

## *Cupid He Rules Us All*

by Michaela Buzsaki Struchova



His deep-set blue eyes admired the delicate floral patterns on her lacy dress as she perhaps too eagerly leaned back against his chest, his arms cautiously yet happily forming a protective frame around her. They were sitting on one of the wrought-iron benches on her balcony, the light of what seemed like a hundred candles of various sizes illuminating the special evening for them. He searched her profile – it radiated peace as he had seldom seen on her face on ordinary days. He didn't need to look though; his heart felt it all evening.

"You are happy," Vincent stated, making her aware it was no question.

"Very much," Catherine replied, her dreamy smile widening. "I don't think I've ever felt this happy," she mused.

Vincent smiled. His gaze dropped on the clear crystal resting on her chest. Her calm breathing made it sparkle with every breath she took. He lifted his head again, absently looking at the starry April night sky.

"Are you?" Catherine asked gently, almost sure of the answer anyway.

"I didn't think anything could ever make me feel this way," he said wondrously. "It is as if a thousand stars ignited fires within me, warming my heart and lighting up my soul..."

He looked at her again. "Yes, Catherine... I am happy."

Strangely, he found it easy to confess his true feelings to her. He didn't dare to say the three most intimate and heartfelt words, but that night, he was confident enough vocally to admit at least his happiness. Again, he could feel the surge of joy within her after he spoke about the pure, unbound truth of his heart. It was as if with each beat of her kind heart, a new and

wondrous emotion floated into his own heart. Their bond grew stronger with each passing day, and sometimes, Vincent wondered how far its strength would eventually reach. And yet, he wouldn't want to change it.

"Tell me about that place deep in the tunnels where you found my crystal," Catherine spoke into the brief silence between them.

Vincent smiled and lifted his head toward the night sky full of stars.

"It is a magical place, Catherine," he said incredulously. "It takes almost a day's journey to get there, walking through almost darkness, wind and cold, but when you get there... it almost blinds you. It's a large cavern, with crystals of all shapes and colours you can only imagine covering its every inch. They cover the ground, the walls, they hang from the ceiling... Everywhere you look, everything shimmers and sparkles."

Catherine smiled. "That must be beautiful."

"Oh, it is," Vincent agreed enthusiastically, smiling too. "You feel like you have just entered Aladdin's cave of wonders... Nobody knows how long it has been there but those crystals must have been developing for hundreds of years, maybe even longer. Nature is truly the greatest of magicians."

He paused as another emotion reached his heart, and he looked at Catherine's profile again. "One day, I'll take you there and we will see it together," he pledged, as always, meaning every word.

Catherine smiled dreamily, then glanced up at his face. "I know it took only a day but... Didn't you feel alone on the journey?"

Vincent chuckled. "I wasn't alone. You were with me every step of the way."

Catherine squeezed his hand, which she was holding. Her heart soared, and the smile on her face widened even more.

"And I also had another companion - a good book," Vincent added.

"Blake or Shakespeare?" Catherine asked, imagining him sitting at the fire in the evening, rapt in some of his favourite poetry.

"Rilke," Vincent corrected her, smiling. "Father gave me *Letters To A Young Poet*. He thought I might enjoy it along the way."

"I suppose he was right." Her smiling eyes searched the confirmation on his face.

"In all those years, Father might have been wrong about a few things but never about my literary likes."

Catherine chuckled and leaned her head back against his chest, although lifting it to see the glittering darkness above them. Gratitude, joy and love were assaulting her senses, and out of the blue, a few lines emerged from her memory.

"What is a youth? Impetuous fire.  
What is a maid? Ice and desire."

*The world wags on...  
A rose will bloom It then will fade  
So does a youth, so does the fairest maid...*

*Sweeter than honey and bitter as gall  
Love is a pass-time that never will pall  
Sweeter than honey and bitter as gall  
Cupid he rules us all..."<sup>1</sup>*

Vincent smiled, then tilted his head, thinking.

"Beautiful words but... Who wrote them? I have never read this poem," he wondered.

"You couldn't have," Catherine chuckled. "It's from a song from the most beautiful movie adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*. I have watched it so many times I lost count." The dreamy look returned to her face. "I was thirteen when I saw it for the first time. Dad took me to a special screening two years after the film's premiere. We learned about Shakespeare at school, but it wasn't until I found Dad's beautiful vintage volume of the play in his library that I fell in love with the story. It's still my favourite Shakespeare play, I think."

She turned to look at Vincent's face. "This film... It's exactly as I've always imagined it looked like in the story. The gorgeous scenery of Italian cities where history breathes from every scene, the colourful costumes, the *music*! Oh, Vincent..."

The fire of excitement lit up her whole face, setting her eyes aglow. Vincent was mesmerised, by her words and by the vision in front of him.

"And the actors playing Romeo and Juliet were so...", Catherine searched for words.

"Emotionally invested?" Vincent offered, smiling.

"Yes! They were still teenagers but the way they acted, I believed every word they said. I used to dream I was Juliet and that I found a love like that, a love like no other in the world..."

