

BAtB Fanfiction – Taken

"Vincent!" Catherine cried out running towards him as the net hauled him into the air. She reached out her hand as Vincent stretched out his. He managed to grasp her hand, the anguish on his face heart wrenching. As she touched him he changed, unable to control his morph back into human form, unable to escape from the net that was taking him away from her, his Catherine. She felt helpless as he stared at her in torment. She couldn't fire her gun for fear of hitting him, there wasn't enough time to do anything other than hold on to his hand tightly with all her might, willing him to come back to her. Her tears threatened to explode, only to streak away with the wind howling from the helicopter blades. The look of devastation, loss and finality on Vincent's beloved face tore at her soul. As at first their hands then their fingers slipped apart, Vincent was lost to her touch. All Catherine could do was stare into the bright light and fight the wind to stand upright as Vincent was taken away from her.



As the helicopter soared higher and out of sight, Catherine stumbled back then collapsed; wracking sobs threatening to overwhelm her.

"It's my fault, oh my god, it's my fault" she cried. "Why didn't I trust him? Why didn't I trust his instincts? He told me to stay away from Gabe. Why did I allow Gabe to talk him into taking that god-damn pill? Why did I want normal? Oh God, please give me the chance to never doubt Vincent again."

Catherine, shaking uncontrollably, continued to cry as she felt two pairs of hands lift her to her feet. She looked into the faces of JT and Tess who had arrived in time to see the helicopter fly away with Vincent trapped in the net.

JT stared at Cat, stunned. When he saw her anguish all thought of blame went flying out of his head. As much as he'd rallied against her to Vincent in the beginning, he also acknowledged and couldn't fault her fierce protectiveness of him time and time again.

"Cat we will find him. We've done it before; we'll do it again," JT uttered as he stared at Catherine in concern. "You're no good to Vincent like this, although believe me, I know how you feel. So let's rescue him. We'll find a way. They could have killed him but they took him instead, which means whoever that was, Muirfield or whatever, they want him alive so there's a good chance he'll be ok for a while yet..." Catherine stared at JT in hope as he continued.

"And why aren't you dead? They usually don't leave witnesses. Muirfield don't just NOT kill people. There's something else going on here..."

"JT, I really don't know. What are we going to do?" Cat asked, eyes brimming with tears.

"I don't know yet but Tess found something on your Dad's iPad that might give us some clues. Plus it was a helicopter so they can't be going far. Helicopters can't fly that long with the limited fuel they have on board."

"Cat, he's right. I don't think it was Muirfield either. Give me a minute and I'll explain," Tess said as she looked at JT, not knowing how she was going to tell Cat the news of what they'd discovered or suspected.

"What happened?" Tess asked.

Catherine stared at them both in anguish.

"I managed to get the vaccine into him JT, it changed him back but it was too late. Gabe was stronger, he threw me across the courtyard and I still don't understand why I'm not really injured; only stunned..."

"Adrenaline and luck Cat," JT responded.

"I heard gunfire and saw that Gabe was down. They must have shot him. They took Vincent. I managed to grab his hand and we held on for as long as we could. He changed again, to human, as soon as I touched him JT so he couldn't fight his way out of that net. It's my fault. The spotlight from the helicopter was so bright. Whoever was in that helicopter must have seen me so..."

"Wait, Gabe was shot?" JT interrupted.

"I think so. I don't know. I didn't stop to look." Catherine responded.

They ran to where Gabe lay. JT checked his pulse.

"OK he's not dead but his pulse is weak." He turned Gabe over; saw the bullet holes in his chest.

"With this amount of lead in him he should be dead. He is in beast mode so his healing powers are really unpredictable. I don't like it. How did you get hold of the vaccine?"

"There is a doctor here who was ready to ...you know...I got the flu vaccine off him at gunpoint, injected it into Vincent. I wasn't going to let him die for me and Gabe would have killed him. He was so strong."

"Ok let's figure this out first. Hate to say it but Gabe would be very handy in tracking down Vincent. We need him."

"But he wanted to kill Vincent so even if we can save him, make him normal for any length of time he'll only..."

"I know it's a risk. But Cat there aren't many options. I think I know what to do to keep him under control for a while. Where did you say that doctor was?"

Cat lead them to the makeshift hospital room where they found Gabe's doctor.

The doctor stared at all three of them as they entered, decided that fighting or arguing with them wasn't worth his life. He was first and foremost a doctor.

"Are you still keen on saving Lowen?" Cat looked at him.

"He's alive?" the doctor asked, surprise on his face.

"Just," JT responded. "Come-on, let's do what we can to save him. Tess, you go with Cat. Tell her what we found out today. And Cat, we will find Vincent. Nothing can keep him away from you for too long anyway because that would really beast him out. As much as I wanted to keep you two apart, without you it's no life for him anyway. Talk about complicated. It's like Romeo and Juliet already....arrghh, but hopefully without the death part at the end!"

He turned back to the doctor and the two discussed Gabe's options in serious tones.

"What is it you need to tell me Tess?"

Cat, sensing Tess' hesitation said "And don't soften any blows. Just tell me whatever it is."

"I've put the clues together and JT agrees with me. You're not going to like it Cat but you've gotta know."

"Know what?"

"Christ there's no easy way here. Cat, Thomas isn't your father"

"What? What are you talking about?"

"I called Heather to give her a cover story for your absence and to find out how your Dad was. She was really weird on the phone and almost hysterical so I pushed her and found out that they ran your blood against his. When they didn't match they ran a DNA test thinking the results were off. There were not enough genetic markers or something – god I'm starting to sound like JT. Anyway turns out you two aren't a match. Cat, Thomas is not your father. Heather is freaked out. I managed to calm her

down but told her I'd bring you in when I could."

Cat looked at Tess in total shock and confusion.

"Cat there was a picture of a man on Thomas' iPad, some dude that was flagged by Homeland Security as having just entered the country again. I recognised him. He was the FBI guy in a suit that came to see Joe to sign transfer papers to collect the Bustamante shooter who came after Gabe. I think that they found out about someone with corrupted DNA after doing an autopsy on his body. So they went after whoever it was that killed him. They obviously tied it to Gabe so they must have wanted him, seeing that they turned up at this castle in the country. Just how rich is he anyway?"

Tess looked around the lavish estate. Even in the dark it was impressive.

"Anyway after JT did some quick hacking it turns out the FBI dude knew your mother somehow. I saw a photo of them together or something...For your Dad to get so spooked to call you to talk and for someone to want him dead, there can only be one reason that I can think of. He knew he wasn't your Dad and maybe wanted to come clean. I'm thinking that FBI dude is somehow connected and if he was in that helicopter and you're still alive maybe he's your real..."

"Don't say it Tess. It's a wild guess. There could be any number of reasons the tests came back they way they did. Maybe they got it wrong."

"Maybe Cat, but really? I don't think so. We think there's more going on here. Anyway if he is your..." she couldn't say the word "and he saw you with Vincent, saw that you were connected somehow, maybe he won't be as bad as you think. You've got to have hope Cat and besides, like JT said, it's not like Muirfield to leave witnesses alive."

JT came back to Cat and Tess moments later.

"OK we've come up with a plan to resurrect Gabe. Basically I'm going to..."

Cat and Tess stared at JT as if he were from another planet.

"Listen Science Boy, as impressed as we undoubtedly will be at your choice of big words..." Tess stopped him.

"Ok, ok, I get it. I haven't got time to give you a lesson in genetic manipulation and DNA sequencing anyway..." JT agreed.

"You think?" Tess responded.

"We need to act fast anyway." JT said.

"Yep time the Scooby Gang kicked into action." Tess rolled her eyes "What do you need us to do?"

"Well for starters we have to get Gabe down here so that we can use him to track down Vincent..."

"Ok Dr. Forbenstein." Tess responded. "Bringing back a nearly dead beast to use as a tracker to find Vincent, can't say I saw that coming. But I get it. Off topic slightly, where's Tyler? I'm surprised we haven't heard from her since..."

Tess saw Cat's questioning look in her direction. "Let's just say I had to save geek squad here from the wiles of the vengeful siren of deceit who used her geeky science charm to knock him out and handcuff him to the heater."

"Yeah handcuffs you shot off. You could have hit me. Cat, she didn't even check for trajectories or... I still can't believe you did that Tess." JT responded.

"Hey you're still in one piece aren't you?"

Catherine understood what she, they, were trying to do. Bring some normality and humour into this situation but she wasn't buying it. All she could think of was Vincent, obsessing over where they had taken him, what they were going to do to him. She shuddered. She'd made a personal vow after realising who he was and what he'd done to protect her over the years, that she would be damned if she ever let anything hurt him.

She couldn't help but feel that she'd failed him. The memory of seeing him being taken away still so fresh in her mind that it made her soul ache.

She was usually so strong, so capable, so in control, but now she was on the verge of falling apart at the seams.

"JT, Tess, we have to find him..." she whispered. "Whatever it takes."

They both saw the anguish on her face.

"All those years I looked out for him, watching the shadow of the man he'd become and in the last 12 months Catherine, because of you, he's been happier than I've ever seen him. That dude is so crazy about you it will keep him going. He knows how you feel. We'll find him. Now, let's go get Gabe."

"Yep operate on a Zombie beast. Oh boy can't wait for that." Tess quipped.

Moments later they carried Gabe in and placed him on the table. His vitals were still faint but slightly stronger than before.

"OK still not dead." JT remarked. "We better get to work. I don't want to meet beast Gabe any time soon."

"No, you really don't want to JT. Gabe is in for a nasty surprise when he wakes up. Remember he doesn't recall what happens when he is in beast mode, not like Vincent." Catherine remarked.

Whilst JT set about doing the Dr Forbenstein stuff, Tess and Cat stood back and watched him work.

"Yeah I noticed that," Tess said. "V is obviously different..."

"He certainly is." JT glanced their way.

"Yes." Catherine explained, "Vincent is the only one who has shown control; did even back then. Like I've told you before Tess, Vincent has only ever killed bad people. He has never gone on the killing rampages like the others did even in Afghanistan. He saved my Mom then too. He knew enough to lay low, come back and live under the radar."

"Why is that do you think Cat?" Tess asked.

"I have a theory about that." Catherine responded. "It's because he was so full of humanity and compassion to start with. Remember at the hospital Tess, when the nurses said he was different even as a doctor before he enlisted and how he was highly respected? I bet not many soldiers start off as ER doctors..."

"You're right." JT piped in again. "Then along comes you Catherine, giving him a reason to do something other than mope and you turn his life upside down – hey in a good way." he finished as he saw Cat's hurt expression.

"He will do anything to keep you safe. You, your friends and family. Plus I've seen you bring him back from his beastie state more than once. Tess you gotta see it to believe it. Not even I'm that brave when he's like that. Cat actually holds his face in her hands, talks him down and it always works. Honestly it's like she's a...a Beast Whisperer!"

"You didn't just say that JT. A Beast Whisperer? Could this get any weirder?" Tess rolled her eyes.

They noticed Gabe stirring on the table and all stepped back, tranq guns and firearms trained on him intently just in case.

JT crossed himself. "OK here goes."

Gabe slowly changed, his features morphing back to normal. At the same time the bullet holes in his chest that had started to mend, but with JT's first jab the process accelerated. It seemed beasting out had some advantages when it came to healing what should have been, fatal gunshot wounds.

Within moments he was back to his human state; disoriented, he sat up, took in his surroundings; simply stared at the remnants of the bullet holes in his chest and frowned.

"Ok. That's new. What happened? Should I be dead right now?"

"You don't wanna know Lowen," JT threatened. "I don't much like or trust you about now so one wrong move and those bullet holes will be real with no hope of resurrection."

"How come I'm not a beast? Tyler told me there was no coming back this time."

"She didn't have Boy Wonder here on her side Lowen." Tess interrupted. "Gotta hand it to you JT, you're the smartest geek I know."

"I think that was a compliment," JT shook his head. "Yeah about that. Before knocking me out and handcuffing me to the heater your evil girlfriend and I talked. Actually quite civilised for a few minutes. Compared DNA sequencing notes. I put some pieces together, came up with a short term solution. It shouldn't degenerate your system further like the pills have been doing. The only reason I did this was not to save your ass Lowen but for you to help us..."

