**

**Vincent, how I wish I could take you with me. I want to show you everything. But we both know that's impossible. Father would never**

**allow it, and I couldn't protect you up there, in that world. If something awful happened to you, I would never forgive myself.**

**One of the old man's favourite quotes is: "If wishes were horses, beggars would ride..." How appropriate that saying is, after our escapade at the carousel. But that was the final straw.**

**He said I deserved all I got, when you slashed my cheek. I touch those three scars now, in farewell, and shake my head. The old man had no understanding, or sympathy, for what I was trying to do for you. He called me completely irresponsible! He shouted that I'm the oldest of the boys, and you, Vincent, look up to me. Father accused me of not caring happens to you. That's so unfair! I care, more than anything.**

**All I wanted to do was give you a ride on the carousel! What was so wrong about that? But I've never been able to do right by him. We both know that. Father has never yelled at you. Not even when he saw what you'd done to my cheek. He stitched me up, and then sent me to apologise to you.**

**Of course, I meant to do so. But, when I entered your chamber, you were sitting at your desk, watching that toy carousel go round and round and round. You were mesmerized by it. By the movement and the music, and my heart broke.**

**You were completely unaware of my presence. I couldn't speak, or show you I was there. I could only watch. I wish I could stay. I would love to watch you grow into the man I know you will become. But such things cannot come to pass.**

**I want to see the world, Vincent! I want to know what lies beyond these stone walls and caverns. I want to go all the way south of Oz and north of Shangri-La! As we'd always promised each other we**

**would, when we made plans for what we would do when we grew up.**

**I expect that, one day, I will come back here. Home is home, no matter if it's just a great, big hole in the ground. There's no getting away from your birthplace, no matter how far you run. But, will I ever be welcome here, again? Would you all still be here, waiting for me? I hope, and pray for it to be so.**

**For now, I must take this trip alone, in your name, Vincent. You'll always be with me, in spirit. I will remember everything, for both of us. The scars on my cheek are my constant reminder of home, and one day, I'll thank you for them.**

**Look to the moon every first of the month, and know I'll be doing the same. We'll be seeing the same moon, Brother. Do you remember the first time I took you up and out, to see the moonlight?**

**When you take out the carousel and find this note, Vincent, read it, and think kindly of me. As I'll think of you. And when I come back, what tales I will be able to tell you about all the things I've seen. It's all there, in front of me, just waiting for me to reach out and grasp it.**

**Always, Brother mine. Always...**

**Devin**