

Bring Into  
Bondage

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## Chapter One

“Marriage of true minds...” Freddie grumbled as he gazed at the row of red, calf-bound volumes. “Marriage of...”

He pulled a book off of the shelf and whipped through the pages, heedless of the fine paper and the ash that floated off the cigarette whose holder was firmly clamped between his teeth.

“No. No. Ah. ‘Let me not to the marriage of true minds admit impediments...’” He read the rest of the sonnet and smiled.

Kathy would like that one. Freddie closed his eyes and tried to recite the words.

“Sir,” said Roberts, the valet, from behind him. “Your car is ready.”

“Thank you, Roberts.” Freddie looked at the book and sighed. Perhaps between the light of the stars and the city, there would be enough to read by. He slipped the volume into the inside pocket of his light gray summer wool suit jacket, checked his vest pocket again, and left the apartment.

In the cream-colored Cadillac, he left his cigarette case and lighter on the dark brown leather seat beside him. The top was down, and the last lingering traces of another sweltering day in New York City wrapped

around him as he pushed the starter. He checked his vest pocket again for the ring that he knew was still there, then pulled into traffic.

Dodging flivvers and buses, he yanked the butt of his cigarette out of the holder and tossed it onto the street. A new cigarette was fitted and lit in seconds. The action was barely soothing. He was smoking too fast, and he knew it. Then again, he felt he had the right to. He again touched the ring that waited in his vest pocket.

He'd planned the evening carefully. They would dine casually at a small Italian restaurant in the Village where the food was excellent and the proprietor served wine as if there were no such thing as Prohibition. Then a pleasant drive along the East River to a spot north of town where one could look back and enjoy the beauty of the city lights, but still be quite alone. And there, on July ten, nineteen hundred and twenty-five, Freddie Little would try his damndest to convince Kathy Briscow to become his wife.

Kathy had every reason to refuse him. For her, marriage meant a loss of self so profound it only started with the loss of her name. Unfortunately for Freddie, it was that same independence that made her so attractive to him.

They'd been going out together for over six months, supposedly as friends. But even Kathy had been calling him her beau for at least four months. Of late, there was a decided tendency to get rather overheated when alone together. The previous Saturday had been the worst.

They were celebrating the Fourth of July at a private picnic in the country. An accident with a strawberry pie had led to some intense necking and even petting before Freddie abruptly called a halt.

"Freddie, it's time we were lovers," said Kathy, blunt as always.

"I think not, Kathy."

She smiled softly. "I'm not talking about easy

pleasure, to be taken lightly. Freddie, I love you.”

“And I love you.” Freddie took her hand and lightly caressed it, marveling at how easily the words had come. “Which is precisely why I will not take you as my lover.”

“I don’t understand.”

“Kathy, dearest, you have a dream of coming together as equals. With no promises or contracts, if something goes wrong, as it could all too easily, you will have no recourse to the courts or social conscience. You will be defenseless, and that is not equal.”

Kathy hadn’t argued back, not that she’d agreed. She merely knew the futility of trying to change his mind on that issue. It had put a significant damper on the afternoon, although they still stayed out quite late that night.

Something had to be done. Freddie had always known marriage was the best answer, a marriage in which they defined the terms of their relationship, in which they were equal partners, and at long last, he felt ready to do it.

He lit another cigarette and touched the ring. At least, he was fairly certain he was ready. By the time he stopped the car in front of the brownstone on East 9th, he was not at all certain. He checked his watch. Three minutes after seven. Kathy was probably in the parlor of the boarding house, wondering why he was late. He forced himself out of the car and up the stoop.

Mrs. Lynne, the landlady, was surprised to see him.

“Mr. Little!” she gasped. “That’s right, it’s Friday. Kathy!”

She pounded up the stairs, fluttering and dithering, as fast as her chubby little legs could carry her. Puzzled, Freddie put his panama on the hat rack. Kathy had never forgotten a date before. Curses, in Kathy’s voice, floated down from the fourth floor. Mrs. Johnson, another tenant in the boarding house, came out of the parlor shaking her graying head.