Vincent's smile widened, gladly savouring the thrill on her face and in her heart.

Catherine suddenly became self-aware, realising she got carried away. She flashed a smile and lowered her eyes, suddenly shy.

"Sometimes our dreams come true," Vincent said knowingly.

Catherine sighed and smiled again. "Yes," she whispered.

"Although I would rather leave the poison and dagger in the play," Vincent added, amused.

"I think we can happily agree on that," she laughed.

Her face turned contemplative, and she settled back in Vincent's arms. He noticed her change of mood.

"Is anything troubling you?" he asked.

Catherine smiled and shook her head. "That night when you left me Shakespeare's Sonnets..."

They both remembered that night very well. It was the day she found out Elliot Burch was not the man she thought him to be, the day when she realised no man could ever take Vincent's place in her heart. Vincent suddenly felt uneasy.

"Are you thinking about Elliot?" His voice betrayed him, but it was too late to take the question back.

"Not in the way you might think," Catherine replied, and he could hear the genuine smile in her voice. "I'm thinking about how much pain I've caused you back then... And instead of rightfully abandoning me, you left me the most beautiful message in that sonnet you marked. That night, I felt it all: the humiliation from being deceived, the blow from having been blind not to see what was right before me, the fear of losing my most precious thing, and most of all, I felt love... pure, unconditional and the only real love I have ever known."

Vincent's tense shoulders relaxed, his heart rejoicing in her admission.

*"It wasn't courage, Vincent, it was love..."*

Yes, he felt it too, much sooner than Catherine. He had felt it since the moment he lifted her almost lifeless body, putting it over his shoulder and bringing her down to the Tunnels. At the point when he hadn't even seen her face, his heart knew he'd found his soul mate. The immediate connection stirring inside him led to a feeling that grew from the moment she gently put the hood of his cloak down and smiled at him for the first time. That was when Vincent knew it: he was struck by a feeling much deeper and more meaningful than by a mere infatuation he'd experienced only once before in his life ...

Enchanted and led purely by his emotions, leaving his brain out of the equation for one unguarded moment, he let his head drop slightly until his mouth landed on the crown of her head. As lightly as a touch of an angel's wing, his lips grazed her silky smooth hair, and his nostrils inhaled the flowery scent of it. He closed his eyes and exhaled deeply, his mind floating in an imaginary world without limits and social conventions.

Catherine felt it as well, the electric current that ran through her at that moment, vibrating sweetly in her whole body. She smiled and closed her eyes, as well, her hands tightening the hold over Vincent's arms. He was always so careful not to let himself get carried away, not to hold her too close, not to say too much and too deep. However, at that moment, as he forgot to keep his instinctive distance, Catherine wasn't going to let the chance slip away. She held him just as tightly and unrestrained as he held her.

A few long minutes went by until she felt Vincent's head straightening and his hold loosening slightly again – he was back in his cautious and considerate state. She wasn't upset, though.

His smile widened, savouring the memory of the few sweet moments that had just passed.

Suddenly, she disengaged herself from his arms, stood up and walked into the bedroom.

Vincent was mildly confused by the abrupt change, but not for long because Catherine reappeared on the balcony carrying Shakespeare's *Sonnets* with her. She rejoined Vincent on the bench and passed him the book, with a beaming smile.

"Can I ask for one more anniversary present?" she asked.

“You can ask for as many as you like, Catherine,” he replied softly with his gravelly baritone.

“Will you read that sonnet to me?”

The thrill in her eyes almost broke him. Only then did he remember they’d never had the time to read Sonnets together. He knew exactly which sonnet Catherine meant – the one he marked for her with a dried rose back then, the one that spoke about his own feelings for her, baring his soul to her like never before.

It was Vincent’s turn to smile, and he took a long moment reading in her eyes before he took the volume from her hands and opened it on the still-marked page. He knew the sonnet by heart, but after his former emotional display, he didn’t have the courage to speak it without something else than Catherine’s face to focus on.

Catherine leaned against the back of the bench, slightly turned toward him so she could watch him as he read. After one last glance into her eyes, Vincent’s eyes fell on the book in his lap and on the over three-hundred-year-old words on the opened page, words from the past and at the same time, words of the present. His unmistakable voice resounded gently in the air as he began to read.

*“When, in disgrace with fortune and men’s eyes,  
I all alone beweepe my outcast state,  
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,  
And look upon myself and curse my fate,  
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,  
Featured like him, like him with friends possessed,  
Desiring this man’s art and that man’s scope,  
With what I most enjoy contented least;*

*Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,  
Haply I think on thee, and then my state,  
(Like to the lark at break of day arising  
From sullen earth) sings hymns at heaven’s gate;  
For thy sweet love remembered such wealth brings  
That then I scorn to change my state with kings.”<sup>2</sup>*



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1 *What Is A Youth?* (Love Theme from “*Romeo and Juliet*”, lyrics written by Eugene Walter

2 William Shakespeare: *Sonnet 29*