

BAtB Fanfiction: Have Yourself a Beastly Little Christmas

A one-off holiday story, this initially takes place during the events of 'Never Turn Back' - Catherine has just left to meet with her father, after discussing going to Colorado with Vincent.

Vincent settled back down on the sofa with his coffee, trying to wrap his head around what Catherine had just proposed. IF they could really make this happen...and IF he was really almost cured, he might actually allow himself to dream of a real future again. If...

He let his eyes close; smiling as he imagined Catherine bundled up in snow gear for a Colorado winter, all pretty colours and fluffy scarves; like a present just begging to be unwra...

"Vincent! Hey Vincent where are you?"

Vincent shook himself out of the fantasy. Damn, that daydream had potential too. "I'm up here JT, what is it?"

"I need another blood sample." JT appeared and before Vincent had a chance to think, JT had jabbed a needle into him with practised ease.

"Ouch! Geez come on, how much more are you going to take? That's the third time this morning."

"Sorry big guy, but if your mutations continue to reverse this quickly, then I need to be on top of every change. Good, got it. Now, I'm gonna get this started, then I need you to come down and help me move everything out of that side room so I can set it up as a proper lab like we decided."

"Do we have to do that today JT? I only had a couple of hours sleep, I was hoping to..."

"Yes, unless you want to keep tripping over all my equipment in the front room. You're the one who complained it was taking over the place. We've been putting it off for weeks and now with everything going on with you I really need the extra space."

"With the amount of blood you've been taking I doubt I'll have the strength to move a cardboard box," Vincent muttered. JT fixed a withering stare in his direction. "Fine, fine, call me down when you're ready."

Vincent watched his departing friend, wondering if he should tell JT that soon it might not matter where the lab was set up; if he left with Catherine. On the other hand, it could still be months before they could go, if at all. He had to be realistic. And in the meantime, the front room really was starting to resemble an exploded Christmas tree, wires trailing all over the place and blinking multicoloured LEDs seemingly everywhere. Yes, telling JT could wait.

But for now, perhaps he could get back into that daydream...or even better, a nap. Vincent yawned and closed his eyes, disconnected thoughts of Catherine and Colorado and Christmas lights all swirling together in his mind....

Vincent took a step back and cast a critical eye over his handiwork. It was just a small tree, but they lived in a small apartment. Money was scarce, so the decorations, like those around the room, were a combination of homemade items and dollar store buys. Even the fairy lights on the tree and around the window were second-hand. Vincent still found it hard to believe how often people got rid of things that still worked perfectly, as they bought newer, fancier versions.

"So, Beast. What do you think?" Vincent turned to look at the bundle of fur watching him curiously. "Will she like it?" Beast - as Catherine had insisted on naming their new puppy - wagged his tail and jumped up, huge paws reaching for his beloved master. He might be small now, but he was going to be huge...and eventually make an excellent guard dog too. Vincent laughed and gathered the pup into his arms. This had been one of the most welcome consequences of losing his animal DNA; dogs - and other creatures - were no longer afraid of him. In fact it was quite the opposite...they all loved him, almost as if they felt a connection; one of several positive residual effects of his former self.

Beast signified his approval by trying to climb on Vincent's head...no doubt for a better look. Pulling the dog back down to his chest, Vincent reached out and adjusted some tinsel, then smiled. Yes. Yes it all looked pretty good, if he did say so himself. And just in time too, Catherine would be home from work soon. She'd pulled another double shift at the restaurant, but as she kept reminding him, once the holiday crowds died down that extra money wouldn't be so readily available. Vincent had a job with a local tradesman, doing everything from fence repair to washing windows, unfortunately at this time of year the hours were erratic at best. But between them they made enough for necessities, and considered themselves lucky to have what they did. After all, it wasn't like they could apply for jobs that had anything but the most rudimentary background checks; even though JT had done his best to create fake identities for them online, there was only so much he could do.

Just as expected, a ping on Vincent's phone alerted him to the fact that Catherine was indeed home; she was sending the usual text letting him know she'd just parked their old truck in the outdoor lot and was heading inside. It may have seemed excessive, but one of the things they hadn't scrimped on was security. With his years of experience doing the same thing at the warehouse in New York, Vincent had equipped their little apartment in the old house with a top level security system, virtually invisible unless you knew exactly what you were looking for. They may have been living under assumed names in the middle of nowhere, Colorado; but this was the 21st century, and even the smallest places had cameras everywhere.

