

MRS. TERRELL'S LETTERS



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BLUSHING BOOKS

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This book contains fantasy themes appropriate for mature readers only. Nothing in this book should be interpreted as Blushing Books' or the author's advocating any non-consensual sexual activity.

CHAPTER 1



Beth McMahon's only hope of escape was crossing the platform and hopping aboard the train. It was a huge risk to emerge from behind the crates which had kept her hidden for nearly an hour. It meant exposing herself to capture. The men were still close by searching for her, and if she was spotted, it was all over. The life she had dreamed of would be exchanged for one which offered no hope of happiness or love, let alone thrills and adventure.

She could see the train was nearly ready for departure. The doors on the boxcars were being slammed shut, and most of the passengers were aboard. Only friends and loved ones were left standing there, getting in last words of goodbye at the windows. The conductor was striding across the wooden boards calling, "All aboard."

A glint of light made Beth squint and peer out to see its cause. A woman was seated by a window, holding a mirror which was reflecting the sun. She was also staring straight at Beth, urgently beckoning her to come. As Beth watched, the woman leaned up against the window and looked both ways before repeating her gesture.

Beth had no idea what to do. It was foolish to trust a stranger, but staying where she was meant eventually being caught. Crouching, she took hold of the boxes for leverage, took a deep breath and launched into a sprint towards the train. She refused to look about her until she was aboard, her heart thumping and her breath caught in her throat.

“There she is!”

The shout was enough to make her blood run cold and rob her of the will to put up any further resistance. Beth bowed her head, tears leaking from her eyes as her last seconds of freedom ticked away, until suddenly her wrist was seized by a cold hand.

“Come with me.”

Beth looked at the pasty, white face and recognized the woman who had signaled her. She allowed herself to be led into the interior and along the narrow passageway between closed compartments until she was pulled inside one of them.

“Shut the door and then hide under my skirts once I sit down and get comfortable. If you want this to succeed, you are going to have to be very still and quiet. I would prefer at this stage of my life to avoid any disrepute brought about by hiding a fugitive, especially one hidden under my skirts. The gossip would be horrendous. Do you believe you are able to follow my instructions?”

Beth looked at her blankly and offered a weak nod. “But why?”

The woman smiled. “Because there was once a time when I should have boarded a train much sooner. I’ve regretted it ever since. Besides, I believe you will make a first class traveling companion, at the very least, an interesting one. Now, what is it to be, young lady, hiding or giving in to whatever you’re running from?”

There was shouting and commotion somewhere outside the compartment which spurred Beth to answer, “Hiding.”

Beth was barely amongst the petticoats when she heard the door open.

"Excuse me, Mrs. Terrell, there are men here who are looking for a young woman."

"Yes, yes, I know exactly the young woman of whom you speak."

Beth gasped silently, certain she was about to be betrayed. Someone else joined in, and Beth shivered as she recognized her stepfather's voice.

"Ma'am, are you saying you've seen my stepdaughter, a young girl, loose brown hair and dressed in britches?"

"The very same," the woman replied haughtily. "Not two minutes ago, I was assaulted by this awful creature pushing me aside quite savagely, knocking me over and entering the empty compartment across from me, where she jumped out the window and..."

There was another commotion, shouts of "Let's go" and Beth went to move, only to be softly kicked. She remained still, her skin prickling as she heard her stepfather continue.

"I'm mighty grateful, ma'am and my apologies for the trouble."

"No apology needed, but maybe some explanation as to how a young lady comes to be dressed so inappropriately and lacking in manners."

"My stepdaughter is headstrong, always has been and I, being a widower for some years now, haven't had the right notion for raising her properly. I'd managed to find her a suitable husband but she objected. Tomorrow was to be her wedding day and instead I'm left looking the fool and will have to face a jilted fiancé."

"How simply terrible for you. I sincerely hope you find the scamp before tomorrow and maybe a few lashes of a switch to her backside might teach the child some manners."

"Indeed, and I'll be passing it on to her husband with my blessings. Thank you again, ma'am and safe travels."

Beth breathed again when she heard the door close, but the woman cautioned her. "Stay where you are until the train is in motion. I will tell you when it is safe to come out."

“Thank you,” Beth replied through the heavy material of the skirt. “Thank you for saving my life Mrs... um...”

“Terrell. Charlotte Terrell. And no thanks needed. You may yet find yourself wishing you had stayed at home.”