

# **"Love Will Find A Way..."**

**Judith Nolan**



*"The only true wisdom is in knowing you know nothing..."*

*Socrates*

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The brightly-lit Manhattan skyline glowed against the shroud of the dark night, blotting out all view of the stars. Darkness surrounded the tower block where Vincent had finally found his beloved Catherine after searching for several long months.

He cradled her limp body in his arms, willing her to live. For him, for their love. But he could see she appeared to be beyond all help or hope.

The sound of the departing helicopter carrying the accursed Gabriel beyond Vincent's immediate reach faded into the distance, merging with the muted sounds of the bustling city far below. They had stared at each other, man and beast, taking full measure. Gabriel had smiled, knowing he'd won the battle and dealt Vincent a terrible blow from which he would not recover.

Vincent sigh, his wide shoulders slumping in defeat. But none of that mattered now. He bowed his head over his love, trying to drive the chill from her body with the warmth of his own. Her words echoed back to him, words of confession and confusion.

"We loved...," Catherine had struggled to tell him the truth she'd kept hidden since she had first known. "There's a child..."

"A child...?" Vincent had questioned disbelievingly, not truly understanding what his love was trying to tell him with her last ragged breaths.

To him, everything seemed to have slowed to a crawl. His usually sharp ability to plan, to understand, even to think, had been submerged in a flood of

indescribable grief. Gabriel had truly dealt him an awful blow in his cynical drive to conquer all around him.

Vincent's love was dying before his disbelieving gaze and he knew he was powerless to stop it from happening. Had he found her in one breath, only to lose her in the next?

"He's beautiful...", Catherine had struggled to whisper in reply.

"Catherine...?" Vincent had shaken his head as he held her.

*What could he say to such a statement? They had loved? When? Where? How?* He'd heaved a long breath. Surely he would have remembered such a momentous event in his life, but the tatters of his tortured memory was blank and bare.

"Catherine..." He'd tried to keep her with him.

*"Though lovers be lost..."* She'd struggled to repeat the quote.

Vincent had waited, hoping against hope she would go on. Finally, he'd prompted, *"Love shall not..."*

But then his love had gone limp in his arms, her head falling backwards. Drawn from him on a tortured breath he'd finished the quote.

*"And death shall have no dominion..."*

Lost to all sense of his own safety, he pulled her limp body up into his arms, holding her against his chest as his tears fell, unheeded, into her hair. He shuddered with grief and the impending sense of loss that hit him like a tidal wave, threatening to destroy him and everything he loved.

He knelt on the roof between the stairway leading down into the building and the empty helipad. He held Catherine closer in his arms with her face against his neck.

In that moment he no longer cared if he lived or died. He could cease to live right here and no one would know the truth. Anyone finding them would not guess at the tragedy that had unfolded on this dark night. No-one except Gabriel.

Everything else around them faded into oblivion. He bowed his great head over Catherine's as the wind gusted across his hair, the only sign of life. She was silent and still in his arms, her spirit gone from her now.

The uncaring beast deep within him stirred into sibilant life, rejoicing in the dark tragedy. It urged Vincent to stand and leave his love behind. Walk to the building's edge. Jump from the roof and finally put an end to all the pain and despair.

*'You know you want to, Brother...'* the dark voice within whispered. *'I promise it will not hurt...'* The being chuckled bleakly. *'Well, not for long, anyway. Then*

*you and I will be together again, forever. Without her to come between us. You know you want that...*

"There is a child...", Vincent replied to his darker self. "My child..."

*'She lied!' the entity hissed. 'How could someone like us have a child? It's impossible! I would have known! I would have seen! You are deluded by grief.'*

"You know only what I know, Beast," Vincent replied harshly. "Your memory is as blank as my own of such an event. And Catherine would never lie, not to me. She said there is a child and *he* is beautiful. I will live for him and search for him."

*'Maybe, maybe...', the darkness conceded. 'But look at her now. She is of no use to you, dead. Put her down and come with me, brother. Be with me! You know you really want to. If you will not jump, we can pursue another course far from here. I know of places nobody ever goes. We will be safe there, you and I...'*

"No..." Vincent drew back to look down at his love. "No!"

Then he gasped in alarm. With the movement, Catherine had breathed the shallowest of breaths against his neck. It was almost as if he had imagined it.

If he had not been so preoccupied mentally arguing with his darker self, he would have seen the faint pulse that began to beat again in the side of her neck. A second breath, shallower than the first. She was slipping away from him again.

"No! You will live! For us! For our son!"

*'She's dead! You're a fool! Look at her with the eyes of a doctor, not a lover. She's gone from you and good riddance!'*

"No!" Vincent shouted again, as he held Catherine upright against his chest so that her head rested against the hollow of his shoulder.

He surged to his feet, holding her close in his arms. "She still lives!"

*'Bah! You are not worthy of my time or my patience,' the beast within snarled. 'I can wait. I will always be waiting for you to come back to me when you see the sense of my words...'*

Vincent ignored his inner darkness as his cloaked shadow hurried onwards, carrying Catherine to safety and concealment. An entrance to the world Below was not far away down a side street, but it was also several stories down. He hurried to the stairwell, taking the steps two at a time, trying not to jolt his love, but having no choice in his haste.