"So if she escaped, where is Tyler now?" Gabe interrupted.

"I don't know nor care. Haven't seen or heard and I don't particularly want to."

Gabe stared hard at Catherine, sensing her turmoil; seeing the injuries on her face, the bruises, scrapes; the fact that she hung back from him.

"Did I do that?"

She nodded tightly, pain evident in her eyes.

"Chandler I am sorry. It wasn't meant to happen like this. I wish there had been another way..."

"But it did Gabe. You would have killed Vincent. Part of me is sorry you're not dead."

"Cat's not your number one fan right now Zombie Boy and even though I get JT's reasons for keeping you alive I can't say I'm happy to see you alive either. So one wrong move and I will happily take care of it. I'm thinking even beasts couldn't survive a bullet right between the eyes. Well, maybe lots of bullets," Tess said in deadly seriousness.

"So why am I alive? Where's Vincent?"

"Taken."

"Taken, what by Muirfield?"

"We don't know. Maybe, maybe not. A helicopter turned up, whoever was in it saw your fight presumably and riddled you with bullets before taking Vincent alive. They flew him away trapped in a net." Tess explained.

"They took him," Cat rasped out. "They had to have been after you to start with. If anything happens to him because of you..." Cat's voice broke with bitter emotion.

"Why do you need me? I don't know who they are or where they've taken him and why don't you think it was Muirfield?"

"Not sure. It doesn't smell the same. For starters they killed you and took Vincent alive. Why not just put you both down? Then there's the fact that they had Cat in their sights and let her live." Tess said.

"I agree. Not Muirfield's usual style at all."

"So Zombie Boy, have you seen this dude before?" She showed Gabe the image on Cat's Dad's iPad.

Gabe blanched. "Christ..."

"What, you know him?" JT jumped all over Gabe.

"Only by reputation. For want of a better phrase he is known to be a cold savage assassin, 'Beast Hunter' if you will..."

"Seriously, you're gonna go with that? 'A Beast Hunter?' " JT threw in sarcastically.

"Ok you guys have all watched too much Buffy the Vampire Slayer," Tess bit out in disbelief. "Zombie Boys, beasts, 'Beast Hunters', evil corporations. Could this get any more like an episode of Supernatural?"

"But that doesn't make sense Gabe. You said that until you discovered there was another beast, namely Vincent, only a few months ago you thought you were the only one..."

"...the only one left after this hunter had eradicated other survivors of Muirfield's experiments yeah." Gabe interrupted.

"What? There were others? How did we miss that?" JT said stunned.

"This guy's reputation stemmed from immediately after the ordered eradication of the platoon members in 2002. He then killed any survivors, with let's just say, extreme prejudice. He believes it was his mission to put them out of their misery. I can tell you one thing though, he's not Muirfield. They are in his sights as well but he was taking care of renegade beasts first, because of the danger they represented. I thought I was the last for years. I had no cause to suspect he'd come back into town."

"So this must have gone to hell in a hand basket when you killed the Bustamante shooter and left your DNA all over his body. They connected it to you and showed up here..." JT guessed.

"So Vincent was caught in the crossfire? They really weren't after him, they were after you..." Cat choked out.

"And when they realised there was another beast they decided to grab him and shoot Gabe? I still don't get that." JT pondered.

"Not enough room in the net for two beasts and maybe Vincent was the great unknown? A more valuable captive?" Tess suggested.

Catherine glared at Tess.

"Hey you know I don't mean it like that when it comes to V but he was a beast at that moment wasn't he?"

"Yes," Cat responded.

"Wait. I thought you said the pills made him normal, that he couldn't beast out..." Gabe interjected.

"Our Catherine took some good advice and injected Vincent with the flu vaccine which kicked his immune system into overdrive, effectively allowing his zoo DNA to reassert control." JT explained.

"What?" Gabe looked at Cat almost in reverence. "You'd prefer? You would accept?"

"An alive Vincent who turns into a beast sometimes over a dead human Vincent? Absolutely. I accept all of him. You crave normal Gabe. I don't any-more. I love Vincent the way he is. If anything happens to him because of you I, I'll..."

"Yes and I'll be right there with her Lowen. What a piece of work you turned out to be," Tess interrupted.

"Chandler, Vincent would have done the same in the circumstances, to be with you." Gabe addressed Catherine, ignoring Tess' jibe.

"You know what Lowen. I can answer that for Cat. No he wouldn't. I've seen him in action and heard enough from Cat to know that V has more compassion and ethics in his little finger than you do in your entire body. His humanity is intact and then some. Can't say the same for yours..."

Cat looked at Tess stunned; grateful for her support and friendship.

"So what now?" Gabe asked. "I probably don't have much time."

"Oh I've synthesized enough of this new stuff to keep you going relatively safely for a while yet Lowen so when this is all over and assuming you're not dead, you and I are going to have a long talk about collaboration and co-operation for a common cause. So play nice. It's either that or..."

"Kill you for good..." Tess interrupted.

"So again, what now?" Gabe threw Tess a harried look.

"We need to figure out where they could have taken Vincent so anything you've got on 'Beast Hunter' will be a great place to start and knowing you Lowen you have information in spades."

"I have a backup at The Loft that even you shouldn't have been able to destroy Forbes..."

"Good, so let's go."

"I am never going to get used to that, 'Beast Hunter'..." Tess muttered as they headed out.

"We may find Tyler at the same time." Gabe mused. "Would Vincent really have killed her?"

"No Lowen, I think you know the answer to that already." JT responded. "You know, with his humanity and all that."

"If it's any consolation Catherine," Gabe looked at her with sad eyes. "I never intended to harm you either."

"Tell that to your beast Lowen. He tried to kill her and would have, had it not been for Vincent." Tess spat.

"I wasn't myself at the time. I don't remember any of it. Seems I should have listened to Vincent when he said we ought to work together to find a cure. But I was desperate..."

"Yes and psychotic. You're a lucky man. Keep it that way..." JT responded as they all approached Catherine's car.

Tess looked at Cat and said, "Better let JT drive so we can watch Lowen, with our guns drawn."

Catherine nodded and whilst JT drove, Cat & Tess kept their eyes and weapons on Gabe the entire trip to his loft.

After parking they got out of the car. Gabe stiffened when his feet hit the pavement. Frozen, his senses reaching out, he smelled Tyler's blood. The smell of death.

"What is it Gabe?" Cat asked.

"Over there" he pointed.

They approached the shadows of Gabe's loft entrance to discover Tyler's body lying still and cold.

All eyes collided with Gabe, weapons drawn, expecting him to transform on the spot. His look of anguish was real as he fell to his knees beside her, checking against hope for a pulse. Found none.

He didn't transform.

"Wow that stuff is really working JT." Tess whispered to him. "Thank God. No beast."

"It wasn't me," JT immediately defended himself to Gabe. "She was definitely alive when she took me out and left me to rot..."

"I know. It was him. Tyler knew of him too." Gabe responded.

"But why go after her? It's not like she was a bea..." JT looked at Gabe closely. "She wasn't was she?"

"No, not that, but she was also one of Muirfield's experiments and she was connected to me. He would have been tying up loose ends."

"Tyler was a Muirfield experiment?" Cat stared at Gabe.

"Yes, they did some pretty nasty things to her..."

"Bastards," Tess swore. "Someone really needs to send them all to hell where they belong. I volunteer to do the job."

Gabe looked both exhausted and defeated.

"When this is over JT, Tess, I may just beg for that bullet after all." Gabe said sadly as he picked up Tyler's body, taking it inside and placing her gently on his bed.

Catherine considered what she'd learned about mystery man. He ruthlessly took out Tyler; tried to kill Gabe; according to Gabe was a 'Beast Hunter' who took Vincent alive and let her live. They were connected she was sure of it. Maybe Tess' idea that he was her father could be true. She shook her head trying to make sense of the mess their lives had become.

When Gabe entered the room and looked around at the chaos he stared at JT.

"Did you do all this?" he asked.

"Well, um, no, actually. I destroyed your equipment and any obvious data but the rest, not me."

"He must have been looking for me, probably ran into Tyler outside and killed her."

JT looked around the ransacked loft. "So does that mean your data is...?"

"No. It's well hidden. They wouldn't have found it."

Gabe went over to the heating control panel, slid his fingers behind it and in doing so revealed a panel on the wall opposite. He went over, keyed in a code to unlock a false wall that housed a safe and all manner of equipment.

He swept the table clean with his arm, placed the contents from the hidden space on the table and began to set up a well equipped data surveillance station that hooked up to the laptop with secure links to numerous secret data bases.

"Wow, what money and power can buy..." JT whistled.

"What are you looking for?" Gabe asked.

"I don't know yet but I will know it when I see it. Start by bringing up everything you have on beastie hunter dude. Does he have a name? Referring to him as 'Beast Hunter' is seriously grinding my gears." JT responded.

"No I haven't been able to find out his name. He's well connected, well funded and very good at staying anonymous."

"Helpful, not," JT responded.

Tess' cell buzzed. "Oh Christ Cat, it's Heather. What do I tell her, what do you want to do?"

Catherine shrugged her shoulders as she stared at Tess.

Tess answered. "Hi Heather. How's your Dad?"

"Coming out of it Tess. Where's Cat?"

"Here with me and safe for now."

"Does she know about Dad?"

"Yes she knows..."

"And?"

"She's dealing with it all as best she can. There's a whole lot of ...What was that? OK I'll tell her. Hang on."

"Cat?" she held the phone out to her partner. "Your Dad is coming round. I think you need to talk to him. See what he knows. That image of, you know who, was on his iPad after all..."

Catherine nodded mutely, grabbed the phone from Tess.

"Hi Heath," she said tiredly.

"Oh Cat I'm so sorry. This is such a shock."

"Heath are you sure about the DNA?"

Heather hesitated, "Yes it's positive. They ran the test twice to make sure."

"So what's happening now?" Cat asked

"Well they took my blood too and it was a match so..." Heather's voice broke.

"I know. He's your Dad, just not mine." Cat exhaled, believing it now. "How is he?"

"He's going to be OK. Cat he's come around and he's asking for you. He is fixated on talking to you."

"Ok I'm coming. I need to ask him some questions anyway..."

"Cat what's going on?"

"Heath all I know is that he's not my Dad and he's somehow connected to a case I'm working on involving really bad people. It's dangerous Heather so I have to talk to him. Are the police still standing guard?"

"Yes."

"Good. I'll see you soon." Cat hung up, returned the phone to Tess.

"I have to go there and talk to him. See what he knows."

"I'll come with you Cat," Tess offered.

"No you stay here with JT. He needs..."

"Oh hell, yes of course. JT is no match for Zombie Boy if he..."

"Hey Vargas, standing right here and you calling me Zombie Boy, that's getting really old." Gabe glared at her.

"Well it's the truth Lowen." Tess then turned to Cat. "Dammit Cat, you shouldn't be alone."

"I'll be ok. I have to do this for Vincent. I need to know. You find out what you can here and I'll do the same at the hospital with Da...I mean Thomas."

"Cat he still raised you like he was your father. He loved you. That was real."

"Nothing feels real to me anymore Tess, except Vincent."

"Catherine, Vincent is very different to me and to the other Muirfield subjects from his old platoon. I don't think that whoever took him, even if it was this 'Beast Hunter', will be so quick to dispatch him when he realizes that Vincent is aware when he transforms and although he can't control when it actually happens, he can control who he attacks when he is his beast. He has you to live for too so don't write him off..." Gabe said with surprising conviction.

"That coming from the dude who not a couple of hours ago was prepared to dissect him like a lab rat, harvest his organs and blood to save his own skin. Really Lowen?"

JT responded sarcastically.

"Well that was before you stepped in to save my ass Forbes so I'm seeing things a little differently now." Gabe responded to JT's sarcasm.

"Just keep it that way Gabe. I'll be back as soon as I can." Cat responded as she left.

Cat got into her car, her mind whirling in chaos with so much to digest. Vincent captured; finding out that Thomas wasn't her Dad; Gabe's "death" followed by his resurrection. Was this 'Beast Hunter' her father as Tess had implied? Why had he captured Vincent but shot Gabe? Had he seen her with Vincent in the spotlight of the helicopter? Did he know who she was? Was her connection to Vincent the reason he changed his mind not to kill him? Was that an influence?

