
To mark the opening of the Studio, I invited Princess Generosa Cleopatra Cardamone. It was an informal meeting — a social conversation, warm and lively. We sat by the fireplace, and the conversation gradually shifted from art to personal stories. I shared memories of exhibitions, of paintings that especially touched me, and the Princess spoke of her experiences connected with great artists and their tragic destinies.

And suddenly, almost without changing her tone, she said:

— Did you know there is a Van Gogh painting that he himself tore apart?

I was startled. I had never heard such a story.

— Tore apart? Why?

The Princess nodded.

— It happened at the very end of his life. He painted it during a moment of extreme emotional tension — right when a wall of alienation began to rise between him and his brother Theo. His condition was deteriorating, and Theo was listening less to Vincent and more to his wife — Johanna.

I listened, holding my breath. This wasn't just a tale — there was a certainty in the Princess's voice, as if she had known more than what is written in books.

— When Van Gogh was once again taken to a clinic, — she continued, — the painting remained with Theo. It was almost finished. Almost. But apparently, Johanna decided to “help.” She took a brush and completed what she thought was missing. The brushstrokes were foreign. The light — not his. But the most shocking thing — at the bottom appeared the signature: Vincent.

I tensed up involuntarily.

— She signed it with his name?..

The Princess slowly nodded.

— He came back, saw it — and understood everything. Without permission. Without the right. Perhaps out of good intentions — but without understanding. She decided to “complete” his work, to make it “more finished,” “more commercial.” But for him, it was an intrusion. A violation of the most personal. His painting — it was his soul.

I closed my eyes. I could almost feel his hands trembling, how he stood before the canvas, into which he had poured all his pain — and saw foreign strokes.

— He couldn't bear it. He tore the painting apart, — said the Princess. — Not out of whim. Out of pain. He rejected interference. He chose suffering, but genuine. He could not allow a falsehood to remain under his name.

— What happened to the painting? — I asked.

— Johanna gathered its fragments. In secret. She didn't throw them away but carefully collected them and, years later, mounted them behind glass — as a reminder. Perhaps out of guilt. Or maybe to prove her love. No one knows. But the painting survived. It exists.

I couldn't believe it.

— And you saw it?

— Yes, — the Princess replied. — In the private collection of an oligarch. He showed it to me, almost casually. On the wall, behind glass — a raw, living wound. The canvas torn, but reassembled. You can see the seams, the fragments, the unfinished parts. But within it — something greater than art. Within it — an act of resistance. Pain that cannot be sold.

We sat in silence for a long time.

— An incredible story, — I finally said. — But it must be heard.

The Princess looked at me and smiled.

— Exactly. That's why I told it to you. I want you to write about it. The full story. Not an article, not a note — a book.

— A book?

— Yes. You know how to feel art. And Van Gogh deserves for his pain to be heard not only with the eyes, but with the heart. Name it as you feel. I would call it... "Torn Soul."

I nodded. Even then I knew — the book would be written. And it would be called:
"Torn Soul: Van Gogh, Suffering and Authenticity"