

“Mirrors”

Judith Nolan



“You’re gonna remember - every time you look in the mirror...”

“No!” Catherine thrashed from side to side, trapped again in the thrall of her recurring nightmare.

Every time she closed her eyes, she was assaulted by the image of the man who’d waved the straight razor at her, before slashing it across her unprotected face, again and again. There was no escape from the pain and the terror, no matter how hard she tried.

“You’re safe. You’re safe with me...,” a man’s voice said, from the darkness. “He cannot hurt you, here...”

Catherine snapped awake with a gasp. She turned her head on the pillow of the bed she lay in. But the bandages over her eyes prevented her from seeing the man who owned that beautiful voice. But he was always there, seeming to sense whenever the nightmare crashed into her sleep and tore viciously at her sanity.

“Vincent...?” she whispered raggedly.

She knew he was near because she could hear the soft rasp of his breathing. She stretched out one hand, but it was not taken.

“These bandages...” Catherine put her hand to her face.

“They must remain, for now,” Vincent replied, quietly. “Your face has not healed enough.”

“My face... it hurts...” Catherine swallowed against a fresh flood of tears.

"I can read to you," Vincent offered compassionately. "You enjoyed *A Tale of Two Cities*. I have more volumes of Dickens. Maybe we could begin *Great Expectations*?"

"It passed the time," Catherine whispered raggedly. "Are you sure these bandages can't come off? I want to see you."

"No, not yet..." Vincent shifted uneasily. "We cannot risk any infection."

"Infection?" Catherine's voice rose in alarm. "Please, find me a mirror," she begged. "Surely you can uncover my eyes enough so I can see what they did to me?"

Vincent didn't reply. Catherine waited impatiently. Finally, she extended her hand again in the general direction of where she thought he was standing.

"There are no mirrors... here...", Vincent finally replied.

"No mirrors?" Catherine frowned. "Why not?"

"There has never been any need for them, in my world. Or in this chamber."

"How can you live without mirrors?" Catherine's attention was diverted from her pain. "It isn't possible."

"We live without many of the things your world would consider necessary."

"I still find it strange," Catherine worried the point. "Or have you removed them for my sake?" She pushed herself up onto one elbow. "Is that it? You don't want me to see what they did to my face?"

"No...", Vincent whispered. "When the time comes, you will be allowed to see."

"I don't believe you...", Catherine replied fretfully, as she lay back. "You're hiding many things from me. I know it." She turned her head. "And I will find a mirror. You cannot hide them all from me."

"Rest," Vincent encouraged. "Rest and try not to worry. There will be time enough to look for mirrors when you are better."

"I'll try..." Catherine closed her eyes, which were useless to her. "You will be here when I wake up?"

"I'll be close by...", Vincent reassured her again. "I won't allow your nightmares to hurt you. I will not allow anything to hurt you, ever again..."

"I know...", Catherine nodded, as she drifted back to sleep. And for the first time, her nightmare didn't return...