“Good evening, Mr. Little,” she said, then looked upstairs. “Poor thing. Not that I approve of such language, but she’s been in such a state since the telegram arrived.”

“Telegram?” asked Freddie, fearing that he knew. “From whom?”

“Her mother,” said the widow. “It must be serious.”

Freddie nodded. It had to be. Kathy’s parents were dirt poor farmers living someplace in Kansas. Mrs. Lynne came dithering back down.

“I’m sorry, Mr. Little. The poor girl’s not thinking straight,” she said. “She’s so busy packing.”

“Packing?” Freddie started up the stairs.

“Mr. Little! I can’t have you up there,” shrieked Mrs. Lynne. “I told her that.”

Freddie ignored her and took the stairs two and three at a time. Kathy was indeed packing her clothes in a trunk when Freddie got to the doorway. She was wearing a dark blue cotton dress, with blue gingham cuffs on the sleeves and the collar. Technically a day dress, Freddie knew it was Kathy’s best one and her favorite for less casual evening excursions.

“What’s the matter?” he gasped. “You got a telegram from your mother?”

Kathy nodded and wiped a tear from her cheek. “It’s Pa.”

She swiped the yellow paper off the bureau and handed it to him.

“Pa ill, stop,” it read. “Please come quickly.”

“It doesn’t say it’s serious,” said Freddie.

“For heaven’s sakes, Freddie,” Kathy snapped. “There’s two words there she didn’t need!” She started sobbing. “Oh, hell, you wouldn’t know. Ma wouldn’t wire me in the first place if it weren’t serious. And she wouldn’t use please or quickly. She’d know I’d know it was that urgent. She’s got to be awful upset, and that can only mean one thing. Pa’s dying.”

Overcome, she sank onto the bed. Freddie slid next to her and put his arms around her.

"There, there," he said soothingly, and kissed her hair. "You don't know that he is."

"He's fifty-nine years old. That's not young, Freddie. And Ma's last letter, she was worried. I got it yesterday. Things haven't been going well on the farm. She won't say what, exactly, but Pa took a ducking in the creek last week and took cold from it, and if his heart goes bad..."

"You don't know that it is."

Kathy got up abruptly. "I've got to keep packing. The train leaves at ten."

"The train, eh?" Freddie did some thinking.

"Oh, damn. I forgot about tonight." Kathy wrapped up a summer shift and shoved it in the trunk. "I'm sorry, Freddie."

He smiled. "No apology needed. It's perfectly understandable."

She looked at his light wool suit. "At least you didn't make any reservations. You don't have tickets anywhere, do you?"

"None. And I would have gladly put them aside if I had. Please, don't waste any time worrying about my evening."

"Somehow, I knew you'd say that." Kathy's smile was weak but grateful.

"When do you plan to arrive in Kansas?"

"I'll get to Topeka Sunday morning. Then I have to catch a local into Hays. With luck, I can get the morning train and be there by two thirty."

"Hays is how far from New York?"

Kathy frowned as she looked at him. "About fifteen hundred miles. What are you getting at?"

"What if I could have you at your parents' farm by..." Freddie did some calculating, "...Saturday evening?"

"How on earth could you...?" Kathy suddenly shook her head. "Oh, no. You're not getting me into that plane of yours."

"That's a whole day sooner you'll be at your father's

side.”

Kathy wavered. “There isn’t room for my trunk. I’ll need that.”

“There is room for a valise or two.” Freddie smiled. “Just pack what you’ll need for a couple days, and we’ll send your trunk by train. It will also be a lot cheaper.”

“And what good will it do me or my parents if I end up mangled in bits and pieces in a haystack in Ohio?” Kathy tossed a pile of step-ins and camisoles into the trunk.

“My plane is perfectly reliable, and I am more than an able pilot.” Freddie put his hand on her shoulder. “Your mother did use two words she didn’t need to.”