It would take only one random shot to be seen by the facial recognition programs Muirfield was no doubt running continuously on them both, and their cover would be blown. Vincent was determined that if that day ever came, they would not be caught unaware.

Putting Beast down, he moved to the laptop on the table and switched to the security cameras. Satisfied that it was Catherine walking towards their front door, he moved quickly to turn off everything except the Christmas lights and the TV; tuned quietly to one of those log burning/Christmas music channels. Eager to see her reaction and hoping he'd done the right thing, Vincent moved into the darkness of their small entry hall, turned off the main alarm...and then everything sort of happened all at once.

Hearing Catherine's keys jingle, Beast rushed excitedly in that direction, taking a detour under Vincent's feet. Trying desperately not to step on the pup, Vincent twisted sideways, his socked feet slipping on the freshly washed hardwood floor. He went down hard, knocking several coats off a hanger by the door as he hit the ground with a loud "oomph". Thinking this was all great fun, Beast jumped on Vincent's stomach, barking madly.

"Shhh, Beast, be quiet" whispered Vincent, pushing away the dog as he gingerly got on his feet to try to salvage the situation. Too late. At that same moment, Catherine - having heard the commotion and assuming the worst - opened the door and entered; ready to fight for her man and her dog. Hearing movement to the side, she expertly spun and kicked out, aiming for the perpetrator's head.

Realising what was about to happen, Vincent cried out, "Wait, Catherine, wait, it's me!" He tried to step back but slid on one of the coats on the floor, setting him off balance.

In a split second, she registered that it was indeed Vincent, but not quickly enough to completely pull back her strike. Instead of kicking him in the head, Catherine's boot heel connected squarely with...Vincent's groin. Down he went again, nearly blacking out from the pain, the sound emanating from him not quite like any ever before made by man or beast. This was finally too much for their puppy to take; whimpering almost as loudly as Vincent, he retreated to the corner. Meanwhile Catherine, stood momentarily stunned as she tried to make sense of the disarray, amidst the yowls of confusion coming from her new little Beast on one side, and the howls of agony from her much bigger former beast on the other. So she did what any woman would do in that situation. She began to giggle.

Although his head was clearing and the pain gradually retreating, Vincent was not quite ready to see the funny side of things. Fixing a look of annoyance in the direction of his girlfriend, he struggled to sit up against the wall. "Hey Catherine," he rasped, "a little help here?"

"Oh my God, Vincent. Are you hurt?" As he looked at her in disbelief, Catherine replayed the events in her mind and suddenly realised exactly where her foot had landed. "Oh no...dammit I had no idea I'd hit you in the...oh I'm so sorry." She kneeled beside him, not quite sure if she should hug him, as he was still obviously in pain. She settled for stroking his head. "It's just that I heard something going on and you made me promise to always be on my guard when coming home, and...and I just reacted." Beast, realising things had calmed down, scampered over and nudged Catherine, wanting his head stroked too. Absently, she reached out and did so, as concern for Vincent washed over her face.

"Yeah, no, Catherine you did exactly the right thing." Vincent was starting to feel better, and he was determined to reassure her. "Our future children may disagree, but you reacted just as you should. I'll be fine. It must have sounded crazy in here."

"About that - what WERE you doing?" Catherine continued to stroke his head...and Beast's, in perfect rhythm.

"Oh, I was...well actually Beast got...never mind." Vincent started to laugh. "Catherine, look at you. I'm starting to wonder which one of us is the boyfriend and which one the pet?" He took her hand from his head and kissed it, as she realised what she was doing and started to laugh with him. Beast decided that the laughter meant fun time again, and bounced right into Vincent's lap, eliciting a wince and another groan.

Catherine wasted no time removing the dog, and tenderly placed her hand against Vincent's crotch. "Seriously Vincent, are you really okay?"

"Yeah, yeah. I mean, other than some probable bruises, and the obvious part of my anatomy, I think my male pride is the only thing really hurting."

"I could kiss it better..." Catherine's hand brushed him gently.

"My pride or my...?" he winked, looking down at her hand then back up, gazing deeply into her eyes.

Catherine responded by leaning in for a kiss. "Both. Definitely both," she murmured, hand now cupping the affected area and giving it a very gentle squeeze.

Vincent returned the kiss and groaned, this time out of enjoyment. "Perhaps we'd be more comfortable somewhere other than this floor though," he said against her mouth. "Let me get up and we'll...Oh! No!" Suddenly remembering why this had happened in the first place, Vincent scrambled to his feet and swung a confused Catherine around behind him. "Wait. We can do that later."

