

## Epigraphs



*Only a struggle twists sentimentality and lust together into love.* — **E. M. Forster**

*To lust is human. To love is divine.* — **Anonymous**

*Lust keeps you wanting to do it, even when you have no desire to be with each other.*

*Love makes you want to be with each other, even when you have no desire to do it.* — **Judith Viorst**

*Love can wait. Now, lust reigns.* — **D.H. Chewins**

## Chapter 1



### NEW YORK

The fall, at the tail-end of summer in September, was the best season to be in New York. The oppressive humidity gave way to a crisp, shivering breeze. The leaves on the trees turned to crimson red slowly, before fluttering down onto the footpaths in a cascade of pleasantly crunchy leaves. This was the time to best experience New York slowly, deeply, and on foot.

The tall blonde showcased her subtle grasp of the New Yorker fashion scene. She was not the jean-and-sneaker kind of person to hide one of her best assets: her smooth, well-toned, slender long legs. No; leggings, a skirt, and ankle boots would do her fine justice.

To explore—according to the author F. Scott Fitzgerald—*the wild promise of all the mystery and the beauty of the City*, Katheryn Kellington chose the most comfortable shoe possible so that her walk wouldn't be interrupted by pinched toes or chafing blisters. A pair of Blondo waterproof leather ankle

boots, she reckoned, would be perfect for making that classic leaf-crunching sound.

The crisp fall air was perfect for her light leather jacket—black—to fit in with all the other New Yorkers. A Zara cheetah-print long-sleeved shirt was worn unbuttoned, a gold-colored Hermès scarf complimented the chic outfit and accentuated her natural shoulder-length blonde hair. A pair of translucent fishnet leggings and a red Chloé virgin wool & cashmere pleated plaid skirt crowned the ultimate travel outfit.

Following the cheeky, teeny trend, Katheryn packed a shoulder-strap, dark mahogany red, Chloé Bitty Bag, small enough to hold her purse and iPhone. Not much into jewelry, she wore minimal fashion accessories, only oversized O-shaped Chanel earrings, paired with Vehla Dixie sunglasses.

It was not the first time she had visited New York. She had enrolled in acting classes at New York's William Esper's studio when she was younger. So she was familiar with the landscape.

Today she had wandered into a cute little cafe close to her hotel. She'd found it on her *TripAdvisor* app the other day: *Frisson Espresso*, in Hell's Kitchen, about 0.2 miles from Times Square, and a short walk off 7th Avenue. The place was quiet, warm, clean, but steady. Nice classic jams on the radio, friendly barista. The small-barstool setting could seat six to eight people. Not too fancy, just a nice place to sit and enjoy her dirty chai. No Earl Gray tea, though. She ordered mint iced tea to go with the delicious almond croissant and the tasty overnight oats with its interesting mix of textures.

While she had a marvelous view of a typical NYC neighborhood street outside the window, her mind was on a different planet.

It had been six weeks since Katheryn returned from filming in Atlantic City, where she met her newfound interest, Massai Mobuku. She was still legally married to Cole Maxsell and could not wait for the divorce, which she'd filed upon her return, to be completed. The dry spell without sex with the alpha Massai was killing her.

She came to New York City to try to catch up with him. Secretly.

Since their last rendezvous, she had a strong feeling of affection and concern for him, accompanied by a strong sexual attraction. Was it love? Or was it lust?

Love, by definition, involved affection, compassion, care, and self-sacrifice. But love was also a temporary madness; it erupted like volcanoes and then subsided, like her twelve-year marriage to Cole.

Lust, truth be told, was intense sexual attraction and desire. And this was exactly how she felt toward Massai. She also knew it was one of the seven capital sins, or vices, according to The Bible.

Therefore, she was confused. To where would her love lead? Marriage, which was a normal societal expectation? Not so fast, Lovebird. Once bitten, twice shy. She just wanted to explore possibilities, to learn about herself. She thought about these things while sipping her tea in that little café.