Kathy trembled. “You bastard,” she whispered.

“Have you bought your tickets yet?” he asked softly.

“Not yet.”

“I’ll make a phone call or two first. I’m certain my sister can arrange to loan you some flying gear. Why don’t you finish packing?”

“Freddie, are you sure it’s safe?” she asked in a small voice.

“Very sure, or I wouldn’t have offered.” He kissed her cheek and left.

Downstairs in the hall, Freddie sent Mrs. Lynne to help Kathy. The other tenants were elsewhere, for once. Freddie called his apartment first and had Roberts pack a trunk and valise for him. Then he called a shopkeeper who was quite happy to fetch things at odd hours for a price. Not that price mattered to Freddie. Being fabulously wealthy did have its advantages.

But it had made things awkward for Kathy on more than one occasion. She was a working girl, a junior editor at a publishing house, and quite proud of having achieved that much. She and Freddie had an understanding that he would assume the cost of whatever they did together, but even that had its limits. Freddie’s sister, Honoria, had at least solved the clothing problem by “loaning” Kathy dresses for those

occasions when Freddie wanted to take her places that required evening dress. As Honoria was tall and slender like her brother, and Kathy wasn't, there was no hiding the fact that Honoria actually bought the dresses for Kathy. But it was politely ignored.

Freddie took charge of Kathy's trunk after it was filled, and put it in the back seat of the car. He put her valise there also, then seated her in the front with him, and they left.

"Freddie, why aren't we going straight up to Grand Central?" Kathy asked, as he turned onto 23rd.

"Because we shall have to detour to my place," Freddie explained. "I have a trunk to pick up, not that I'm presuming upon your parents' hospitality. There must be a hotel or something in your little town. In any case, it wouldn't be very kind to drop you there and not remain to bring you back."

"Don't you have appointments or something?"

Unlike Kathy, Freddie did not have to work, and didn't, except as a writer.

"Nothing I can't cancel, and be happy to at that," said Freddie. "And I'll be bringing my book with me, so you needn't harass me about letting it go."

Kathy snorted. She had edited Freddie's first novel, which was to be printed soon, and had all but nagged him into writing a second.

"But that does remind me of a curious aspect of this adventure," he continued. "What about your job? I can't imagine you just flying off and leaving it, no matter how dire the circumstances."

"I contacted Mr. Healcroft, and he agreed to let me take a vacation."

"He did?" Freddie's eyebrows lifted in amusement.

Kathy shrugged. "He seems to feel obligated to be kind to me. For the moment, I'm glad."

Freddie nodded. The trunk and valise were waiting in the apartment lobby. The doorman loaded them, and soon the luggage was duly dispatched to the train station.



"Well," said Freddie as they left the ticket counter. "Shall we find ourselves a bite to eat?"

"Aren't we going out to the airfield?" asked Kathy.

"We don't have to immediately. The inn won't give our rooms away."

"What inn?"

"The inn at the airfield. It's a lovely little place, but the food is terrible."

"Aren't we leaving tonight?" Kathy's voice became strained.

"Of course not. I can't fly in the dark."

Kathy panicked. "You tricked me! I thought you said we'd get there tomorrow."

Freddie grabbed her shoulders. "Now, now. Calm down. We will. I figured the time leaving tomorrow morning. We'll be taking off at dawn. We should get there in time for dinner."

"Oh." Kathy sniffed.

"Here." Freddie handed her a handkerchief. "It's clean."

"Thank you." Kathy dabbed her eyes and wiped her nose. "I'm sorry, Freddie. I should have trusted you."

"My dear, you are overwrought, and deservedly so. Let's get some food into you, and then we'll head out to the inn. We'll both need a good night's rest."

Kathy nodded. But at the inn, she couldn't sleep. Putting on her red artificial silk dressing gown, she slipped down the hall to Freddie's room. Dim light shone under the door. She knocked.

"Yes?" he called quietly.

"It's me," she hissed. "I can't sleep."

Freddie opened the door. "What's the matter?"