"Later? Vincent...I've had a long day, I'm kind of liking the idea of now."

"I know, me too, but this is...well this is a surprise. I have a surprise for you, Catherine." Vincent grinned nervously at her, suddenly worrying again if he'd gone too far. "Here, take off those lethal weapons..." he gestured at her boots while slipping her coat from her shoulders, "...and then close your eyes."

Catherine started to say something, then changed her mind and obeyed, standing quietly as Vincent looked at her, and then hugged her close to his side. She giggled. "Well I'm ready...are we going to stand here forever?"

Vincent squeezed her again, and then gently led her to the living room. "Okay, you can look now."

He watched expectantly as Catherine opened her eyes, gradually taking it all in, gasping as her gaze settled on the tree. Her eyes filled with tears and she caught a sob in the back of her throat. Vincent took a deep breath. "I know that weeks ago we talked about doing this together, but you've been working so hard and taking all those extra shifts...and Christmas is only a couple of days away. I wanted to do this for you." He waited, but she said nothing, tears now streaming down her cheeks as she continued to stare at the tree. "Please Catherine, say something. Please tell me those are happy tears."

Catherine finally turned to face him...and smiled. Vincent let out the breath he'd been holding and smiled back. "You like it then?"

"Vincent, you did all this for me...for us? It's beautiful. Absolutely beautiful. You're right...I've been working so much I nearly forgot how quickly it was coming, but you knew I wanted our first Christmas here to be special, you..." her face crumpled as she started to cry again.

Vincent drew her into his arms. "I was so worried you'd be angry with me, not waiting until we could do it together, especially this first one."

"Never. I could never be angry with you Vincent, not for doing things like this." She kissed him, and the kiss deepened as the fire they'd started earlier in the hallway began to reignite. Despite the dull ache he still had, Vincent felt himself start to harden, and he drew her closer, making sure she could feel how much he wanted her. Catherine moaned and arched against him...then stopped and giggled as a furball started to worm his way between their legs, feeling left out and yapping quite vocally about it. Vincent sighed in frustration, but couldn't help smiling at the newest member of their little family.

Catherine leaned down and picked Beast up. "So, my little monster, you knew about this too? Seems like both my boys are good at keeping secrets."

"Oh, he was a tremendous help. Kept running off with those tinsel snowflakes, and you can see I had to trail the lighting wires up along the wall there. Doesn't look great, but better than him chewing on them. Hopefully he'll leave the rest of it alone." Vincent glanced dubiously at the pup. "And speaking of leaving things alone, time for you to run along and let us get back to what we started in the hallway." He leaned over and took Beast from Catherine's arms, giving him a solemn look, and then setting him down with a pat.

Catherine shook her head. "There's no way Vincent, he's all excited right now. Perhaps we need to put him in..." Vincent placed his finger over Catherine's lips.

"Shhh. He'll be good, we've had a little chat you see, and he knows when to leave us alone for a while."

Catherine laughed. "A little chat? Good try Vincent, but he's a puppy, not a ..." her voice trailed off in amazement as she watched Beast scamper happily into his basket in the corner of the room, snuggling up against one of his toys, taking one more lazy look at them before closing his eyes to sleep. "Okay, how did you do that? It's that connection thing again isn't it? Seriously Vincent, that's almost freaky."

Vincent leaned in for another kiss. He didn't want to talk about the dog anymore; his focus was definitely on other things. Like his gorgeous, sexy girlfriend, currently rubbing her body against his. "Alright, no we didn't really have a 'chat', but yeah he does seem to understand me, sometimes anyway...maybe you're right about that connection. But enough about him." He turned Catherine's head back towards him; she was still staring incredulously at Beast. "I'd rather talk about our connection...actually I'd rather not talk at all..." he grinned wickedly, "...let's just connect."

Catherine grinned back at him, walking him backwards until he was up against the sofa. Trailing her hands along his body, she pushed him down. Vincent willingly sat, gasping in anticipation as she knelt before him and started to unbutton his fly. "I think I promised to kiss something better."

