

THE LOST LOVE LETTERS OF CATHERINE CHANDLER

by Joy Faulkner

PROLOGUE

In the first dark days when Catherine Chandler was believed dead, her two friends, Joe Maxwell and Jenny Aronson, went through her belongings to see what was to be done with them. It was a sad and silent business for them both, with few words spoken, and when they came upon the hand-carved rosewood box addressed simply to Vincent, they showed no curiosity. There was too much pain in their hearts for that. They merely passed it on, as they were requested, to Peter Alcott for delivery. And so, by this circuitous route, Vincent's letters to his beloved came home to him.

At first, he wouldn't open them. He couldn't. But he put them safely away. And one morning, not long after he had brought their son back to the tunnels, he took them out of their hiding place. And he found their partners, the replies Catherine had written to him. They were still bound together by their narrow band of satin ribbon, a length carefully cherished from her hair; a keepsake from that Halloween night so long before, when they had walked New York together. He held it in his hands for a moment, remembering.

Then finally, he began to read.

And as he read, he heard her voice, whispering the words softly into his ear. And he felt her smile, sensed her warmth, her fragrance, flowing into his heart. He felt her love. And in that instant he knew, *knew*, that she was alive.

The shock was great, almost too great, and he fell to his knees as if stunned, clutching the letters to his chest. And the room dissolved around him, shimmering behind a veil of unshed tears.

But the roar that burst from his thrown back head filled the whole world Below with its joy.

The tunnel dwellers paused, and looked at each other in wonderment. For they had not heard such a sound from Vincent in months. Indeed, they had never thought to hear its like again. And back in his chamber, Vincent wept. He finally allowed the tears to fall. Because he now knew:

His Catherine was coming home to him.

And, as a tribute to the power of love over death, and a reminder that all things are possible if you truly wish for them hard enough, here are Catherine's letters to Vincent; the words that brought their bond, brought her, back to him.