The thought of a life without Vincent crashed into her head with inexorable force. A little more than a year ago he was a ghost in her sub conscious. Now she couldn't imagine breathing without him let alone existing.

Memories crowded in on her. Memories of Vincent's love, his loyalty and his fierce protectiveness. He'd saved her more often than she could count. She remembered their lovemaking. What he did to her was beyond comprehension. He made her come alive; she craved him as much as he craved her. There were kisses that went forever; piercing amber eyes that swallowed her whole every time, leaving her shaking.

Tears streamed down her face. She was not going to lose him. It wasn't an option. She would move heaven and earth to bring him back to her no matter the cost.

Catherine arrived at the hospital. She almost flew up to Thomas' ward and then stopped outside his room as she contemplated the coming conversation. There were endless questions she needed answered. "Vincent needs this" she said to herself as she resolutely shouldered her way through the door to have that conversation.

"Cat," Heather flew into her arms. "I'm so glad you're here," she cried.

"Sshh it's ok Heath. I'm here," she held her sister. Were they even sisters? The sudden thought horrified her. Maybe the mother she thought she knew wasn't that either.

Thomas watched from his bed, heartbreak evident in his gaze at the recent turn of events but knowing for the sake of his family that he and Cat had to have the coming conversation. He could tell by her expression and behaviour that she knew. The blood test must have given it away. They usually take blood from the eldest first...

After moments consoling Heather, Cat looked at her.

"Sis I have to talk to him alone ok?" she acknowledged Thomas' nod of agreement, seeing the pain reflected in his eyes.

"Yes Sweetheart, Cat's right," he said gently to Heather. "We'll be fine. Please. Cat will come and get you soon."

Heather stared at them both in sorrow and shuffled out the door.

"Catherine, you know don't you?"

"Yes, I do."

"When Heather told me they'd taken blood from her I knew. They usually go to the eldest first."

"Yes. I wasn't a match. Something about genetic markers."

"I'm so sorry you had to find out like that. This was the reason I called, why I wanted to see you..." he trailed off.

"I had a feeling your "accident" wasn't an accident and that it was deliberate. They tried to kill you didn't they? Who's the man on your iPad? The one Homeland Security flagged as being back in the country? Is he my father? Is that what you wanted to tell me?"

Thomas looked startled. "You know all that already? How?"

"Tess and...other friends put the clues together. So?"

"Yes he's your father. I panicked when I saw the email. I thought he was here to claim you. It's something I feared he would do sooner or later."

"Who is he?"

"Cat, there is so much to this story I need more than a mere five minute conversation to tell you everything."

"You've had 30 years, so just give me the short version...Thomas, I have things I need to find out from you and things to do with the information, so please..."

"I don't know his name Cat but he was your Mom's fiancé. She was pregnant to him with you when I met her."

"So she really is my mother?"

"Yes of course. You thought?" he looked at her in horror.

"Well it crossed my mind."

"God Catherine, yes of course she was your mother. No question about it."

"So what happened? How did she know him?"

"As I said, he was her fiancé. Your Mom started as an infectious diseases doctor who specialised in DNA sequencing. She did a lot of classified government research and came to work for a corporation doing the same research. At first it was her dream job but then she discovered that they were doing some questionable experimentation on human subjects..."

"But you always said you didn't know what she did. You told me when I came looking for her boxes that you didn't want to look because you were afraid that the woman you fell in love with might not be in those boxes. Now you're telling me you knew?"

"That was sort of true Cat. I never went through them to find out more. What I'm telling you is all I know. I didn't want to know more than that. I kept it from you

because I couldn't risk that they..."

"Muirfield," she interjected.

"Yes. How did you know Cat?"

"I've heard of them. Long story. How was he connected to them?"

"He wasn't. Your mother had noble intentions, she was passionate about her research, her patients; thought she was doing good for her patients and by the time she realised the vipers she was in bed with, so to speak, it was too late."

"How did he fit in?"

"I don't know. But I do know he was against Muirfield and whatever they were doing in relation to genetic manipulation on human subjects. He tried to get her away from them, force her to leave it all behind but she wouldn't. You know your mother, she was too attached to her patients and believed she was the only thing standing between the company and them. Your mother said that she was the face of humanity in the midst of something profoundly evil. She couldn't walk away so he left her. Cat he didn't know she was pregnant with you. When I met her all she told me at that time was that she'd broken up with her fiancé and there was no going back."

"You loved her that much, enough to raise someone else's child?"

"I loved your mother Catherine. I know she had secrets but I was willing to overlook them to be with her and I raised you as my own. She was a wonderful wife and mother. Vanessa was fiercely loyal with a huge heart and so much compassion. You've inherited that from her you know. There has never been a day I have regretted the decision I made. A few years later along came Heather and we were a family then, in every sense of the word. I have never regarded you as anything other than my daughter Catherine..."

"I know. You've always been there for me. I can't argue with that." Cat admitted.

Thomas continued, "I didn't know all of these details in the beginning. I only found out years later when she was pregnant with Heather. I came downstairs one night to find her asleep in front of her computer. I saw what was on the screen. That's how I learned that her ex fiancé had found out about you and was asking questions. I saw other classified data in relation to Muirfield too. While my head was reeling from this information she woke up and saw my reaction. Your mother begged, pleaded and cried asking me not to disclose what I'd seen, to not take it further. Your mother also told me that he had sworn he wouldn't try to find you because he knew the danger. Cat, I suspected it all went deeper than what she was telling me but I saw the terror in her eyes and I backed down. She was terrified for our lives; mine, yours, Heather's and her own. She told me what they were capable of. After that night we never talked about it again. I couldn't tell you Catherine. I had a family whose lives depended on our silence."

"I'm so sorry you had to go through this Dad. Is it ok if I call you that?" Cat asked.

"I'd be honoured Catherine. You are my daughter as far as I'm concerned and I love you."

As Catherine held out her hand and took Thomas' hand in hers she had tears in her eyes because she understood, with such clarity, more than he could possibly know about keeping secrets. "So why has he surfaced now do you think?" Catherine asked him softly.

"I don't know. I assumed it was to reconnect with you so I panicked. Have you seen him? Has he found you?"

"No, I don't think so. He might be involved with our...latest case though, which is why I'm asking. How did you know about him to get the Homeland Security flag? That's usually not available to civilians."

"Your mother. When she came back from Afghanistan in June 2002, she was different; haunted, but she refused to talk about what happened except to say that someone in the platoon saved her from certain death which enabled her to get out. Whatever occurred with the soldiers affected her deeply. She said that if anything ever happened to her that I should have access to what she did just in case anyone came looking for you. She showed me a photo of your father, told me what to look out for so I did."

Cat's heart lurched at his reference to Vincent. She knew who it was that saved her mother all those years ago. God the connection ran so deep it was terrifying.

Thomas continued. "That following fall...well you know what happened..." he reflected sadly.

"Yes the night she was killed."

"I was very careful not to draw attention to us. I tried to live as normal a life as possible while trying to provide for you and Heather."

"I know. I understand Dad. Are you sure you don't know anything about him, where he might be?"

"No Cat. I've told you all I know. Why? What's this about?"

Catherine couldn't hide the pain in her eyes.

"Cat what's wrong? Tell me. I want to help. Is it about Muirfield?"

"It could be. I don't know."

"Catherine they are very dangerous." he warned.

"Believe me when I tell you that I know how dangerous they are. I have people working on it but I really need to find him to ...answer some questions regarding a...a missing person."

"The one thing I do remember about him is that he does have serious high ranking military connections. I don't know if that helps?"

"Military? OK." Well that was something Cat thought. Maybe they could track him through facial recognition in the classified military databases. Between JT & Gabe she was sure they would be able to achieve that very discreetly.

"Dad I have to go. The police escort will stay in place as we investigate the hit and run so you and Heather will be safe. I need to do this. I need to leave. I'm sorry. And Dad I'm ok. Thank you for being honest. Thank you for doing what you did, for being there all these years living with the burden of such terrible secrets. I know it's hard."

"It's ok Cat. You go and do what you need to do. You're tough and resourceful. You'll be ok. You always are."

"My resolve is being seriously battered at the moment but you're right. I can do this." Cat hugged him briefly and headed out the door to Heather.

"Heath, I have to go. Look after him ok? Stay with him."

"Where are you going?"

"Heather he was definitely the victim of attempted murder so I need to investigate what happened. I need to follow a trail while it's still warm. He or you won't be safe otherwise..."

"Cat what aren't you telling me?"

"I'm sorry but I can't talk about it now. Time is running out..."

"For what Cat? I don't understand."

"Heather," Cat sighed with frustration but also understanding for Heather's emotional fragility in the circumstances.

"Heath just trust me ok? I have to do this and I've got Tess and other people on it too so we're going to sort it out. Just do whatever the police ask you to. They're here to protect you."

"From what Cat?"

"Heather again, I can't tell you. I have to go. I'll call you."

She kissed and hugged her sister tightly and was gone.

Cat headed back to Gabe's loft.

"So anything yet?" She asked on arrival.

"No but it's going to take a while to go through all this data. Lowen you're nothing if not methodical. There's some seriously comprehensive stuff here." JT remarked.

"When your life is on the line you tend to be thorough," Gabe responded "Plus I have the resources at my disposal."

"I noticed. Being rich, powerful and connected helps." JT observed.

"Yes, it does."

Tess went to Catherine, gathered her in a tight hug. "How are you doing? What happened?"

"Better. OK. Where to start? FBI man is my father. Thomas knew because he met Mom when she was already pregnant with me. He says 'Beast Hunter' left her not knowing she was pregnant at the time and that he only found out when Mom was pregnant with Heather, that I was his daughter. Mum swore Dad to secrecy because of the repercussions. Dad knew enough about Muirfield to know that they were up to no good but didn't know the extent of it. 'Beast Hunter' said he wouldn't look for me so things bubbled along for years. Mom did her time in Afghanistan. Vincent saved her there as we know but she essentially knew that it was only a matter of time before they came after her."

"Wow he knew all that?"

"Yes. Gabe's right, he's not Muirfield. He hates them and wants to take them down too. He blames them for losing Mom and later me. Presumably too for having Mom killed. He's been overseas until now. Dad thought he was back to see me which is why he panicked but I don't believe it was because of me. I think he found out about you Gabe and you were the target, not Vincent."

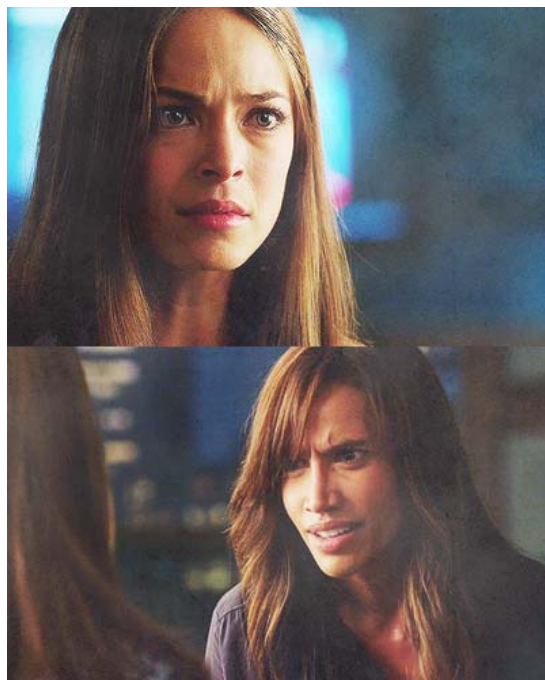
"Did Thomas know anything more that could help us track him?" JT asked hopefully.

"No, just that he is or has had high military ranking. Maybe a really discreet back-door facial recognition search of classified military files might be a place to drill down into."

"As good a place to start as any. Let's get to it Lowen." JT responded.

"What a mess Cat." Tess said.

"I know Tess but I have a feeling. I believe he recognised me tonight. He knew it was me and that's why I'm alive and maybe why he didn't hurt Vincent."



