

Back To Life

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Note: Some dialogue was taken from the episode 'Though Lovers Be Lost' written by Alex Gansa, Howard Gordon and Ron Koslow, from the series Beauty and the Beast)

"Vincent!!"

Her scream resounded in the cavern, overpowering the deafening growls of the man on the verge of insanity who had just tried to strike at her.

His unusually pale face, covered with heavy perspiration, changed immediately from anger and rage into utter shock and disbelief, his eyes widened, his voice muted, his arm slowly descended.

Catherine.....

She knew he had recognized her, he must have, otherwise she would have been either dead or at least heavily injured by now. A ray of hope shone through her heart, but vanished quickly, because Vincent suddenly slumped down to the ground, pulling her with him.

Kneeling next to his lifeless body, Catherine looked at his face. Seeing his eyes closed, his chest not moving, she suddenly realized the cruel truth.

"No.... No!! You *can't*, Vincent! Not without *me!!*"

She was desperately trying to wake him, grabbing his shoulders shaking him, then laying her ear to his chest, listening to any sign of a heartbeat.

"I won't let you... I won't let you!!"

Her breathing was ragged, horror reflected in her eyes, her vision was getting blurry and she was gasping for air, as heart-wrenching sobs were finding their way out of the deepest core of her soul. She felt like something had clamped her heart and didn't want to let go.

You can't leave me now! We've gone so far, through so much, this can't be the end, not like this!!

Unwilling to let him go, she grasped at the only thing that came across her desperate, agonized mind - she leaned to his face and kissed him. Not just a soft goodbye kiss, but a proper lover's kiss, and once she had started, she couldn't stop herself.

All the love she had felt for him for so long was pouring out of her. She was attempting to breathe life back into him, to wake his dormant heart and make it beat for her and the world again.

Her hand cupped his cheek as her lips were passionately trying to revive him. And then...

Catherine...

Her eyes flew open but she didn't pull back, for what she felt was a kiss returned...

She felt like crying out of joy, but her need was stronger and she revelled in the first tender, and then the more and more passionate, response to her kiss from her beloved man.

Vincent felt a new lease of life coming into his veins, heat rising to his heart, his mind focused fully on her, the woman he loved most in the world... The black veil of rage, which devoured him for days, had been lifted by the warm white light pulling him to the almost-heavenly face leaning over him.

In just seconds, his arms encircled her body and he slowly rolled them over to find Catherine partially beneath him. Only then they broke the kiss, both gasping for air, deep, now almost black eyes gazing into her darkened green ones, speaking volumes without uttering a word. He was aware of tears running down her face in streams, although her face was glowing with happiness, breaking through the darkness surrounding them.

“Vincent...,” she whispered, and her hands reached for his face.

Her trembling fingers were gently stroking the outline of his still feverish face, the face she had been seeing in her dreams for over two years now. They ran tenderly along his cheekbones, his flat nose covered with soft fur-like hair, studying the lines on his forehead covered with perspiration, then slowly returned down until they reached their ultimate goal - his uniquely shaped mouth.

Her touch sent a shiver down Vincent’s spine and an electric shock through his heart, his whole body trembling in desire, overtaking him with a force he couldn’t control any more.

“Catherine...,” he whispered hoarsely.

He closed his eyes for a moment, trying to control the fire engulfing him again. But this time, it wasn’t the devastating fire that had almost devoured him just a few moments ago. This time, it was a fire reviving every fibre, every muscle and every vein in his body, creating a being so new and so powerful, that it was almost impossible to tame it.

Yet, what he could feel was no evil lurking from the dark corners of the cave and threatening to harm and destroy. It felt as if something beautiful, very long and very deeply hidden, was clawing its way out of the deepest part of his heart and breaking free - crying out to be heard, to be loved...

Catherine was gazing at his shadow hidden face, feeling it still with her fingertips. His skin was hot, but not burning her, only spreading a beautiful, almost liquid warmth throughout her whole body.

She should have noticed the dark sand mixed with the dirty soil on which they laid, the damp rocky walls of the cave and the salty scent lingering in the air. But she didn’t.

All she could see and feel was him. The centre of her being, the reason for her living. The man she would love until her last breath.

When Vincent opened his eyes, the blackness which had covered them for days was gone. Although Catherine couldn’t see their true colour, they were much brighter, shining through the dark and gazing at her with an unmatched intensity.

She laughed and cried more tears of joy, before pulling his head down for another passionate kiss. Suddenly, Vincent’s hands were all over her body, exploring hungrily, yet gently as well, what he had been only imagining for countless sleepless nights. They both felt more alive than ever, breathing heavily, longing to become one soul and one body, right there in that very moment. No more fears, no more hesitation, no more doubts. Their mutual long and almost unbearably suppressed need gave way to love expressed most naturally and passionately; time and space melted, and together, they reached for the stars...