Finding the old warehouse in the alleyway behind the tower block, he ran inside, scrambling around detritus and stacks of cardboard boxes to the basement

door. Dragging it open with one mighty hand, he pushed through, leaving it to clang shut behind him.

In the immediate darkness he was forced to feel his way forward toward the far wall where an old upright dresser concealed the entrance to the hidden world beneath the city. Inserting his elbow behind the furniture he pushed it aside, squeezing through the darkened opening with Catherine in his arms. He reached back to drag it closed behind him.

The familiar world of the upper tunnels closed around him. With his love held close against him, he bent to pick up a piece of old brick from the tunnel floor. The rattle of a passing subway train drowned out the short, frantic message he tapped out on the nearby pipes. He called for Father to meet him in Vincent's chamber.

Dropping the rock, he gathered Catherine's limp form closer against him before he began to run. He flew past the outer sentry posts, not caring who saw him or which called after him in astonishment. None thought, or tried, to detain him.

He entered his chamber to place Catherine carefully on the bed. Drawing the covers up over her, he knelt on the floor beside the bed, beginning a detailed assessment of her vital signs. What he found gave him little hope. Her pulse was shallow and erratic. He smoothed the hair away from her forehead in desperation, urging her silently to stay with him as he worked.

He had no idea what they'd given her. But the needle marks on her arm told their own story. There were many, some old and some very new. One still bled a little.

Father came stumping into the chamber, leaning heavily on his stick, his medical bag clutched in his free hand.

"The message said you've found her," he breathed worriedly, casting aside his stick as he came up to the side of the bed. "Is she alive?"

"I have found her and she is alive... but barely," Vincent acknowledged, even as he bent forward and gently kissed Catherine's pale forehead. "She wants to fight. I can feel it in her but she is very tired and heartsick..."

He smoothed his hand over her moist skin. His touch made Catherine groan as she turned her head against the pillows.

"Then we must do everything within our power to help her survive," Father tried to reassure his son as he began his work in earnest. "Do you know what they injected her with?"

"I have no idea..., " Vincent replied helplessly. "Whatever it was it must be powerful."

A worried looking Mary appeared in the chamber entrance. "What do you need, Jacob?" she asked quickly.

Father turned to her, giving urgent instructions. "And send a message to Peter. We're going to need his knowledge and expertise."

"I will." Mary looked toward the bed and its unconscious occupant before she turned away and hurried out again.

Behind his parent, Vincent leaned over his love. "While I live, you live... with me. In me." He cupped her cold, pale cheek in his warm palm. "Always..." He breathed deeply. "I will *not* allow you to die."

Again, as if hearing his voice, Catherine turned her head against the pillow. "Vincent...?" she groaned, managing to lift one hand clear of the covers. Her fingers opened and a half-full medical vial fell out among the covers.

The movement was too much for her abused body and her arm fell back to the bed. On a ragged sigh, she slipped away from him again back into the danger of deep unconsciousness.

Vincent picked up the vial, frowning at its label. "This..." He held it out toward Father. "They injected her with this. Somehow she managed to keep hold of it."

"Brave, girl." Father took it to study the label. "This is a powerful sedative. Someone did not want her to survive."

"Gabriel..." Vincent breathed the hated name. "He didn't want her to live. He wanted me to suffer and die of despair."

"Well, all I can say is be glad someone must have miscalculated the dosage and only gave her half." Father shook his head. "For whatever reason."

"Our son..." Vincent lifted his shoulders helplessly. "Catherine told me there is a child. A boy child."

"A child?" Father's eyebrows rose in shock. "How is it possible?"

"Simple biology, it seems..." Vincent murmured brokenly. "I thought I had lost her forever. And now, this..."

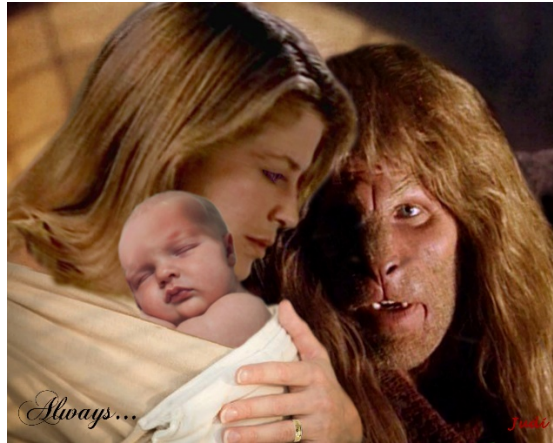
"That possibility remains, I'm very much afraid," Father laid out his fears bleakly. "But the fact she has survived this long gives me a small glimmer of hope."

"She must survive, Father. She will survive," Vincent replied vehemently. "For us and for our son. It is why she fights even now. Why she kept that vial."

"Yes..." Father breathed, shaking his head. "You will stay with her?"

"Always..." Vincent bent over the bed. "I will never leave her alone again."

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*"Don't be pushed around by the fears in your mind. Be led by the dreams in your heart..."*

**Roy T. Bennett**