Vincent came to and staggered to his feet. He took in his surroundings; a windowless room with a made up bunk bed and toilet facilities. It was basic but it was a surprise considering the alternative of being dead or in another damned jail cell like the one he'd been held in at Muirfield's facility recently.

"Well they don't want me dead – yet," he thought. "That's gotta be good..." Although the last Muirfield agents wanted to zip his chest open like a duffel bag so maybe his prognosis wasn't so positive.

He sensed something different about this operation though. He'd faintly heard someone in the helicopter stopping snipers from taking Catherine out. Leaving someone behind, a witness, was not Muirfield's style. He was certain he heard reference to a daughter but he'd been too focussed on watching Catherine's face to understand the rest. The thought of Catherine had him remembering her stricken face on the ground, staring up at him with heart wrenching pain etched on her face as he was taken away. Vincent prowled the room in frustration thinking about Catherine and what she would be feeling right now. He just wished she'd listened to him when it came to Gabe but he had to admit even he had been taken in by him in the end. He still couldn't believe how that had gone down and suspected that Catherine would be taking responsibility for his capture yet again. He swore softly to himself.

Then there was the fact that she'd injected him with the vaccine to bring back the animal DNA. He marvelled that she would rather have him half man/half beast with a chance at life rather than he die. She accepted him. Catherine didn't want normal more than wanting him alive and his head reeled at the implications of that very thought. When, not if, he got out of here he would have a long talk with her about their options. He wasn't living his life without her so if it meant starting somewhere fresh then so be it. They could grab those id's and run. He knew that with Catherine he had more than a better chance of keeping his beast side in check. He growled at the thought of seeing her again.

Twenty four hours of uninterrupted loving was also at the top of his to do list. They deserved that. She angered the hell out of him but he also realised it was what he loved about her - her strength, indomitable spirit and all consuming love in trying to protect him. He couldn't exactly stay angry at her for that. Her loyalty was ferocious and he thought on how lucky he was to have her in his life....

"Catherine. I haven't found you to let anyone take you away from me. I am not going to lose you." he growled to himself fervently.

Watching the monitors relaying a live feed from inside the room, X studied and listened to Vincent's mutterings. What he saw on the ground in the minutes leading to Vincent's capture had completely spun his thoughts into overdrive. He expected one beast but found two. Recognised his daughter, then realised she wasn't working with Lowen as he first thought; she was with Vincent. It was him she ran to, not Lowen. He knew who Vincent was because he'd kept tabs on Vanessa when she was in Afghanistan. He knew that she was the doctor that monitored him along with the others in the unit but he didn't know Vincent was alive until now.

X pulled up Catherine's precinct case records and studied them for a long time, stunned at the story they told. Then he pulled up Vincent Keller's medical records, discovering that he was respected, humane, compassionate, ethical and very highly regarded as an ER doctor before enlisting after losing two brothers to the towers.

X didn't know his daughter. He hadn't been emotionally invested in her upbringing so he felt a certain detachment to her over the years. But when the time came he couldn't in all conscience sanction her death. What shocked him more was the realisation that Vincent's beast was the one who had saved her with reckless abandon and possibly at the cost of its own life. X couldn't reconcile this because as the beast, Vincent shouldn't be able to evoke the humanity of who he was when he was normal.

Putting it all together now, X again looked back over what he knew and what was in black in white in front of him; that Vincent had saved her the night Vanessa died. Then again when three agents from Muirfield came after her. There were so many other examples of Vincent watching over his daughter; the bike messenger; Heather; the medical examiner and countless others in his anonymous role as the Vigilante. Was he really a hero? For years Muirfield had tried to find a way to temper the effects of the DNA experiments to make their 'super soldiers' behave like normal men in peace time. Was it as simple as love? X shook his head in wonder.

He'd seen Catherine reaching up to the beast, grasping his hand, desperate not to let him go. He had seen the anguish on her face as he hauled Vincent away from her. That had stunned him more than anything. She was reaching for the beast, not the man so she'd obviously accepted both parts of him, maybe even loved him. What kind of man inspired that kind of emotion? Certainly not a monster.

X sat for a long time thinking about his next move. For the first time he didn't know what to do and it unsettled him. Killing Vincent Keller made absolute sense to all that he knew about the beasts before, but now, it made no sense at all. "Vincent needs to be analysed," he thought out loud ... "to find out how he is able to control his urges to the point of being able to live in society almost normally." X was beginning to suspect the only thing standing between him and society being free from these beasts wasn't really the beasts themselves but Muirfield, after what he'd witnessed tonight. Was Vincent unique? He was aware. It seemed he had a conscience even as the beast. How much could they learn from him with his co-operation, if he was, for the first time in more than ten years, treated as a man rather than a monster? X saw what happened when Catherine and Vincent had touched. Vincent was no longer a beast in his mind and it changed everything...

X made his way through the complex and stopped outside Vincent's door. He punched in the code and as he entered the room he stared at Vincent who seemed ready to spring into action. X put a finger up to his lips and made a signal for Vincent to be silent. Vincent puzzled at his behaviour and also wondered who this man was because there was something oddly familiar about him.

X went to a panel, punched in another code to access an array of dials and buttons and proceeded to switch off several of them.

"OK, now we can talk," as he turned back to Vincent.

His voice was familiar....then it hit him; this had to be the guy he had heard say "Don't shoot, she's my daughter" Was this Catherine's biological father? That didn't make sense, but the fragment of conversation he'd heard in the helicopter as he was being lifted away from the castle suddenly replayed itself in his mind and made sense now. As he processed that information Vincent realised why he was familiar. The likeness was unmistakable. This was as stunning as it was unexpected. Vincent sensed no real animosity or even danger radiating from the man standing in front of him; add to that the possibility that it was he who had prevented Catherine's death on the ground. This had Vincent intrigued so, he decided to see how this would play out.

"Talk?" Vincent responded. "I've always had the idea that cutting me open to see what makes me tick was more Muirfield's style..."

"Except I'm not Muirfield Vincent. Far from it."

"You know who I am? Who are you?"

"You can call me 'X' for now and I know *of* you Vincent. I know you were one of Vanessa's charges in Afghanistan and I know what Muirfield did to all of you. May they burn in hell and be damned."

" 'X' are you serious?"

"It will do."

"Ok then, 'X'." Vincent said with slight sarcasm. "So is it a case of your enemy is my enemy and we work together?"

"Not so fast Vincent. We have a lot to talk about first."

"Huh? If you aren't Muirfield, then what's your agenda?"

"Vincent up until today I have killed every single Muirfield agent and 'Super Soldier' I've found. The only thing that is keeping you alive at the moment is what I saw happen between you and Catherine..."

"Your daughter!"

X looked at Vincent questioningly. "How the hell?"

"When you were taking me away in the helicopter I heard you tell your guy not to shoot; add that to there being an unmistakable likeness between you. I also came across some information years ago that listed Thomas as her adopted father. So I'm putting two and two together here."

"Smart man." X said with a slight smile. "I think I like you Vincent."

"Probably handy for my chances of survival then?"

"Maybe. The jury is still out on that one."

"So what do you want to know?" Vincent sensed strongly that co-operation was his best chance at walking out alive. He couldn't believe his luck. This guy wasn't Muirfield and he was Catherine's father. That had to account for something.

"How have you managed to go undetected for so long?" X asked.

"Muirfield knew I was still alive so I wasn't exactly undetected."

"No some units knew there was a beast out there and I presume you killed those who came after you?" X questioned.

"Yes."

"This means that your identity actually didn't get to those high enough to spread the word. You are still unknown. So how did you manage it?"

"I stayed pretty much in isolation for the first ten years. I didn't go out much. Kept to the shadows. Stayed away from situations that could escalate and cause me to transform."

"That's a lonely existence for someone Vincent."

"It's better than being dead."

"True."

"So what happened about twelve months ago to change the game?"

"I suspect you already know the answer to that question?"

"Catherine found you?"

"Yes."

"And if she's anything like her mother, I guess once she realised who you were she refused to let you go. She took up where her mother left off and was determined to protect you at all costs."

"I see you know her well despite not being in her life."

"I can put two and two together as well Vincent. It was you who saved her ten years ago when Muirfield murdered Vanessa?"

"Yes but I was too late to save Dr C. I would have if I could."

"I believe you. So after meeting and saving my daughter you kept tabs on her. Kept her safe?"

"As best as I could without her knowledge, yes."

"Hmmm interesting guardian angel you turned out to be."

"I'm definitely not an angel no."

"So Catherine found you and in doing so came to the attention of Muirfield?"

"Yes three agents tried to kill her the same day she called them about finding corrupt DNA at a crime scene. She killed one, I took out the other two."

"The subway incident?"

"Yes."

"Nice work."

"I thought so. Better them than Catherine."

"I would agree."

"Thought you might."

"And this has happened frequently?"

"Yes. She has this tendency to go in first and I come in to clean up the mess."

"I'm not surprised. She sounds just like her mother and you sound just like me. I have a question for you Vincent. When you are in beast mode you are aware of what's going on around you? No beast could stay off the radar this successfully if he turned into a monster like the others did, including Lowen. As a killing machine without remorse you wouldn't be able to hide."

"Yes but I've never really been that. I know and remember everything that happens. I had my moments in Afghanistan but always managed to control it somehow. Then when Catherine came along it got easier. She has this ability to bring me back. Calm me down."

"She deals with you directly when you are the beast?"

"Yes."

"100% beast?"

"Yes."

"Brave girl."

"And then some."

"Vincent, it should not be remotely possible to do what you can do. The cross species DNA should take over to such an extent as to suppress your humanity. At least that's what I've seen in all the others I found."

"I can tell you it's not just possible it's real. I don't kill innocents."

"I know that too. I went over the precinct case files. You've become quite the hero. Police don't like it but the public are certainly on your side. Why do you do that?"

"I was a doctor so I guess it's just instinct, an extension of who I am and when Catherine came along she made me help whether I wanted to or not."

"She tried to get you to live a more normal existence? Why? Did she hate that you were alone? Was she horrified at what had been done to you and wanted to make up for it because she knew about Vanessa's involvement with Muirfield and had to make amends?"

"Yes to all of those questions."

"She's had a hell of a year."

"She has."

"Tell me, the burning of the Muirfield servers?"

"That was all her. I only got there in time to save her. I wasn't happy with her stunt that night. She did it without my initial knowledge and risked her life to erase me from their files."

"She did it to protect you?"

"Yes."

"You know she wouldn't be on Muirfield's radar at all if she hadn't found you in the first place."

"I agree but once she did there was no going back. It's not like I knocked on her door and said 'Hi, remember me? The beast that saved you all those years ago? I want you to risk your life to be with me.' Your daughter, Catherine Chandler, is a very stubborn woman. I tried to get her to stay away but..."

"You could have tried harder."

"I could have tried harder? I beasted out in front of her, told her I could kill her in less than a second, told her not to come back and to stay away but it didn't work. She came back time and time again. She told me I wasn't a monster. She knew the truth about me and I wanted to believe her."



"So when did you fall in love with her?"

Vincent hesitated for the first time trying to gauge what X needed to hear.

X laughed. "Vincent it's as obvious as the nose on your face. The lengths you both go to for each other. That's not just friendship. I may be a killer but I'm human and I know love when I see it. And as far as motivation to protect her goes, it's pretty much the best there is."

"The night I saved her the first time, the night Dr C was killed. When she looked straight at me after I took the guys out chasing her, I heard her pulse slow even though she was looking straight at me. "

"You were the beast?"

"Yes."

"So your beast?"

"Yep, as it turns out. Loves her too."

"I'll be damned. Have you ever hurt her? Even accidentally?"

"Hell no. That's not even a possibility. I have killed those who hurt her or cause her harm."

"I noticed."

"They deserved it,"

"Undoubtedly. Vincent I like you more and more."

"Very happy to hear that," Vincent grinned widely for the first time.

Taking a moment X thought to himself, "Hmmm, I really like this guy. I can see what she sees in him. He's a good looking man even with the scar."

Then he turned to Vincent and said, "That's a pretty nasty scar. How did you get that?"

"Back in Afghanistan when Muirfield tried to wipe us out, one of them pulled a gun on Dr C. There was an order to silence her for not keeping quiet. She was threatening to tell the world about Muirfield. I was starting to change but knew I had to stop him. We fought, he pulled a knife, he slashed my face open and then I killed him."