An hour had passed and Jacob grew very worried. He had heard Catherine cry out Vincent's name, but then, it was suddenly silent and they hadn't heard anything from the not too distant cavern since.

My God, I hope she's not.... I hope he's not...

"I'm going in," Jacob said with a decisive voice to Pascal on his side.

"Are you sure?" Pascal was a bit afraid for the tunnel patriarch.

"I have to find out what happened."

Jacob walked slowly towards the cavern. When he approached its entrance, he tried to make up some shapes out of the dark filling it, but he couldn't see anything.

He crossed the entrance and when he glanced to his right, he saw a lantern burning in the corner illuminating the bodies of the two people he loved most in the world.

Catherine was sitting on the ground with Vincent laying with his head in her lap, her fingers caressing his hair gently. He looked like he was sleeping.

Jacob was relieved, but then a flicker of fear ran across his face when Catherine looked at him. She saw it and calmed him down by smiling a little and stating the fact.

"He's alive."

Father exhaled loudly and thanked Heavens for sending this woman into Vincent's life, into *their* lives.

"I'll get help," that was all he could manage to say, and turned to walk back to call for Pascal.

Catherine leaned down to Vincent's face and whispered. "Wake up, my love, we have to go."

Vincent opened his eyes, his eyelids felt heavy but he summoned all his remaining strength and with Catherine's help, he managed to stand up. His body felt like it had been run over by a train and he could barely stand. But when Pascal appeared and quickly came to support him, they all walked out slowly, starting their journey back to the home tunnels.

As they walked out, they were passing other tunnel dwellers who had kept watch over Vincent in his darkest hours and were happy that he had overcome the darkness yet again. All of them knew that the person they could thank for that, was the woman walking right behind him, carrying his dark cloak.

When they entered Vincent's chamber, Pascal helped Vincent to sit down on the bed.

Jacob checked his vitals, and when he saw how exhausted his son looked, he decided to let him sleep and examine him properly the next morning. He asked for some soup and tea though to be brought for both, Vincent and Catherine. Then he turned to Vincent again.

"You needs a wash, and dry clothes, you're sweaty and could get a chill... I'll send for Mary..."

"I'll do it, Father," Catherine interrupted him, sitting next to Vincent now, holding his hand.

He looked at her and suddenly had a feeling of *déjà vue*. She said the same two years ago when Vincent was badly injured and half-blind from the explosion he lived through Above. It was Catherine who had washed him, changed his clothes and dressings, and cared for him for days. Not because they had asked her to, but because she had wanted to and wouldn't leave his side.

Jacob's look turned soft and he smiled at the woman he had never thought he would become so fond of.

Catherine returned his smile in understanding.

"Get some rest, you must be exhausted too. I'll watch over him, don't worry."

He was grateful to her, for the lack of sleep over the last 36 hours was creeping in on him badly.

"If anything changes---"

"I'll let you know right away," she finished the sentence for him.

Jacob couldn't help himself and caressed her cheek lovingly in gratitude. She smiled at him and felt great fondness towards the man who had raised the most incredible human being she had ever met.

Then, Jacob leaned over Vincent and kissed the top of his head.

"Sleep well, my son...," he said, moved, and left the chamber.

Vincent felt and looked absent-minded, therefore he didn't react much to his father's kiss. Terrible fatigue was hovering over him, and all he wanted to do was sleep.

Catherine stood up to take the bowl of water and washcloth and get a clean nightshirt for him, but suddenly, he grasped her hand again, pulling her gently but insistently back.

When she saw the scared look in his eyes, after he suddenly became alert again, she smiled and said calmly.

"I'm not leaving, just getting you a clean nightshirt... You need to wash and change."

Vincent loosened the grip on her hand and let her go with a sigh.

When Catherine came back, she helped him to take off the vest and shirt, gently washed his upper body and face clean and helped him to put the nightshirt on. While doing it, she couldn't help but steal quick looks at his perfect body, his broad chest covered with soft golden hair, his strong shoulders, which looked quite impressive despite the bruises and cuts Vincent had inflicted upon himself in his state of rage, banging into the walls of the cavern. Catherine finally knew him as a lover, and yet she could never tire of seeing him in his natural state.

Quickly discarding her new desire and thinking of his health again, she pulled the nightshirt over his head and helped him to lay down, covering him with his quilted blanket.

Vincent still hasn't said a word since they had returned from the cavern, but he was following her every move with his tired, but suddenly alert eyes. Even in his numbed state of mind, her touch was sending shivers down his spine.

"Rest now, I'll be here," Catherine said quietly, looking lovingly into his deep blue eyes noticing the pale tone of his face.

Vincent didn't reply, just kept gazing at her for a while, as if trying to gather the right words but missing a link to connect them. She stroked his cheek and kissed his forehead.