Vincent growled gently as Catherine reached inside his black briefs and released his raging erection. He removed his shirt and lifted his hips slightly to help as she pulled off his jeans and briefs, then growled again, loudly this time, as she positioned herself between his legs, taking him gently into her soft mouth. A tease of things to come. She drew back immediately and their eyes met, heat simmering between them. Vincent felt as if he was ready to explode and yet she'd barely touched him. His breath started coming faster, and he moved his hands to her head, ready to urge her on, then hesitated and pulled them back. For the moment this was Catherine's show, and he wanted to let her to take the lead. And take it she did...with a mischievous smile she leaned forward again, and oh so gently placed a feathery kiss upon the tip. Vincent moaned. "How was that?" she asked. "Feeling better yet?"

"Mmmm..." was all Vincent was able to get out at first. "Mmmm, yeah. But I would be even better if you could do that again." Catherine complied, leaving her lips on him just the tiniest bit longer this time, and eliciting another moan. She leaned back and looked at him expectantly, eyes twinkling. Vincent nodded. "Better, mmmm, but I think I need a little more." She obligingly kissed his manhood again, this time ending with the slightest swipe of her tongue. Vincent let out a growl and bucked his hips; he was so hard it almost hurt. She was driving him crazy. Still locked in her gaze, Vincent couldn't help himself; he started to beg. "Oh God Catherine, more, please...please." She looked at him, smiling, but not moving. "Again." he said. She raised her eyebrows...damn this woman loved to tease him, almost as much as he loved being teased. He groaned, barely able to get the words out. "Please, again oh dammit please."

Finally, finally she relented...and this time didn't stop. Maybe she took pity on him, or maybe couldn't wait anymore herself...Vincent just knew that her warm, luscious lips were sliding over him, her tongue lightly tickling as she moved up and down his length. His hips were rotating, gently thrusting of their own accord, and his bliss was increased further as Catherine gently massaged his heavy sac. A long, low moan escaped him; somewhere in his haze of euphoria Vincent knew if he didn't stop her now there'd be no chance. With a groan of resignation, he leaned forward and placed his hands on her head, trying to gently move her off of him. "Catherine...mmm...don't want to stop you...but...oh damn...I want, I want to last...I want to come inside you."

Catherine was having none of it. Not missing a beat, she took his hands from her head and laced their fingers together at his sides. She smiled provocatively and spoke, her mouth still against him. "And you will...but not now. I haven't finished kissing you better yet...and after all, it's not like enjoying yourself more than once is ever a problem for you, is it?" Vincent growled at her words, the breath and vibration of her throaty voice against his heavy shaft only making him hotter, leaving him unable to do anything but lay back to enjoy every last sensation. He squeezed her hands and she moved faster, keeping up with his rhythm, applying gentle pressure where she knew he liked it best, timing everything perfectly as Vincent reached the edge and - calling out her name - tipped over it. As he released himself almost desperately into the warm cavern of her mouth he thought - as he always did - that life simply couldn't get any better.

As he came back down to earth, he had another thought, and started to chuckle. Catherine looked up at him questioningly. "What's so funny?"

"Nothing." Vincent started to pull her up slowly back up his body. "I was just thinking that getting kicked in the crotch almost sounds appealing now, if this is how you're going to look after me." He turned and sat her next to him on the sofa. "But now, it's my turn to look after you." He leaned in and kissed her, hard, as together they removed her clothes. Catherine moaned as Vincent drew back and cupped her breasts, running his thumbs over her nipples, watching in amazement at how quickly they pebbled beneath his touch. He would never tire of seeing her body react to him, never. Leaning down, he took one of the hard nubs into his mouth and suckled eagerly, then did the same to the other one.

"See, I told you."

"Huh?" It took Vincent a moment to register that she'd spoken. He looked up, then followed Catherine's eager gaze back down to his shaft, rock hard and throbbing for her once again. She was right, this was another welcome 'leftover' from his former self; they never ever had to wait for him to be ready...not so far, anyway. "Oh that," he answered with a grin, letting his hand wander down between her legs. As usual, she was already swollen and wet, more than ready for him. "You see something you want?"

Catherine mewled impatiently and arched into him, trying to move into the position she wanted. Vincent moved with her, carefully allowing just the tip of his eager manhood to enter, then stilled. Catherine giggled as she squirmed beneath him, but Vincent's strong arms held her down just enough to prevent her from achieving her goal. "All in good time my love," he murmured, "all in good time." Catherine stopped moving, and their eyes met, each trying to wait the other out. She broke first, turning her head and giggling. It didn't help that Vincent had been gently tickling her side.

"You cheat!" she exclaimed. "Now you have to give me what I want."