"I didn't know that."

"You couldn't know. Dr C was the only one who knew and now Catherine knows."

"Well Vincent it seems your ties to my family are deep."

"You could say that. Now I've got a question for you."

"Only one?"

"For the moment."

"Did you move Dr C's body? Put up the head stone?"

"Yes."

"Ok. I wondered about that. So what's the story? How is it that you weren't around for Catherine?"

"That's more than one question Vincent. I had my reasons and they don't concern you but I will say it was the best option at the time. Let's just say my hatred for Muirfield knows no bounds."

"I can imagine. I'm not a fan either."

"Yes they pretty much ruined your life."

"Oh I don't know. It was looking pretty good until recently. It isn't them who are ruining it at this moment..."

X smirked but moved on. "I presume it was good because of Catherine?"

"Absolutely. Now the way I look at it, you now see that I'm her best chance for survival against Muirfield. You don't want her to face them alone because you know she will. Muirfield always ties up loose ends so even if I'm out of the picture they will still come after her."

"Yes I am aware of that. I understand the uniqueness of you and the complications that this brings."

X looked at Vincent intently. "Now as charming as I find you there is still the matter of your beast. I would like to assess you a little more before making any further decisions."

"What did you have in mind?"

"Nothing too invasive. I can see that in human state you are an exceptional and intelligent man. I need to be more convinced of your subconscious state. It appears you have that under control or else Catherine or innocents would have been harmed by now. What I'd like to do is hook you up to a monitor to read your brainwave activity when you sleep. Get a glimpse into your subconscious mind."

"Will you let me go if I say yes? I need to let Catherine know I'm ok first."

"No." X said firmly.

"Ok then. So hook me up now."

"I thought you might say that. You'll do anything to get back to Catherine right?"

"I will. But I don't like her not knowing what is happening or where I am. I don't like it at all."

"I understand that but you know if I let you go they'll still come after you? Muirfield are relentless."

"I know." Vincent said honestly. "We can only deal with one day at a time. If we go back to the whole your enemy is my enemy thing and work together, with your resources we could ..."

"One step at a time Vincent, one step at a time."

"Ok. Wire me up."

"Not just yet. I need to set things up first. Rest and I'll send dinner in soon. Later my men will come to hook you up before you go to sleep."

"Rest? No chance of that but ok. It's been interesting talking to you."

"Interesting is an understatement Vincent. It's you who fascinates me."

An ironic smile formed on Vincent's face as he said, "You know I think I could get to like you too."

"Well seeing as you are virtually my son in law..."

"Hadn't thought of it that way." Vincent's smile changed to one of happiness at that thought, then grew larger.

"Oh, I see you like that idea?" X observed.

"You bet I do. I sure as hell don't love anyone else."

X chuckled dryly as he walked out of the room.

Vincent almost punched the air he was that happy. There was no way he was going to die. He didn't believe it for one moment. Plus it appeared they had a hell of an ally in Catherine's father.

"Soon Catherine. I'll be back soon." he said out loud.

Vincent paced the confined quarters, mind reeling with the information he'd learned. The man was Catherine's father and he too wanted her safe. Rightly or wrongly Vincent was her safest bet at living. He trusted X would see it his way.

Shortly after X left, food was passed through the door via a small panel. Vincent picked up the plate, sniffed the contents and smelling nothing out of the ordinary he relaxed. If they were going to kill him, he thought, they would have done so by now so he ate in silence, conserving strength, building energy reserves, contemplating his next moves. Escape was out of the question, antagonising X not an option. More talk and co-operation was needed which was why he agreed to the electrodes. There was nothing in his subconscious mind he was afraid of. Nothing at all. If reading his brainwave activity increased his chances of getting out then he would do it. Anything that took him closer to being with Catherine was worth the risk.

An hour later X's men came in, wired him up and plugged him into a monitor. It was painless, benign and surprisingly non-invasive. The men left, the lights went out and Vincent was left to rest.

Vincent hunkered down on his bed but was incredibly restless, his mind a kaleidoscope of emotions. He wondered what Catherine was doing, how she was coping. It had been hours now and with a seemingly cold trail, it would be almost impossible to find him. He had no doubt Catherine and JT would try.

He remembered seeing Gabe go down in a hail of bullets and almost felt sorry for him, then remembered how he'd tossed Catherine across the courtyard, prepared to kill her and his sympathy evaporated fast.

Fitfully, the electrodes monitoring his brain activity sending vague images to a live relay, Vincent eventually fell asleep with Catherine on his mind.

Vincent felt warm fingers trailing down his arms as her soft lips found his. He groaned with passion, pulling Catherine close, inhaling her glorious scent. Their kiss deepened as craving took hold, raging desire always igniting when they were this close.

He couldn't get enough of her, as his hands travelled her body; touching, feeling her skin, basking in her love and complete acceptance of him, his beast. God how he loved her, could drown in her. He couldn't imagine life without her.

"Catherine, I am so in love you," he breathed as his lips moved from hers to explore her throat. "Can't get enough. Never enough. I'll kill anyone who tries to hurt you. You're mine."

"Sshhh Vincent, I know. It's ok. I'm here and I love you, so much..." she breathed raggedly as his hands continued their exploration of all of her, enveloping her in need, want, craving so intense she reeled at the onslaught.

His head spun as she peeled off his clothes, slowly, with deliberate movements enjoying the sight of his naked body; the feel of his muscles beneath her fingers; the tremors that rippled at her touch.

He responded, pulling at her clothes til she was naked, moulded to his body, feeling her heat pulse against his savage need.

Blissful torture as their mouths found each other, tongues colliding in lust, heat pulling them down til they were drowning, sinking.

Vincent picked Catherine up, threw her onto the bed and was inside her; deep, hard and frenzied as their need for union pushed them beyond their limits.

Vincent felt himself fall further and further, sinking deeper into her until he cried out...

Disoriented he awoke from his vivid dream. He looked around wildly, understood and cursed. Vincent sat, feeling the strain against his pants, willing himself to calm down from his arousal. Wringing his hands in frustration Vincent rasped her name over and over again.



Cat, Tess, JT & Gabe worked through the night, studying everything they could find using facial recognition searches on every data base whether classified or not; going through all of Gabe's comprehensive data in relation to anything that even hinted remotely of a beast reference. Unusual homicides that might be tracked back to the man they were calling the 'Beast Hunter'. Gabe, with an armed Tess in tow, headed outside to see if he could pick up a scent of anything that may lead them to Catherine's real father. With an aching heart he also checked Tyler's body for clues. Nothing! Not a single thing. This so called 'Beast Hunter' was good. He had covered his tracks so he had to have serious resources. He was a ghost, leaving virtually no footprint. There was a reference found, the one that tied him to Vanessa but even that was obscure – a grainy image of the two of them laughing together, arms around each other. The same one Tess had seen to raise her suspicions about his connection to Catherine.

"Lowen I thought you said you had good Intel? If he is so good at covering his tracks how did you know anything about him at all?" JT said dismally.

"I did find all that out. Amazing what you can learn when you have deep pockets. Much has vanished off the net in the meantime. I told you he was well connected. My Intel was solid at the time." Gabe said defensively.

Cat, Tess and JT had slept in shifts, always vigilant in keeping an eye on Gabe because they were expecting the meds to wear off and release his beast but it didn't happen.

The next morning Tess looked at Cat. "Listen Cat. What are we going to tell Joe? It's not like we can clue him in and obviously we're not going in to work for the next couple of days."

"I know. Well obviously I can take some personal time because of Dad."

"Yes ok and I'm owed a couple of days and without you I'm desk bound anyway so I'll tell him I'm with you and Heather supporting you." Tess suggested.

"Thank you so much Tess, for doing this, for being here for me."

"Hey that's what partners do remember? I know we've had our moments but I get it all now and I'm with you all the way."

They hugged awkwardly. "I'm so not good at this Cat. You know I'm not the type of girl to..."

"I know," Cat grinned. "Hate to make you go soft & squishy around the edges Tess so let's do this."

Tess laughed. "OK Cat let's go and save V. I hate to think what he's going through and he will be missing you like crazy."

"So long as that's all he's doing. Not being..." Cat couldn't say the rest.

"Hey don't think about it. I can't believe that I actually agree with Lowen, but I think he could be right. V should be safe for a while. He is different. It won't take them long to realise that plus if it was Daddy dearest then who knows..."

"I can only hope Tess."

Some time later...

Cat rubbed her neck, an impatient sigh exploding out of her. "JT, I am getting really frustrated here. We are not getting anywhere. If only Vincent's burner phone was on him, we could have tracked the signal like last time."

"Yes I know but fighting beast Gabe kinda smashed it to pieces..." JT responded gloomily. "Honestly Lowen you are more trouble than you're worth."

"Hey Forbes I keep telling you it's not like I have control. Obviously if I'd known this was all going to go down..."

"You would've done exactly the same damned thing."

Gabe sighed. "Possibly. To say that I wasn't thinking straight is an understatement. Amazing what lines you will cross to save your own life."

"Yes and it's not worth it. The price is too high. Some Assistant District Attorney you turned out to be..." JT threw at him

"I was a damned fine ADA. I've always prided myself on doing the right thing."

"Could've fooled me." JT sniped at him.

"Ok my decisions lately have been questionable." Gabe agreed.

"Questionable is an understatement." JT responded.

"Boys stop bickering," Tess threw in. "It's not helping. V's burner smashed, end of story."

"Yes, so no signal.....Oh. My. God. I'm an idiot. Of course!" JT suddenly exploded out of his chair.

"JT what is it?" Cat stared at him in wild hope.

"Signal...signal. Helicopters have transponders, GPS location data. Even black ops like these dudes were, would be tracked on some covert aeronautical management system somewhere. Why didn't I think of that earlier? We just have to find the receiving transmitters and we'll get a location or at least as close as possible to where V was dropped off. It's not like they could fly all night."

"And hopefully didn't transfer him to another plane to fly out of the country..." Tess interjected.

"Shit, I hope not but we should be able to track that too. Finding the receiver might take a while but once we do, the rest should be easy."

"JT you're a freakin' genius. Gotta say I'm starting to like this geek side of you. You're definitely a smart cookie." Tess said impressed.

"Oh My God. Another compliment from 'Detective Shoot First & Ask Questions Later Vargas'. I've died and gone to heaven," he sniped back at her in good humour.

JT was very pleased with himself in that moment as it was a definite break-through.

The hours ticked by as JT and Gabe hacked every system, trawled every obscure site in their search for the programme tracking aircraft flight paths. It was like finding a needle in a haystack but Catherine was confident. She had to be. Any other alternative didn't bear thinking about. She couldn't, wouldn't lose Vincent. She may as well pluck her heart out of her chest for all that it was worth if anything happened to him. She also knew that this merry go round of horror had to stop but she didn't know how.

Catherine also realised it was because of her that Vincent kept taking these risks. He was trying to give her 'normal' because he thought that's what she really wanted. She now understood that even though she said she accepted him the way he was, believed it herself even, that subconsciously her actions hadn't reflected that. She'd jumped at the chance of him taking the pills without much objection really. They should have tested them first. At the realisation of her part in all of this she also knew that life without him was simply not possible. She didn't care any-more if he never found an antidote. She would no longer pay lip service towards an impossible fantasy.

Vincent was who he was and Catherine knew that without his beast he would always be scared that he would be unable to protect or help her. That even 'normal', Muirfield would always look for him, hunt him down, kill him. Maybe the two of them needed to disappear for good. Vincent certainly seemed to be able to control his beast so much more effectively now. Maybe in a quiet town leading a quiet life they could fly under the radar for years. As long as his beast remained hidden there was a strong chance it could work. Life in New York held no appeal if he wasn't in it so she may as well go wherever he needed to be to keep him safe. At least they would be together and that was all that mattered. They could live off the grid and get lost in each other. She suddenly smiled as her thoughts drifted to what that would entail. God how she loved him. She remembered his touch, his voice and his eyes as they glowed amber when they made love. "Hold onto that memory Cat," she said to herself. "Just hold on."



The next day after leaving him to ponder for what seemed an eternity, X was back in Vincent's room.

