

No Turning Back

(Catherine's Letter to Vincent)

Dear Vincent,

I almost lost you today - again... And yet today was the first time when the fear of losing you hit me so hard, that it almost crushed me.

I put my hope of helping to save you from your stony tomb into the most unlikely hands - Mouse's. I barely knew him, but trusted his apparent skills and judgment in the hour of the gravest need; and Elliot's, who has yet to win my trust, but without whom, there wouldn't be you and Father anymore...

Right now, I'm drained, physically and above all, mentally. I've felt fear in my life before. I felt it when my mother's life was hanging on its last thread, and I knew that I was about to lose her way too soon forever. I also felt it when one of the men who attacked me flashed his knife in front of my face to show me what he was about to do. And there were other times I felt it, times I'd rather not talk about, at least not now...

Still, I can't put into words the horror gripping my heart when I found out what had happened to you and Father today. Where can I even begin? Do I even dare to relive the terror chilling me down to my bones, almost paralyzing me at some points when all hope seemed lost?

I wasn't thinking about what had happened between us before when I decided to ask Elliot for help. I wasn't thinking of the awkwardness, arguments, or whatever might have happened once I saw him again. I could only think of one thing: 'Vincent must live...' Isn't it amazing how crisis and fear can partially shut down our self-awareness and push us forward to get where we need to be? Love really makes us do the strangest things...

Yes, Vincent, love. We've been dancing around that emotion ever since we met, and I know how difficult it is for you to put it in words. I know why it is difficult for you, but trust me, I felt it right from the start, even if it might not have seemed so at first. Until today, we have been meeting at night, sharing the warmth of our embraces, listening to each other's heartbeats and voices. And yet we never named it by its true name - love... For that's what it is when two people count the hours to meet again, when the mere sight of each other brings a smile to their faces and a spark to their eyes like nothing else can.

I'm writing these lines, and my hands are shaking when I think of you buried under those rocks... My hands never shake, Vincent. That is the impact today has had on me. When I told you I've never been so frightened, I wasn't lying. And maybe that fear, the raised adrenaline made me act in ways I probably wouldn't have otherwise, but I didn't care; I still don't... not if it meant saving you and Father and bringing you back home...

Our parting at the threshold was the most difficult one for me yet. I always miss you when we go our separate ways, but tonight, it was almost physically painful. After everything that happened today, I needed to be by your side just a little longer. I needed to feel you even more than ever before. Only your much-needed recovery from today prevented me from turning around and following you anywhere you would wish to go...

Is this what it feels like, Vincent? Does it feel the same when you save me from danger, when you save my life? This... I don't even know how to describe it... this stabbing pain in the heart when you realise that the life of someone you love is hanging by a thread, and you have so little time to change it that every second is vital? I guess that's what drowning feels like - you can't breathe, the world around you shrinks more and more, and you pray for a miracle, using all your strength to escape death...

More than anything today, I'm grateful, for not only is Father safe, but most of all, you, the man I love, are alive and safe. How did you manage not lose hope while buried in that frightening darkness, Vincent? What kept your mind and heart going when everything seemed lost? I can only imagine, but I am grateful. Maybe it was your fear for Father and his health. And maybe it

was my love, calling out to you, letting you know that a life without is simply unthinkable...

I am tired as I haven't been in a long time, and yet I can't sleep... I wonder if you are asleep. Probably yes, since the weight of the world has been taken off your shoulders after those gruelling hours, and you can finally rest. But I wonder... Do you think about us just as I am at this very moment? Do you wish, too, that we were resting now together, reassuring ourselves that we are still two inseparable parts of one being? I wish...

Either way, my heart is at peace tonight, knowing that you are safe and well. And as I finally lay myself to bed, there is one memory that will put me to sleep eventually - the memory of your beating heart echoing in my ear as I lay it on your chest at the threshold. And I hope that when you sleep, throughout our bond, you will hear the beating of my own heart speaking to you, for now you know for certain that it beats only for you...

Forever,

Catherine