

NOR IRON BARS A CAGE

(The Lost Love Letters of Catherine Chandler #7)

by Joy Faulkner

My dearest Vincent,

The horror of the last few days still haven't left me completely. I shudder to think of them yet, to think of what they must have meant for you.

I have never before seen you so lost to yourself, so close to death, not even when the Silks caught you Above. Then, at least, you still had the will to fight, the desire to go on. But when I found you in Hughes' cage, you had given up. You were preparing for death, Vincent. For death. And the fear that memory strikes into my heart cannot be described.

I would have killed Hughes to get you out of there. And Gould as well, if I'd had to. Nothing would have stopped me reaching you. Nothing.

So you cannot tell me again that it is better for me to leave you. Not anymore. For a time, I know, I tried to believe those words. I tried to believe your assurances, much as they distressed me. And they did, Vincent. They burnt into my heart like fire. But if you couldn't accept the gift of myself, I thought I might give you my world instead. You would have had the freedom to see it through my eyes, to live in it through my experiences. That much, at least, I could do. And I would have done it, Vincent. I would have shared my life with you that way, if there was no other way to do it.

But even then, I hesitated. The pain of losing you was proving too much. I packed my things, Vincent, but I couldn't move out. When it came to it, I just didn't have your strength.

Now, thank God, you are home. And safe. You are gradually getting well again, and the despair is slipping away. I can see it in you, in your smile when I come in, in your growing strength, and I can breathe again for a time. But I know that I have another battle to fight. In some ways, an even harder one. I know Father is angry with me, that he lays the blame for much of this at my door. He feels that you take too many risks, Vincent, just by knowing me.

And he's right. You do take too many risks. We both do. But loving is a risk. Not just for you and me, for everyone, and we can't back away from it because of that. If we deny love, what will be left in the world? Your world or mine.

There is so much to gain if we are strong, if we keep faith. Love, as you say, is greater than evil, greater than disillusionment and fear. And we must remember that, and hang onto it, no matter what. Fate threw us together, Vincent, and we must not lose the dream that it gave us. That dream is worth everything, worth all the struggles we encounter along our path toward it. So we must nurture and care for it, and never let it die.

Take care, my dearest Vincent. Be well.

Catherine