"Sleep well? That was a highly informative night in the mind of Dr. Vincent Keller."

"It was, uh, why?" Vincent actually looked worried, his dream of Catherine still so vivid in his mind...

"Let's just say that it was probably way more than I needed to know." X said and noticing Vincent's agitation, he laughed.

"Oh don't worry Vincent it's not like I saw clear images or anything it's, let's just say, that I know where your mind was last night, or should I say where certain parts of you were. What was interesting and very telling is that there was no sign of your beast. It seems that Catherine's ability to, um, calm you in one sense, invades your subconscious as well as your conscious mind.

Vincent calmed somewhat.

"Vincent it seems you are far more human than you are beast and that's extraordinary as well as very encouraging. I can't exactly be the typical father who goes all Neanderthal about who his daughter goes out with. I don't have the right. With Muirfield in the picture I can't be picky. Do I consider you ideal partner material? Probably not, but it is what it is and based on what I observed whilst you have been here I'm inclined to let you go...it would seem Catherine is better off with you."

Vincent's head snapped to attention. "I like your inclination a lot."

"Yes I expected you would, but there are conditions."

"Name them." Vincent said.

"Your co-operation to start with."

"How do you want me to co-operate?"

"What I want Vincent is the ability to come to you in secret occasionally to study your progress. What you do, how you do it, take more blood samples to see how your DNA is evolving. I also want you to be very upfront with me. Voice any concerns if you feel that you may be regressing or worried that harming Catherine could become a reality..."

"That won't happen."

"I know you truly believe that Vincent, and I tend to agree, but sometimes our actions don't match our intentions. The DNA in flux within you will always carry a risk. The risk that you are driven by urges other than your rational mind. You have to be realistic."

"Ok. I understand that and I agree to everything you ask. I would be the first to take myself out of the picture if I thought there was even the remotest chance that I could hurt Catherine."

"Vincent when I say that, I don't mean that death is your only other option. Should it ever occur, I have enormous resources so I promise you I will always look for the

healing alternative first. It appears you are way too unique to eradicate unnecessarily. Harvesting your body parts is not nearly as valuable as studying the living, breathing, evolving person that you are."

"Well that's encouraging."

"Believe it or not Vincent, killing other beasts wasn't an easy decision on my part. Bringing Muirfield down, well that's a no brainer, but unfortunately their trial participants, including you, didn't ask for this. None of you knew the extent of their evil. Vincent can you imagine more beasts like Lowen on the loose with no memory of their time as a beast, rage unchecked, causing chaos?"

"I see your point but there aren't any more. They were wiped out with my platoon."

"Like you were Vincent and Lowen before you?"

"Wait, does that mean there may be more survivors?"

"I don't believe so but I could be wrong, you and Lowen again being cases in point. There were a few I hunted after 2002."

"There were others back then?"

"Yes."

"All dead?"

"Unfortunately. And Vincent we did try. No cure worked."

"I may be able to offer some insight there."

"Any insights would be welcome Vincent. You are a doctor after all and I presume you have had some help?"

"Maybe." He wasn't going to give anything away in relation to JT. Time would tell if they could all work together to bring down Muirfield. He realised now that they had no choice but to at least try to do just that.

"I leave that to you. I'm not likely to come across another survivor any time soon so no hurry..."

"That's easy for you to say." Vincent said.

"Ahh yes of course. You want a cure?"

"Yes and no. If Muirfield were out of the picture then yes but while they are still a threat I can't really be normal. I'd be no good to Catherine."

"That's very true. A fine predicament you are in Vincent. Discover a cure and then realise that taking it and being normal is more dangerous than being a beast. That has got to screw with your mind."

"Not nearly as much as it used to."

"It all comes back to Catherine?" X questioned Vincent searchingly.

"It does."

"You really love my daughter that much?"

"More than life itself."

"I believe you Vincent."

"So what now?" Vincent asked.

"That's it. You can go."

"Seriously? I can just walk out?"

"Yes Vincent you can."

"What about Muirfield? What are your plans?"

"To be honest I don't know how we take them down yet but we will. When it comes to Muirfield we are on the same page. Most evil bastards ever spawned from hell. Even hell is too good for them. Vincent, the DNA experimentation is only the tip of the iceberg. You have no idea what they are truly capable of and what they have done."

"I don't ever want to find out. I have to tell Catherine all of this. I can't go behind her back. She'll be angry otherwise and I'm not prepared to put her in danger."

"I wouldn't have expected anything else from you Vincent. And Vincent?"

"Yes."

"I'm impressed. You are not at all what I expected to find. Killing you would be a travesty of justice and to be honest I don't want Catherine to go through that pain either. As I said, you are far more valuable alive and in one piece. Plus I know you'll die to protect her. I guess I couldn't ask for a better bodyguard."

"Well you're surprising the hell out of me. What about Catherine? Are you expecting to reconnect with her too?"

"No, not at all - I leave that for you to discuss with her. It's her choice. I won't be offended if she decides not to but I am open to the idea as long as it's safe."

"Ok."

"Now this is an untraceable phone with only one number in it. Mine. Call me in a week or so and we will go from there."

X handed Vincent a phone.

"No, I'll provide my own burner phone. Just give me your number. Phones can be traced and to be honest I don't completely trust you yet. If Muirfield traces your phone they can get to me and then to Catherine. I won't risk her life. That's non negotiable."

X stared at Vincent, admiring his honesty and initiative.

"Ok Vincent, here it is." He scribbled the number on a note. "Don't lose it. I expect a call soon."

"You'll hear from me. The whole your enemy is my enemy thing we have going works for me." Vincent responded.

"You can leave any-time you like Vincent. The exit is through that door. I had you placed in this room for a reason. It's closest to the exit. Goodbye Vincent and good luck until we meet again."

X walked out of the room vanishing from sight in seconds.

Vincent stood for a long moment digesting the entire conversation and his astonishment at how easy this was. Almost too easy. He was still suspicious. But all he could think of was being with Catherine. This was not the outcome he expected and neither would she. He had to find her and fast.

Vincent wasted no more time. Within seconds he was out in the street. He took a moment to get his bearings and then ran away in the direction of his love.

Later that day at Gabe's loft a shout went up from JT.

"Got it," he cried jubilantly. "Ladies and gentlemen we have a receiving signal! I am now going to triangulate it and hone in on the approximate time that helicopter grabbed V last night and fast track its path."

Minutes later JT got all excited again. "Ok now we have a location. 90 minutes North West. So what's the plan? We can't exactly storm the building We have no idea what we are up against here."

"A reconnaissance and then entry by stealth seems to be the place to start." Tess suggested. "Hey Wonder Geek, can we switch Beastie Boy back on again temporarily to kill the bad guys and then turn him back to normal or is that asking too much?"

"Vargas..." Gabe warned.

"What? Lowen you owe us and more importantly Cat, big time. So JT is it?"

"Let me think about it."

"Really? You're going to think about it on my behalf Forbes? Do I get a say in the matter?"

"Shut up, I'm thinking." JT went over all of the options, the means necessary in his head, his scientific mind going into overdrive.

"Yes it's doable but only as an absolutely last resort."

"Happy to hear that..." Gabe growled.

"Well the problem is that you are completely insanely unpredictable with no conscience or ability to distinguish the good guys from the bad so that worries me. We'd have to watch you and put you down if necessary and that could be like really distracting. Mind you once we are in we have V so that will even up the odds. I'd need the meds plus the stuff required to beast you out and....as many tranq guns as possible for each of us loaded with doses that could take out maybe 100 beasts just to be safe. But yeah it's doable."

JT looked at Tess and grinned. "Tess welcome to the dark side. May the Forbes be with you."

"I have my gun," Tess agreed with evil glee. "That's always an option..."

"Well yes there is that." JT smiled.

"Hey guys, I'm right here remember."

"You did say you might beg for that bullet Lowen." Tess reminded him

"I was emotional at the time. I take it back. If there's any hope you can fix me JT, I'm in." Gabe said.

"Well glory be. He sees the light. Just remember, if you get any ideas about grabbing Vincent again, you're so dead." JT promised.

"Message received loud and clear. You were right Catherine. I have totally dishonoured the memory of Vanessa and for that I am truly sorry." he stared at her with what appeared to be real contrition.

"OK Gabe, thanks, but we'll take it one day at a time from here. Let's go and get Vincent first. If he elects to tear you apart limb from limb I won't stop him."

"Ouch Cat. I love you more all the time," Tess chuckled.

"Cat, I'm with you too but first we'll have to stop at home so I can collect my bag of genetic engineering goodness. Speaking of which Lowen, have you got any spare tranq guns lying around?" JT asked.

"Well yes I do." he answered glaring at all of them.

"I figured you had to have something for Tyler to use against you just in case..."

Gabe went to the bedroom, then returned moments later with a tranq gun.

"Well that's a start. One more than we had five minutes ago," JT said happily.

"Ok Scooby Gang let's kick it and get this show on the road." Tess almost strutted towards the door. "We have Cat's boyfriend to save...and won't he be surprised to see Gabe."

An hour later they had collected what JT needed and were on their way to the location indicated by his exemplary hacking skills.

Almost an hour and a half after that, they pulled up two blocks away from an industrial warehouse estate deciding to go the rest of the way on foot, quietly.

It was an abandoned estate. No movement, no traffic, not a soul to be seen.

"Great creepy digs for villains," Tess remarked. "Much like your old warehouse JT..."

"Do you ever take anything seriously Vargas?" Gabe looked at her.

"Not if I can help it Lowen. Humour alleviates the tension."

He shook his head at her, baffled.

They crept forward.

"I don't like it. There are no cameras, no guards, no anything. There's nothing to indicate anyone has even been here. You sure we've come to the right place JT?" Tess asked

"Yes absolutely. There's no mistake." JT responded.

"Ok I'll take your word for it but you would think we'd have seen someone by now. It's not like we can knock and say 'Honey I'm home'..." Tess mused.

They continued forward, checked empty buildings, peered through broken windows.

The only sounds were their breathing, footsteps and the wind.

Thirty minutes of exhaustive searching found nothing but empty buildings and numerous empty rooms.

Cat's shoulders slumped in defeat with each sweep as their search slowly neared its conclusion with no result. No Vincent. No sign that anybody had ever been there.

She stared at JT in anguish. "Are you sure they were here?"

"Well no but...hang on, I think I saw something." JT answered hopefully.

Sudden movement had caught his attention; a swinging door metres away in the last building they hadn't searched.

Carefully they entered as Gabe went still, sniffed the air. "Vincent was here."

"Are you positive?" Cat whispered in agony.

"Yes Catherine, Vincent was definitely here but he's gone. Everyone is. I don't smell blood or death so they have either moved him or maybe they...and I just can't smell it. I am so sorry. I really am." he turned to her with genuine sorrow in his eyes.

Gabe saw Catherine's heartbreaking misery and knew he was indirectly responsible. He realised how much of a monster he must be to her now. The torture to her soul written all over her face cut him deeply.

Tess turned immediately, reaching out as Catherine, who had been hanging on by the finest of gossamer threads for nearly 24 hours finally unravelled, collapsing straight into her arms.

The drive back to the city was silent and miserable as they all came to grips with the very real possibility that Vincent had been killed or at the very least moved and they had no idea as to where. Catherine was huddled in the back seat refusing Tess' touch, her comfort or solace. She didn't feel deserving of anyone's sympathy as she wrestled with the possibility and awful enormity of the life without Vincent that stretched out before her. Catherine ached in every part of her soul. She felt numb and all she could do was shrink into herself; uncaring, unseeing and feeling completely alone in her desolation.

They took Catherine to Tess' apartment. She didn't resist, she just allowed herself to be led as Tess removed her shoes and jacket; tucked her into bed.

"Cat when you're ready I'm here. I'll speak with Heather and find out about your Dad. You just try to rest." Seeing her friend looking so empty Tess searched for the words, but all she could think of was, "Cat he may not be Gabe didn't smell it so maybe they really did just move him. Hold onto that. We'll start again tomorrow."

Catherine nodded mutely, eyes swimming with tears, her control slipping away.

Tess closed the bedroom door behind her, came out to JT and Gabe.

