

Vincent's Journal Entry

Judith Nolan



“Love is not love that alters when it alteration finds...”

William Shakespeare

Sunday, April 12, 1987

Soon it will be dawn. A new day and a task more difficult than any I could ever imagine. But this new dilemma must be faced and dealt with. There can be no other way.

But how do I begin to explain, to help her understand what has happened to her? Father operated through the night, trying to repair the damage to her face. He is painfully aware his success has been limited, but he has done all he can under very difficult circumstances.

Before he went to rest, he administered our strongest sedative, giving her the precious gift of a few hours of oblivion, free from the inevitable pain and disbelief.

And so she sleeps, this woman from another world. Here beside me, in my chamber, in my bed. So close I have only to reach out my hand to touch her, and yet... I dare not.

I must never allow her to see me, because I know she will not understand our differences. However, deep inside me, the temptation remains, quiescent for now but it lives nonetheless. Her soft warmth and frailty surrounds me, her breathing matched in slow concert with mine. I have tried allowing its steady rhythm to relax me, to submerge my senses in a waking dream, for I cannot sleep. But it is no use.

I feel drawn to her and I do not know why. It is all so new, this strange, feathering sensation of anticipation twining around my heart, making my pulse jump at the slightest sigh from her. It is almost as if I am waiting for something, a new and precious joy, to unfold. But what it is, I cannot guess. Perhaps it is merely an illusion created by a night spent without sleep. For I am tired beyond measure. Despite that, my muscles tremble with the burning need to move, to pace; but I must remain still, keeping watch over her.

Ever since I first touched her softness up in the park, that sensation of waiting for something wondrous to happen has stayed with me. I have only to close my eyes and she lives somewhere deep within me. There is an odd sense of connection, surpassing my ability to grasp its meaning. Even though I have yet to comprehend the full understanding, it must be enough. I will make it so through the long and lonely nights to come.

I realize I do not even know her name. Maybe that's for the best. She appears so small and fragile, lying there among the pillows and comforters of my bed. A beautiful angel descended from the wondrous realm I may only visit after the night falls.

She has seen the many colors, the beauty and the light of that world so far above where I now sit; things I may only dream about. And yet, that same world has brutally scarred and discarded her, leaving her to die alone and unseen in the park. How can that be? How can such a world

exist, where her soft loveliness can be slashed and destroyed by the blade of a knife held in a man's careless hand?

She would have died if I had not found her there, brought her here, to this secret place, to my father's care. That is the unpalatable truth. Now the day Father feared for so long has finally come to pass. His worried counsel is I should never have brought her here at all. But there was nowhere else to go. He insists she must leave as soon as humanly possible. He worries for me, for the inevitable effect her presence here will have on me. He is also deeply afraid for our security, the sanctity of our world far below the city, and I cannot find it within myself to blame him.

We decided to bandage her eyes to prevent her from seeing any of us, or this place, as we tend to her. Mercifully, they were not hurt in the attack, but we must make sure she will not be able to find her way back here again, once she has returned to the world Above. And I am to tell her nothing of this hidden realm, or myself. How could I explain it all anyway? I doubt she would ever understand.

So I wait out the few hours remaining before she awakens to the truth and the pain. All I can offer her, in the way of understanding and empathy, is my voice. I will read to her, anything and everything. I have already selected Dickens, Great Expectations. I will attempt to distract her thoughts from the pain, allow my words to soothe her and convey my compassion, my awareness of her frightened sense of betrayal. I know that feeling only too well.

I once railed against the unfairness of life, of my limited options, of what I saw in the Mirror Pool every time I forced myself to look. I know I am different, and that fact is as immutable as the rock walls that surround me. Long ago, I accepted my fate, my destiny to be alone. Now I will use that hard-won knowledge to guide her through the terror she

will feel, the inevitable questions and the inescapable truth of what has been done to her without her consent.

The longest journey begins with a single step. I can only hope and pray she has the strength to endure the unendurable. That she will find the spirit to rise above and to begin life anew. I know she can do it. I can feel it in her. There is a sense of vitality, an untapped well of raw courage that will carry her through the agony and the shame. Of this I am certain, if nothing else. I feel, somehow, I know her. In my heart of hearts, I sense she is the other half of my soul. I also know as soon as she leaves this place, I must begin to forget her. For me there can be no other way.

But for now I will allow myself the small, precious gift of sitting here and watching over her sleep. I can do that; I can be here for her in the darkness. And I will wonder — just a little — about what could have been if we had met in another time and place, and I was not the man I am...

Vincent