"Mmmm, not quite yet. There's something else I need first." Vincent leaned in for a quick kiss, and then pulled himself out. Catherine pretended to pout, but that didn't last long. Vincent lifted her off the sofa and laid her down on the thick, plush rug they'd splurged on as a housewarming gift to themselves - both knowing it was for precisely this purpose. He settled between her legs and trailed kisses down her body, as she opened herself to him. When his kisses reached her molten core, his lips and tongue caressed, lapped, suckled, while his fingers probed, stroked, fondled. Vincent felt waves of happiness rolling over him as he listened to Catherine's cries of ecstasy, felt her body shudder and tremble against him. He was in ecstasy himself, enjoying giving just as much as she was enjoying receiving. His skilful ministrations brought her to climax once, twice, three times; each orgasm rolling into the next, and each one bringing Vincent himself a little closer to losing control. When he could take it no longer he sat up, and with a long, deep growl he sank his raging, quivering erection completely inside her, in one quick thrust. They gasped at the same time, Catherine feeling his fullness, Vincent feeling her inner walls contracting and pulsing around him, pulling him ever closer to that edge.

Both realising that they no longer wanted to rush, they moved together slowly, silently, until suddenly Vincent stopped. Buried deep within her, he gazed down at Catherine as a surge of love and emotion hit him, almost bringing him to tears. He could see the same love in her eyes, reflected back at him.

"God Catherine, you are so beautiful. The lights...the lights from the tree. They're making you twinkle and glow and look all magical...and...and I love you...and I probably sound really stupid right now."

Catherine smiled, reaching up and running a finger along his scar. "No you don't. That's one of the nicest things you've ever said to me." Now she was crying too. "I love you too Vincent. And it IS magical, not just the lights, but what we have...okay, no picket fence but we've got our home, our dog, and our first real Christmas together."

Vincent nodded, then closed his eyes and leaned into her hand for a moment, that one familiar gesture signifying how far they'd come. He took a breath, then opened his eyes again and grinned, starting to move once more inside her. "You're right. But you're still twinkling."

"So are you," Catherine laughed and pulled him down, circling her hips to meet his. They drew closer and Vincent took her mouth in a kiss, crushing their lips together as his tongue met hers in a frantic dance. He thrust inside her repeatedly, faster now, deeper now, as his lust rose and Catherine moaned beneath him. She matched his strokes without missing a beat, as Vincent ramped up the tempo even further. He felt the familiar tightness rushing through him and knew he was close, could tell she was too, and buried his face in her neck, nipping gently at her shoulder and revelling in her gasps of delight. One more thrust, another, and he was gone. They were gone. Vincent roared with pleasure as they climaxed together, shuddering for long moments as they gradually recovered and drifted into sleep...still on the rug, still joined, still twinkling.

Of course, it didn't last long. Only a few minutes later, Vincent was awakened by something wet and sharp, attacking him. At least that's how it felt. He sat up with a yell, waking Catherine and realising his would-be attacker was actually a rambunctious puppy using a wet tongue and sharp claws against his bare skin. Beast barked at him, thrilled he now had his master's attention, and started running frantic circles through the living room and adjoining kitchen. Vincent sighed, and reached for his jeans.

"He wants to go out," Catherine said helpfully from the floor.

"I know, I know. I'm going." Vincent yawned as he did up his fly, then stepped into the hallway and retrieved his winter coat from where it still lay on the floor, putting it on and not even bothering with a shirt. "Come on, you," he said to the now frantic pup, as he slipped on a pair of old boots kept in the kitchen. After disarming the alarm, he opened the door leading onto their tiny back deck, which in turn led to their little yard. Although it was an added security risk, Vincent had agreed with Catherine that the benefits of having the outside space were well worth it...and now that they had Beast it had become even more convenient.

As he stepped outside, Beast rushed past, yipping excitedly. "Shhhhhh," said Vincent. "You know the drill. Quiet out here. Especially at night. Don't want the neighbours getting annoyed with you...or us." Beast looked up at him, then took a flying leap from the deck into a snow bank before trotting off to do his business - but he did stop barking.

