

## NO WAY DOWN

(The Lost Love Letters of Catherine Chandler #4)

by Joy Faulkner

*My Dearest Vincent,*

*My heart reaches out to you in your distress, to comfort and love you. I long to hug you better, as my father hugged me so often when the hurts of the world became too much for me. But then, I was a child and easily comforted. You are a man, and your anguish, the pain and humiliation you suffered so recently, need more than my arms to dispel them.*

*Please, Vincent, please, don't let the nightmare of what happened to you make you feel shame for yourself. Or hatred. The shame and hatred should be for your attackers alone, for they alone bear the guilt of their cruelty. Their cruelty and their ignorance.*

*I understand how you feel. I truly do. Didn't I feel exactly the same when those men took me into their van and slashed my face? I, too, knew the horror of being held against my will, of being degraded and crushed. I knew the terror of helplessness, just as you did, and the scent of fear in my nostrils.*

*I find it impossible to describe the feelings, the thoughts, that ran through my mind as I watched another human being preparing to hurt me, to enjoy hurting me; to know that there wasn't a thing on earth I could do to stop him. Even now, the words won't come. Even for you. They stick in my throat and choke me. But that is something you will understand, and they are something else we share now, Vincent, those feelings.*

*Yes, it's true that cruelty and brutality do seem to breed in the air Above, but so do compassion and trust. If you care to look for them. They aren't commodities enjoyed only by the world Below.*

*Remember Lucy, who finally came to trust you, and Isaac who gave me his help so unstintingly and asked no questions in return? And don't forget Howie. Never forget Howie. He gave everything so that you could get safely home. Remember him, Vincent, when you're feeling dark and hopeless, and remember that I come from the world Above as well.*

*The truth can be terrifying, just as you say, but between us it can hold no terrors. The evil you speak of is in their eyes, their souls, the ones who hurt you. Not yours. So you need never fear to look into my eyes, as often as you wish, for there you will see only love. The love mirrored from your own. And that love is the only truth you have to face between us.*

*When I was hurt, Vincent, when the world's brutality had crushed me, until I felt I could no longer go on, you were there for me. You showed me the way back. Let that same courage lead you, now that your own way is darkened. And have that courage, too, to lean on me as I leant on you.*

*I want to be there for you, Vincent. I want you to take my hand as I took yours, and trust me as I trusted you. Then, both our souls will sing.*

*Take care, take care, my dearest one. Be well.*

*Catherine*