Only then did Vincent close his eyes and fall almost immediately into a deep sleep.

Catherine moved to his favourite high-backed chair facing him and sighed. She was worn out, physically and mentally. She had just gone through her worst nightmare and her most beautiful dream in a matter of a few days. She was thinking of Vincent's illness, her looking after him in her apartment for three days, praying to God for him to survive the darkness. She couldn't forget his words before he had left on the last evening.

"Whatever happens, whatever comes, know that I love you..."

With that thought, the fatigue overcame her and she drifted off to sleep.

When Catherine woke up, she noticed a tray on the table next to her, with a teapot and cups, two bowls of soup covered with lids and some bread. When she touched the teapot, it was still warm, so she couldn't have slept for long. Her eyes turned to the bed and she was surprised to find Vincent leaning against the back of the bed with his observing eyes resting at her.

"You're up...How do you feel?" She smiled and sat down next to him on the bed, taking his hand.

He looked as if he was thinking hard about something.

"What... happened?" he asked with inquisitive eyes.

Catherine's heart froze. "What do you mean? You don't... remember?"

Vincent saw the pain in her eyes.

"I remember going to the cavern, to protect Father and the others from myself.... I remember the madness, the rage, the Other provoking me.... I remember losing myself, wanting to die..."

Catherine gasped and fought hard not to cry. *My God, how he must have suffered...*

"But... How did I get out of there?"

Her heart stopped for a second and a cold shiver ran through her.

"You don't...?"

He shook his head quietly, noticing the look of disappointment on her face. Catherine closed her eyes in deep sorrow.

He doesn't remember the most beautiful moment we've ever shared...

She exhaled and put on a brave face.

"When Father sent me a message about how you were, I came immediately and approached the cavern. Father tried to stop me but I just had to go to you, I could hear and feel how much you needed me... I came in and found you in..... the state you were in. I desperately wanted to help you, but didn't know how, though I knew you needed me."

Catherine stopped for a moment to see his reaction but he just kept his focus on her eyes.

"I called your name, but you didn't seem to recognize me and then you went to... strike at me before I called your name again and you.... you must have recognized me then, because you stopped your attack and fell to the ground unconscious.... Vincent, you saved my life..."

Tears were running down her face and she couldn't stop them.

Vincent's expression was changing quickly into the one of horror, while she was speaking. His breath was ragged as he spoke in agony.

"I almost ... *killed* you..."

"No! When you recognized me, you couldn't... Even in your worst state you couldn't hurt me, as I've always told you, you could *never* hurt me, Vincent!"

He closed his eyes in pain and shook his head. "Why? Why did you go down to me?"

"Because without you, there is *nothing* in my life.... Without you, I'd die..."

Vincent's eyes shot up and now it was his turn to weep. He gasped and pulled her to his chest, embracing her tightly allowing the tears to run freely now.

"Catherine...", he whispered with a broken voice. "Without you, I'd beg Hell to take me..."

She sobbed and was clutching to his shirt in pain, imagining such a moment, overwhelmed by the depth of his love. He may have forgotten how she had brought him back to life, but he hadn't forgotten how much he loved her and that was all that mattered to her.

They clung to each other for a while, Vincent cradling her gently, the movement soothing her tired soul until they both calmed down.

He broke the silence with a sigh.

"There is one thing, Catherine..."

She could hear hesitation and frustration in his voice, so she pulled back to face him.

"What is it, Vincent?" she asked gently.

He closed his eyes and bowed his head for a moment, trying to understand something but not finding answers in his head.

"I... I can't feel you any more..."

Catherine was puzzled.

"I think the bond... is broken..."

Her stare was intense. Catherine knew she hasn't blocked her feelings from him, so he had to be telling the truth, but she sobered up quickly and tried to stay positive.

"Vincent, you've been through a horrifying experience.... You're weak and extremely exhausted. Give yourself some time... It will return, you'll see."

She was smiling at him, trying to motivate him to stay positive and not give in to despair. "Besides, all you need to know how and what I feel is to look into my eyes..."

Vincent did look into those green pools and he saw himself and her deep and resonant love for him shining and warming him like the summer sun in his dreams.

He couldn't help himself, his lips stretched into a lovely smile reaching his eyes as he tilted his head briefly.

"Yes..." he said quietly, stroke the back of her hand with his thumb and couldn't suppress his strong desire for kissing her so he did, just softly, his lips on hers like the lightest touch of a feather against hers and yet, causing her smile widely and trembling from joy.

Then he pulled her into his embrace again, her head resting under his chin. When his hands touched her body, he felt a somehow familiar heat rising in him. But at the same time, a strange new-found peace and he wanted to believe her that the bond would return at some point. And then all would be well again.

END