Vincent stood on the deck, peering into the darkness as he tried to keep an eye on his dog. Suddenly his limited night-vision kicked in, and he saw Beast sniffing around a tree. The night-vision was nothing like what he'd had before, but it was there...along with several other slightly heightened senses. After initially losing all of his animal abilities, a few - like these senses - had kicked back in, albeit at a much lesser strength than before. After testing him to death, JT had come to the conclusion that what Vincent was now experiencing were actually latent abilities that all humans had, but were buried deep in our DNA. These abilities had been awakened by the animal DNA, and once that was gone they simply needed to find new pathways to work on their own. Whatever the reason, Vincent didn't mind. They came in useful with the dog and for security, and certainly didn't hurt his love life with Catherine. Speaking of the dog...

"Beast!" Vincent whispered loudly, "If you're finished, get back here. Otherwise, hurry up. It's cold." Taking a last look at the very interesting tree trunk, Beast trotted obediently back over to the deck, then slid down several times as he attempted to climb the rather tall, icy steps. Stifling a laugh, Vincent picked him up and carried him inside, wiping dry his paws with a towel, and setting him down, where he promptly scampered off into the other room and, from the sounds of it, bounced into Catherine's lap.

After taking off his coat and resetting the alarm, Vincent poured a couple of glasses of wine and took them into the living room. He handed one to Catherine - now dressed in cozy flannel pyjamas - and sat down next to her on the sofa. She was gazing at the Christmas tree with Beast in her lap, looking entirely content.

"Where did you get it?" Catherine took a sip of her wine, and snuggled into his still bare chest.

"Ned O'Leary - you know, the farmer we got Beast from. He runs that tree lot, and when I was up there for work on his fences last week, I did a favour for him, helped him fix a generator. He wanted to pay me and I said no, but he insisted...so we finally agreed I would take a small tree instead. Oh, and he threw in the lights, and a gallon of his apple cider. Anyway, I picked it up today before dropping off the truck for you at the restaurant."

"Ooooh, so you've been planning this for ages then?"

Vincent smiled. "See, you think when you're at work I've just been sitting here watching TV...but I've been spending my evenings cutting out foil snowflakes, and trying to follow completely impossible online directions for making a decent star or angel to top it. As you can see, I gave up on that, perhaps we can go out tomorrow and find a nice one together." He laughed, "If nothing else Catherine, I've learned that arts and crafts are NOT my thing."

"Oh, yes they are," she murmured, still looking at the tree.

"Huh? Catherine what are you talking about?"

She turned to him excitedly, eyes glistening. "I know EXACTLY what should go on top of that tree. Hang on." Plopping Beast into Vincent's lap, Catherine got up and practically ran into the bedroom, where he could hear her moving around the few storage boxes they'd brought with them to Colorado. Just as he was about to ask if she wanted help, she returned and sat back down, clutching a folder.

"You remember when you got me that flash mob - and they gave me the paper heart, with just 'V.' on it?" Vincent nodded. "Well, I kept it." Catherine opened the folder and carefully, lovingly took out the pink heart.

Vincent's own heart leapt in his chest. "You actually kept it? But you were mad at me...that's when I was messing everything up between us..."

"Well you didn't mess this up, and I know you actually wrote it because it matched all...never mind..." Catherine hurriedly closed the folder and looked the other way, taking a huge gulp of her wine. Vincent reached over and gently took the folder from her. He opened it, and under the pink heart he saw an envelope. He looked at Catherine, and she shrugged, smiling resignedly. Inside the envelope were notes. From him. Most of them just said "Roof. V."

"You kept these too? All of them? Why?"

"Because they were from you."

Vincent tried to respond, but was too choked up. No words were needed, anyway. He leaned over and clutched Catherine to his chest, and for a moment they just held each other...until the spell was broken by a whimper.

"Um, we're squishing Beast" said Catherine, both of them laughing as the puppy wriggled up between them. "So Vincent, what do you think? The heart on the top of our tree?"

"Yes...but it just needs one slight adjustment. Can you hand me that pen?" She did, and then looked worried as he moved to write on the heart. Vincent smiled. "Trust me." Under the 'V.' he carefully added '+ C.'

"There. Now it's perfect. Want to put it up?"

"I can't reach."

"That's what you have me for. Come here. Sorry Beast, you'll have to sit by yourself for a moment." Catherine stood, and Vincent lifted her up so she could carefully place their heart on the top of the tree. She slid back down his body, and Vincent kissed her gently, both of them caught off guard by the emotion of the moment.

"Our first Christmas tradition," she said, taking Vincent by the hand and sitting them back down on the sofa, Beast happily snuggling against them both.

"The first of many," he replied, as they looked up at their tree, lights twinkling over their perfect little family.

The End

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