"I'm frightened." Kathy slid in.

He was wearing his shirt and pants. In spite of her fears, Kathy couldn't help admiring the tall, lean figure that was all arms and legs, the soft, strawberry blond hair that was usually slicked down, but had gotten ruffled since he'd left her in her room.

"Kathy, I promise, I won't let us crash," he said soothingly.

"You would have to mention that." Groaning, she sat on the edge of the bed.

Freddie gazed at her fondly. Even worried, Kathy had that spark of liveliness that made a face and figure that should have been plain quite beautiful. Her brown hair was cut to her chin, after the current fashion. But her figure had a little healthy padding, and she had real bosoms. Quite squeezable bosoms, as Freddie had found out to his everlasting regret and joy. His fingers itched, but he chased such thoughts from his mind. Now was not the time.

He sat down next to her. "If not tomorrow, what are you worried about?"

"Pa." The tears trickled down her cheeks. "Freddie, I haven't seen him in six years. I couldn't afford it, even if I could have gotten the time off from work. What if I never see him again?"

"Then you'll just have to rely on your memories of him." Slowly, Freddie put his arms around her. "It will hurt a great deal, but time does heal."

"I suppose you're right." She shook her head, then nestled in. "It was so hard when Grandma Briscow died. She lived just long enough to see the Eighteenth Amendment passed. I was in New York by that point. Ma said not to come back for the funeral, which made sense. She died so suddenly, what could I do for her? I hope I make it in time for Pa."

"You'll get there as fast as I can get you."

"Freddie, why are you doing this for me?"

He kissed her hair. "You know why."

She looked up into his soft green eyes. "You really do, don't you?"

"Amazingly enough, yes."

Her eyes filled. "I'm really glad you're here. I don't feel quite so helpless anymore. This afternoon, I was wishing you would come with me, but I couldn't ask because I didn't have the right to. Damn you, Freddie."

Freddie winced inwardly. Kathy only cursed when the two of them were alone together, and usually only when she was emotionally overwrought. He often heard worse from his male friends and chose not to make an issue of it.

“And I want so badly to be your lover,” Kathy continued. “But you’re right. As long as I don’t have rights, we can’t be equals. Lord. What would Pa think of me, if he heard me like this?”

“He’d probably come after me with a shotgun,” chuckled Freddie.

Kathy laughed sadly. “He just might. He’s an Old Testament man and one stubborn old mule. Won’t take a mortgage on the farm, and he’s got more acres than he can work. But he won’t take a mortgage to buy anything. All the new machines, he paid cash for.”

“Given how badly crop prices are doing, I’d say he’s pretty smart.”

“He’s that, all right. Self-taught, but he’s quite a student. He taught us to read before we were five. He always told me the good Lord had given me good brains; it would be a sin and a shame if I didn’t use them. I don’t know if he meant for me to be an old maid. But he was pretty proud when I told him I was going to New York to work after college instead of coming back to Hays and waiting around to get married.”

“It’s a good thing he was. It would have been interesting to see him try to keep you at home. You come by your stubbornness honestly.”

“Pa can out-stubborn me any day of the week.”

Freddie laughed. “This I will have to see.”

“Freddie, you don’t like it when I’m stubborn, do you?” Kathy sniffed.

“If you’re disagreeing with me, of course I don’t. You don’t like it when I get stubborn. But I do respect it, and I admire your tenacity.”

“That’s only a nice way of saying I’m cussed.”

“I wouldn’t have you any other way.”

“You won’t take me, either.” Kathy got up. “It’s

just as well, I guess. It'll save me a lot of explaining to Pa, assuming I get there in time. Thank you, Freddie."

"You're welcome, Kathy." He stood.

There was an awkward pause. Slowly, he pulled her to him and softly pressed his lips against hers. The warmth grew with quiet sighs.

"If you're going to kiss me like that, the least you could do is take me to your bed," Kathy whispered.

"Then you had better start kissing me like a brother because I cannot help what you start."