She read that there were ways to turn lust for Massai into love, in other words, to get out of his bed and into his heart. It'd been a wild ride so far, but she was starting to want more. A more enduring, meaningful relationship. Yes, lust was a tricky beast to maneuver, but she thought she had made some headways toward loving him. Though their time together had been brief two weeks, she believed she and Massai had developed a genuine friendship. They had done things together in public, seeing movies and stage shows, having

dinners, and visiting bars, although they could not pretend there were no societal prejudices against interracial dating, even in this modern century. The next step would be to take it slow and try to re-establish a traditional approach to relationships, like going out more on dates, texting each other, and taking time to make out without it leading to sex so they could build a bond. She was confident she could work on that.

It was nearly noon when she strolled out from *Frisson Espresso*. Revigorated. Replenished. Revived.

\* \* \*

“Katheryn?”

She turned around and was stunned to see an almost mirror image of herself, a gorgeous blonde dressed in the most beautiful floral dress she had ever seen, in her favorite New Yorker color—black.

It’d been a couple of years, but she recognized immediately her cousin Jolene Johanson. Jolene had a brother, Jon, five years younger, who was taking care of their aging parents in their family home back in Atlanta, a safe walking distance from Katheryn’s family home.

Katheryn and Jolene used to hang out together after school. They were eight months apart in age; Jolene had always been Katheryn’s younger ‘sister.’ They had history. There was nothing they wouldn’t do together, like skinny dipping, nude sunbathing (until Katheryn had caught a severe sunburn on her back and Jolene had to nurse her without their mothers’ knowledge), sharing boy-girl, girl-girl stories, intimate and naughty thoughts. They were close like BFF until careers and marriages intervened and kept them apart.

“Wow. Look at you!” Jolene broke into a bewildered smile. “For a moment, I wasn’t sure it was you. Then I saw your unmistakable signature long legs. I always wish I have those. You haven’t aged one bit, Katheryn. I would say, you look a lot younger.”

“Jolene! Why! You’ve just made my day. You’re just as beautiful as I last saw you — let me see, yes, at our mothers’ 60th birthday celebration in Atlanta.”

“I’m so glad to see you, Katheryn. What are you doing in New York? How’s my dear aunty Kacey?”

“She’s fine, getting older. She’s traveling with my dad on a long cruise right now. I’m looking after their house for them.”

“Great. We’ve so much to catch up on. Let’s grab a cup of coffee,” Jolene pulled on Katheryn’s sleeve. A moment of silence, then they both laughed.

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“What are you doing in New York?” Jolene couldn’t wait to find out. She and Katheryn were close like twin sisters; their mothers Cortney and Kacey Wilkingsen were biological twins.

“I’m seeing someone in New York.”

“Anyone that I know?” Jolene joked.

“I don’t think so,” Katheryn replied.

An awkward moment of silence. Changing the subject, Jolene broke the ice, “What have you been doing since we last met?”

“Oh, nothing much, except that I’ve separated from Cole Maxsell, you know, my husband,” Katheryn said. “I’ve moved out. I’m staying with my parents until I complete my divorce.”

“Oh no, I thought you and Cole were a perfect couple made in heaven. What happened?”

“He and I have put on a good show all these years, but beneath the surface, we haven’t got along for some time. I think it started when we realized we were mismatched sexually. You know, I’ve always had high libido. Don’t tell anyone, but Cole has a tiny penis, a so-called micropenis, the size of my pinky finger. If only he could get it up, we might still manage, but he shunned contact with me because of his Erectile Dysfunction. I could get no sexual satisfaction from him, it’s frustrating.”

“My poor Katheryn, he has deprived you of your pleasure.”

“I’ve taken care of my needs, thank you very much. But my fingers and my toys don’t do justice to the ‘done’ feeling. I crave intimacy, loving embrace, the whole TLC.”

“I understand. You also have dark secrets.”

“Don’t you start on that!”

“Why yes! We’ve grown up together and shared things, intimate, naughty things. Don’t you remember?”

“I remember. How can I forget? You’re my conscience. You’ve always reminded me of our deep dark fantasies.”

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