"What are you going to do now JT?" she asked him.

"Well someone has to keep an eye on Lowen here so we'll go to The Loft. I guess I'll stay there and make sure..."

"Forbes that's not necessary."

"Do you really want to take that chance Lowen?"

Gabe stared at JT knowing he was right. His shoulders fell forward in defeat. "Ok."

The rest of the evening passed in a blur as JT became Gabe's shadow whilst wrestling with his own demons. He refused to believe Vincent was dead but had no idea how to track him even if he was still alive and that tore at him. Wondering if he'd thought of the helicopter GPS tracking earlier whether they may have gotten to Vincent in time.

JT collected a few belongings from his place and then went back to The Loft with Gabe. He gave him the meds and an extra sedative to keep him quiet for the night while contemplating the next move. JT couldn't believe he was helping the man indirectly responsible for Vincent's capture. But Gabe hadn't asked for this either. He was just as much a victim as Vincent was if not worse. Gabe didn't have Vincent's control or awareness and had to live with the awful knowledge that he couldn't control his murderous rampages when he transformed.

Tess left Catherine to rest. She spoke with Heather and told her what little she could while keeping the situation under control. Tess told Heather that delayed reaction to the news of not being Thomas' daughter had set in. "Just give her a little time and space Heath. Cat can stay with me for a couple of days."

Heather understood, tearfully agreeing to give her sister some time and space as Tess had recommended.

As Tess hung up the phone, realisation that Cat was in serious trouble this time slammed into her like a bullet had just hit her in the stomach. Tess allowed herself to feel helpless for a moment not knowing what to do to help and then slumped onto her couch in shock as she too dealt with the fallout of the situation.

Time passed so Tess went in to check on Catherine only to find her feverishly pulling on her shoes, grabbing her jacket.

"What are you doing Cat?"

"I need to go to Vincent's."

"Why?"

"Please just take me there, please," as tears tumbled down her face. "I need to breathe him.....feel him."

Tess understood, nodded, picked up her keys and followed Cat to the car.

Tess drove with Cat in silence all the while tears streaming down Cat's face. "Cat we're here."

"Thanks Tess. You don't have to stay."

Tess looked at Cat suspiciously.

"It's ok. I'm safe here. Please I want to be alone," she pleaded with her best friend.

Tess continued to stare at her in doubt.

"Ple..." Cat pleaded, her voice catching. "Please."

"Ok." Tess said. "But if you need me just call and I'll come and get you straight away no matter what time it is. Promise me you'll remember to call if you need to?"

"I will Tess. I promise. Thank you."

Tess watched as Cat shuffled away, slowly climbing the stairs. Just as Tess reached the door, she turned, about to say something more, but Cat had disappeared, walking down the upstairs hallway to, Tess assumed, Vincent's bedroom..

Cat opened the door then peeled off her clothes and climbed into Vincent's bed, huddling under the covers, aching everywhere with the savage loss and loneliness of being without him.

JT's cell buzzed. He looked down at the private number with no interest and almost didn't answer it.

Hitting the receive button he placed the phone up to his ear. "Hello." he said with tired resignation.

"JT, man, where the fuck are you? Where's Catherine? I can't find her. I'm going crazy"

JT sat bolt upright, adrenaline surging through his body. "V is that you? You're alive?"

"Yes of course I am. Where's Catherine?"

"With Tess at her place."

"I'm going there right now."

"Wait, what?"

"JT, it's a long story. I'll explain more tomorrow but it was Catherine's real Dad who took me and he's a good guy; well he hates Muirfield as much as we do..."

"It's ok I get it. You're ok though? They didn't?"

"No, nothing. I'm ok. He was fine with me, wants to help."

"Oh my God. Who knew?"

"How's Catherine?"

"Thinks you're pretty much dead or permanently missing so she's like almost in a catatonic state."

"Christ. Man I gotta go..."

"It's ok V, go and see your girl. But call me as soon you can." JT hung up with the most ridiculous smile on his face. All was suddenly right with the world.

Tess heard the pounding at her door.

"All right I'm coming." She opened the door, ready to scream blue murder at whoever was on the other side but stopped dead in her tracks.

"No...no." She stared at Vincent in disbelief, blinking rapidly.

"Is she here?"

"No V, I dropped her off at your place."

"What?"

"She crawled into your bed. I'm pretty sure that's where you'll find her."

"Tess..."

"It's ok V. Go!"

Vincent turned to leave.

"I'm just really glad to see you alive..." Tess started to say with a huge smile on her face, but Vincent was gone before she could finish the sentence.

Cat curled up in a foetal position in Vincent's bed. She tried desperately to conjure him up in her mind's eye, willing him into existence next to her, feeling him flow around her. She was so cold and so miserable without him. They had come so close but he wasn't there. More tears spilled from her eyes as she felt the torment of not finding him. Was he dead? If not, then where was he? Where had they taken him? In her mind there seemed to be no way to find him this time and that terrified her. She was usually so dammed strong but her strength was fading fast along with hope. A future without Vincent didn't exist. Feeling desperately helpless and alone she cried into his pillow and inhaled his scent.

Lying there, with silent tears falling down her face and onto Vincent's pillow, Cat thought she imagined gentle hands reaching out to gather her into all too familiar arms. Cat, startled, turned her tear streaked face to find Vincent's glorious one mere centimetres from her own.

"Vincent." Cat cried. "Oh my God Vincent. Is that you? Are you real?" Cat reached around him and pressed her cheek to his chest to make sure. Vincent's heartbeat was strong and real and beating as wildly as hers.

"Catherine, yes it's me. I'm here."

"But how? We tracked you down but you were gone..."

"You found me? How did you find me?" Vincent asked.

"JT, Tess & Gabe. Gabe came through."

"Gabe's alive?" Vincent said in shock.

"Yes...but...later. Talk later...God, Vincent!" Catherine trembled violently as she pressed hard against his chest.

"Catherine when they let me go I looked everywhere for you, thought I would go insane." He held her close, his arms a tight wonderful band around her. "I didn't think I'd find you here."

"I thought I'd lost you." Catherine's eyes shone with tears.

"Sshhh it's ok. I'm here. I can't live without you. I never want to..."

Vincent dropped his arms to cup her glorious face in his hands as he leaned forward to place feather like kisses on her wet cheeks. He stared intently into her tear filled eyes then placed his lips on her lower lashes in a kiss that drank away her tears.

"This is what kept me going Catherine. You, touching you, kissing you, remembering what it feels like to move inside you. God, I love you so much," he breathed against her lips before claiming them in a long, languorous, soul shattering kiss.

He kissed her as he'd never kissed her before – with intense longing, adoration and mind numbing thoroughness.



Catherine melted into his mouth and expected to die from the sheer pleasure of it.

Her heart beat frantic, she craved all of him; his skin, his scent, his touch, that incredible mouth and his heart and soul. She was as much his as he was hers. Hands reached out to peel clothes away from bodies as desire allowed no resistance. Naked skin on skin was required to slake their thirst for union. Vincent dragged his mouth away from Catherine's as he continued his onslaught along her jaw line to her throat and beyond. When he took a nipple into his mouth and rolled it deftly with his lips Catherine whimpered. The skin of her aureole puckered and rose as she arched her back, pushing the peak further into his mouth to experience more of his exquisite tongue.

The feelings he evoked in her were all consuming. As he complied with her wordless request, suckling with more urgency Catherine threw her head back in abandon and let herself free-fall into pure sensation. Vincent's mouth continued its assault across her stomach, dipping lower and lower. Catherine felt every lick, every nip, every kiss, every touch, every breath, his eyelashes fluttering against her skin and then her senses whirled in chaos when he found her core with his mouth. As he nipped and rolled his tongue along her delicate sex his hands reached up her body to caress and not so gently knead her breasts with firm strokes.

Catherine felt the avalanche of sensation as it reached higher and higher to drag her under. As Vincent delved deeper his instincts took over and finding her G spot he laved at her mercilessly. Catherine screamed in pleasure as his long tongue continued his assault; rasping, sucking, penetrating so far inside her that it felt like he was everywhere, invading every part of her all at once. He catapulted her into such blissful torture she could no longer stand it, her body threatening to implode.

"Vincent please. Oh God, now...need...you...inside...me."

Vincent moved back up Catherine's body and as he drew level with her face he plunged deep inside her in one stroke. Then he pushed again and again, impaling himself further with every movement. Catherine wrapped her legs around him drawing him in deeper as if she could fuse him into her flesh. It wasn't close enough. It would never be close enough. She wrapped her arms tightly about his shoulders, arched up to meet him over and over, felt him pulse in and around her, felt the ache of him embedded so deeply inside her that she cried with the sheer joy of it. His eyes glowed amber as they fell over the edge and as her eyes locked with his their climax hit them in waves. Their lips met and they seemed to merge at every level of being. It was beyond glorious. Wave after wave of orgasm crashed around and inside them until it finally released its hold bringing them back ever so slowly to reality...

Vincent buried his face in Catherine's neck inhaling her sweet scent, saying her name over and over as if reciting a litany. She held on to him like she would never let him go.

As their trembling subsided and their heart beats slowed to beat as one they lay entwined, staring at each other, both fearing that if they closed their eyes it would all be just a dream.

"Catherine...
Oh my God...
No words...
I'm never letting you go...
This beast mates for life..."

"And don't you forget it" Catherine crooned deliriously as she nuzzled his jaw, planting soft kisses on his skin.

"Mmm you seem a bit happy at the moment." Vincent smiled warmly into her eyes

"Bit happy? Vincent I am beyond happy. I am delirious but I'm still terrified it's all a dream."

"It's no dream Catherine. God I missed you. Being dragged away in that net and away from you was the worst single moment of my entire life."

"But now you're here. Vincent I thought I was going to break in two. I don't know what we are going to do but I can't go through that pain again."

"I know Catherine. I know." Vincent pulled her close. "I feel the same. It was only a little more than a day but it felt like a lifetime. I really didn't think I was going to see you again either but then...it's like a miracle happened. Catherine, there's something I need to tell you though, aah, but I don't know where to start."

"What do you mean? What happened? Are you ok? Vincent are you ok?"

"It's not about me. It's about you. It, it's about your Mom and Dad."

"You mean about my Dad Thomas not being my real Dad?"

Vincent looked at Catherine in shock. "Wait, you know already?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"In case Dad needed to have an operation because of his injuries, I gave blood at the hospital but it wasn't a match. They told Heather because they needed to get blood from her. Tess managed to get the information out of her when she called to cover for my absence. I went to the hospital to see Thomas after you had been taken. He told me the truth. He told me that my biological father was my Mom's first fiancé who begged her to leave Muirfield and when she wouldn't he left her, not knowing she was pregnant with me."

"Why wouldn't she leave Muirfield?" Vincent asked.

"She felt too strongly about the people they experimented on. She felt she needed to stay for them."

"I can believe that about your Mom. I've said to you before how amazing she was in Afghanistan."

"Anyway when Mom met Thomas she told him as little as possible. He said he found out more by accident when she was pregnant with Heather. She made him promise not to tell for fear of our lives."

"Christ Catherine, that's a big secret to live with."

"When she came back from Afghanistan where you met her she was haunted, really affected by what had happened."

"She hated what they did to us." Vincent agreed.

"Mom told Thomas a little more about my real Dad and told him what to look out for should anything ever happen to her. She knew Vincent. She knew it was just a matter of time. So when my real Dad came up on a Homeland Security alert that Thomas had access to he recognised him, panicked and that's the reason he..."

"Called you to meet with him and then got hit by that car."

"Exactly."

"So Muirfield was tracking him." Vincent observed.

"It seems like it. Vincent, Tess thought my real Dad was in the helicopter and maybe when he saw me, he recognised me, which made me think that's the reason he didn't kill you."

"That's right."

"So my real Dad. What's he like?" Catherine asked.

"Complicated." Vincent replied. "He said he killed the surviving members of my platoon. I had no idea more than me escaped but he said he did it because he believed they were a threat to civilians. He tried to find a cure but couldn't. He said they couldn't work out how to reverse the DNA or get survivors to function under the level of control I seem to have so he made it his mission to wipe them all out."

"So he really is like a 'Beast Hunter'?"

Vincent looked at her quizzically. "'Beast Hunter'? Where did that come from?"

"Gabe, he said he recognised him and told us the story."

"Speaking of Gabe..."

"JT performed his usual genius mad scientist magic. He figured we would need him and maybe his beast tendencies to track you."

"So he's alive?"

"For now. I did say that if you wanted to rip him apart I would let you."

"You said that?" Vincent looked at her with a rather satisfied smile.

"I did. I wasn't very happy with him at the time."

"I can imagine. So where is he now?" Vincent asked.

"JT is babysitting him, making sure he doesn't go all grrr again and try to kill us all."

"JT is babysitting Gabe?" Vincent was incredulous.

"I know. This has been a really weird 24 hours Vincent. You have no idea."

"I'm starting to."

"Gabe knows that I blame him for everything that's happened so I expect he will keep a wide berth from me for quite a while. JT said he would help him. He thinks he has found a way that won't kill him like his pills do, but it won't cure him either, so we all have to work together as JT said, for the common good."

"JT said that?"

"Words to that effect. Gabe seems to be sorry for what he tried to do to you, but he is a victim too and he was desperate. Having said that, if he doesn't co-operate there are any number of people, including me, lining up to put a bullet in his head, but Tess is the number one volunteer."

"Remind me to send Tess flowers." Vincent said admiringly.

"Does JT know you're back?"

"Yes I called him to find out where you were. When I couldn't find you I nearly went insane. He said you were with Tess so I banged her door down."

"You didn't?" Catherine looked at Vincent with huge eyes.

"Not literally. She did seem really happy to see me though and told me where you were."

"Vincent, she was amazing. I couldn't have done it without her. I was hanging by a thread which completely unravelled when we got to where we thought they held you but you were gone."

"You mentioned that. How did you find me?"

"JT. He figured out the whole GPS tracker in the helicopter thing. It took hours to find the receiver, with Gabe's equipment I might add, and once JT found it, tracking the flight path was easy. We got there and everything was gone. You weren't there but Gabe could smell that you'd been there. We assumed the worst. Needless to say at that point I lost it."

"I'm sorry you had to go through all of that."

"Vincent it's not your fault. You were the one taken. Now you said my real Dad saw us so what happened after that to make him let you go? Who is he?"

"I don't know. He would only introduce himself as 'X'."

" 'X'. You're kidding?"

"Nope."

"Weirder and weirder." Catherine said shaking her head.

"Definitely. I can't tell you much about him. He was with your Mom like Thomas told you and kept away for your safety. He went after renegade beasts as I mentioned and he was really surprised when he learned of my existence."

"I bet he was," Catherine observed.

"He kept tabs on your Mom in Afghanistan so he knew of me. He was stunned when I mentioned that I saved her life over there."

"That should have scored you brownie points."

"It did. Which is one of the reasons he let me go. He knew killing me was wrong. It seems I'm not like other beasts..."

"I'll go along with that," Catherine purred, snuggling closer.

"...because I'm aware when I'm beasting out unlike the others, unlike Gabe. He acknowledged that I don't kill innocents so he didn't see the value in killing me, decided that studying me..."

Catherine went still.

"No. Not like that, in a benign way, like talking, checking in with me once in a while; working out how and why I'm able to function relatively normally."

"I can answer that question. It's all me." Catherine's lips were now at the curve of Vincent's neck so he was finding it difficult to concentrate.

Vincent laughed. "Um...he worked that out too."

"What?"

"Catherine stop it." as her mouth became more insistent against his skin. "You're driving me crazy..."

Catherine paused, looked at Vincent with a teasing smile. "So what were you saying about what he had worked out?"

"Um, let's just say, my feelings for you. He studied all the precinct case files and my medical files. Put all the clues together and realised that I was the one who saved your life many times and that you were protecting me in return. He saw our hand clasp when he took me, recognised you and realised that our connection was deeper and figured you wouldn't fall for a monster. For someone who's never met you he seems to be able to read you accurately. One of the other reasons he let me go was because he knew I could protect you better than anyone else. I made a pretty convincing argument that you were better off with me in your life than out of it."

"I'm glad he could see the obvious. Vincent you liked him didn't you?"

"Yeah. He hates Muirfield and is determined to bring them down so it's the whole your enemy is my enemy and we should work together thing."

"My real boyfriend working with my real father." Catherine shook her head in wonder. "So I guess taking out Muirfield is still on our agenda? No running away to Denver? You know, I did entertain that idea for a bit."

"Catherine as much as I would love to run away to Denver with you we can't. Even if we find a cure I can't take it anyway, not while Muirfield is still out there. They would search for me if I was 'normal' or a beast."

"I know Vincent. I came to the same conclusion. We need the beast part of you. I love the idea of a normal you but never ever in preference to keeping you full stop, beast and all. Plus I'm getting quite attached to your beast anyway. It's the amber eyes..."

"Oh yes I do remember that." Vincent looked at her with love. "And I plan on them making a reappearance very soon but Catherine I have to come clean with you about something first."

"Oh, oh, I don't like the sound of that."

"Please don't be angry...your real father..." Vincent started to say.

"Yes." Catherine responded.

"I knew who he was as soon as soon as I saw him."

"How could you know that?"

"I heard a fragment of conversation in the helicopter about a daughter, realised he'd stopped the shooter from killing you and then saw the family resemblance as soon as I laid eyes on him."

"Yeah so? That's ok. With your spidey senses I would expect that."

Vincent took a deep breath but felt he had to tell her the whole truth. "Catherine we have kept far too many secrets from each other in our misguided attempts to keep each other safe. JT said once how great would it be if we actually worked together rather than..."

"Vincent..."

"When I was helping Evan out of the building after Muirfield captured me..."

"I remember."

"He'd seen a file that listed Thomas as your adopted father. Evan knew that I had seen the same file..."

"Wait, you knew Thomas wasn't my real Dad and you didn't tell me?"

Catherine's face lit up in anger as she tried to pull away from the safe harbour of Vincent's arms.

"Oh no you don't", Vincent hauled her straight back and held her firmly.

"We are not repeating old mistakes where I watch you storm out; we are miserable apart and then it takes a near death experience to bring us back together. Not this time. Now please listen Catherine..."

Vincent held her gaze for a long moment choosing his words.

"Catherine. Yes I knew, but only that he wasn't your Dad. I didn't know until now who your biological father was. And I still don't. 'X' is nothing to go on. I didn't even know where to start. So what was I meant to tell you? 'Look I've seen a file that says Thomas is your adopted father but I don't know any more than that.' What if he had been Muirfield, telling you would have sent you on a suicide mission to find out and for me it has always been about keeping you safe. You know that. I love how strong you are and independent; that you can look after yourself but I am an alpha male. Let's face it; with the enhancements I got, the whole alpha thing is really magnified in my case. It's in my nature, but where you're concerned it's more than that. It scares me sometimes, the lengths I will go to keep you safe but it's who I am. You are never going to be able to change that. I am going to make really bad decisions thinking I'm doing the right thing. Please don't be angry with me. The scar on my face is nothing compared to the scars losing you would leave."

Vincent kept looking at her, eyes wet with tears. He was so scared of Catherine pulling away.

Catherine stilled, staring at him in anguish. Her heart clenched as she absorbed the hurt in his words. Realising her petulance, she blanched at the thought that she could repeat old patterns. Risk losing him again? She would never allow that to happen.

She reached out to caress his face, running her fingers along his scar.

"You never did finish explaining how you got that..." she said softly.

"Remember months ago when I was blacking out and JT made that serum based on your Mom's formula?"

Catherine nodded.

"I spoke of remembering your Mom and at the same time I mentioned that I saved her from being killed by the bastard that was involved in wiping us all out. I fought with him, kept him away from your Mom. He slashed me with his knife, sliced my face open before I killed him. I don't know how I held it together. I guess the DNA helped but of course by the time I managed to get out and back home it was too late for it to heal properly...but Catherine this scar is nothing..."

"No, it's not nothing. It's a reminder to me of the horror of that time, of how alone you were and how vulnerable. How terrified you must have been. Not feeling human. Oh Vincent I'm so sorry."

Catherine moved forward to touch her mouth to his scar where it started at the top of his forehead. She trailed soft kisses along the length of it all the way to where it stopped near his mouth.



Vincent groaned in pleasure. "God that feels good."

"You like that?" Catherine breathed against his lips.

She pushed Vincent onto the bed while straddling him. The sheet fell away to reveal her beautiful, naked body as she leaned forward to continue her assault on his face. She kissed her way along the length of his scar from his mouth to his forehead and then back again. As her tongue traced circles on his cheek, she reached between them to cup his length in her sure hands. Vincent's eyes flew open as he hardened at her expert touch. Then her mouth started to move, her kisses continued their caresses down his throat, his shoulder and onto his chest as she blazed a trail of fire to the flat of his stomach all the while making sure his manhood wasn't ignored.

It was Vincent's turn to writhe as Catherine enveloped his shaft with her mouth. She took in the length of him and swirled around him with her tongue. He growled his response as her mouth became more insistent, sweeping up and down; licking, sucking, engulfing him. Vincent's hands reached down to caress her head, fingers tangling in her hair as he moaned at her insanely insistent tongue.

"Catherine..."

It was all he could breathe as words completely failed him.

Catherine stopped long enough to settle herself above him and guide him slowly inside her, watching the fierce desire on his face that spoke of a need so intense it took her breath away.

Vincent reached out to cup her bottom cheeks with his hands, caressing her skin while she pushed herself all the way down until their bodies met. He was buried inside her so deeply he couldn't feel where he stopped and she started. When she rocked backwards and forwards, building momentum, throwing her head back in ecstasy, Vincent lost all sense of reality.

As their desire escalated, Catherine pitched forward against his chest, her mouth a mere inches from his. The movement intensified the angle of their union, the depth of his entry and bought with it exquisite pain. Mouths clung, breaths mingled as they sought to merge as one as wave after wave of climax tipped them into a headlong blinding release.

Many moments later...

"God what did I ever do to deserve you?" Vincent stared at his beloved Catherine in wonder. "You never fail to take my breath away. Thank you for forgiving me...again. Especially like that."

"What do you mean forgive?" Catherine chuckled. "That was me punishing you."

"Oh God. If that was punishment your forgiveness is possibly going to kill me."

"Yep," Catherine snuggled in beside Vincent, holding him tightly, wrapping her legs around him as if he was her anchor to reality. She never wanted the terror of separation again. Vincent understood all too well as he too wrapped himself around her.

Together again, they drifted off to sleep in a place of extraordinary bliss.

Hours later Catherine woke up with a start, terror shook through her as she reached out...to find Vincent right beside her in their bed. It wasn't a dream.

"Hey I'm here Catherine. It's ok." Vincent pulled her into his arms, holding her tightly.

"Oh God Vincent, just for a moment..."

"I know. I'm not going anywhere. I love you, so much." He kissed the top of her head, entwining himself around her, enveloping her as she suddenly craved, to confirm his reality against her still trembling body.

The intensity of his love and his very essence poured into Catherine, infusing life, love and his soul directly into hers. She burrowed into him, trying to merge into his skin, feeling him against all of her. She pressed closer and closer, straining, melting; their combined heat having its effect on him as he hardened against her.

Catherine felt his response, felt his erection against her sex and desperately needed him inside her to fill the aching void; her urgency acting like a drug as Vincent locked lips with hers. It was his dream. Sinking, drowning and as they joined, Vincent pulsing inside her, taking Catherine with him, this time he knew it was real and it was forever.

The End.

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Disclaimer: Whilst I own the rights to my story, I do not own Beauty and the Beast, its characters or images. They belong to the CW Network. This is a work of fan fiction.

I hope you enjoyed 'Taken'. Don't forget to post reviews/leave comments to let me know what you thought of my S2 alternative opener.

I am working on several other scenes/short stories at present and also plan to start a novel very soon.

Next work to be published will be the final in 'The Wet Series - Part 5: Oasis.' It promises to be the most romantic and sexy story of the series. Think of the dance from 'Bridesmaid Up' being part of the inspiration for Vincent's magical birthday present to Catherine.

I have also self published a very steamy romance novel about love and second chances between an author and a private investigator, called 'Indefinite Secondment'.

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