

CHAPTER

1

Molly had been riding all day in a glow of expectation. The expectation involved the new life she was about to begin, a life of more freedom than she had known under the supervision of a stepmother who was both neglectful and meddling, a life that promised introductions to young men of ambition and a talent for hard work, with one of whom she would cast her fortune. The expectation was real, but the glow was a trifle hard to maintain crammed, as she was, into a stagecoach that jounced and jolted, tipped and almost toppled as the team of horses pulled it across the Illinois prairie.

With the exception of Cousin John Hardin, a prince of the family who acted as her chaperone, the men stuffed beside her were not the kind with whom she expected to share this new life. They were calloused-hand frontier types smelling of sweat and tobacco. During the day it had amused her to observe them as they burped and farted in their open-mouthed sleep with dust settling like tiny castles on their teeth. One of them was made so queasy by the coach's motion that he flung himself through the open coach door window to spread groans and his breakfast across the prairie.

When these men were not sleeping, they told stories, scratching themselves, and scrutinized her, looking away when Cousin John warned them off with narrowed eyes. They noticed the fineness of her clothes. They examined her clear complexion and the lustrous, well-brushed brown hair. They told themselves that this was not a woman who spent long periods of time outdoors. They noticed the smallness of her hands, the absence of a wedding ring, and guessed correctly that she was not a woman who worked with those hands. Her feet did not reach the floor of the stage; she rested them on one of the many pieces of her luggage that had been unloaded the previous evening from the Illinois River paddleboat. They saw—or imagined—that her ankles were tiny and well-turned, the kind of ankles that made a man swallow. They did not realize how much dust she was tasting in her throat.

Most of all, they noticed how pretty and animated she was, especially when she whispered to her escort and her blue eyes flashed. When she giggled, glints of pleasure lighted the men's eyes. The melody of her laughter made them want to share the joke. Despite the pounding of the hooves outside and the shouts of the driver, the music of Molly's laughter made them thrill.

Early in the evening, the long day and the two-week trip finally nearing its end, Molly opened her eyes, no longer pretending to nap, and recognized the landscape from her visit two years before. "Cousin John," she asked, "am I dreaming?"

"Springfield's just ahead," he assured her. "Capital of the state now."

"My heavens! There it is!" She had glimpsed the new State House cupola rising above the prairie. "I'll wager you can see Kentucky from the top!"

All day it had seemed to Molly that the stage was moving too slowly. Now suddenly it seemed to fly along the packed expanse of earth called Jefferson Street, past stores, taverns and workshops. Idlers emerged from the taverns; they stepped out along the street to see whom the stage was bringing to town.

The driver blew a horn. The stage pulled to a stop outside Spottswood's Rural Hotel. Cousin John Hardin leaned close to Molly. "Just so you know," he whispered, "the

proprietor of this establishment calls himself Colonel George Washington Spottswood. A blood descendant of the father of the country. So he claims.”

“Indeed!” said Molly. “A true colonel?”

“A bloodline colonel. Without weapons experience. He will undoubtedly want to greet you. The fine Southern families must stick together.”

Molly raised an eyebrow.

“He may want to marry you,” Hardin teased. Molly struck him a blow on the arm. “Fortunately for you, our laws prohibit bigamy.”

By the time the stagecoach came to a halt, a clerk was ringing a large bell mounted on top of the hotel. Spottswood’s was a two-story structure, both hotel and tavern, recently built of wood planking, not logs, and it also served as an office for stage lines operating through Springfield. Stable hands hurried from behind the hotel to take charge of the horses. The driver jumped to the ground and flung open the coach door.

Cousin John helped Molly out of the coach. She scrambled through the door on legs that seemed numb beyond moving and emerged into the twilight of the spring evening. Beside Hardin stood a man with more girth than height. He grinned up at her and offered his hand. She took it and let the man and her cousin guide her onto the wood plank porch of the hotel.

“Welcome to the capital of the State of Illinois,” the round man said, bowing. His tavernkeeper’s clothes smelled lightly of corn whiskey.

“Colonel,” Hardin said, “I would like to present Miss Mary Todd, my cousin, Molly.” He turned to her with an ironic sparkle in his eye that Spottswood could not see. “Molly,” he said, “this is Colonel George Washington Spottswood.”

“I’m honored, Colonel,” Molly said, curtsying ever so slightly.

“Todd is one of the great family names of Kentucky,” said the Colonel, standing as tall as he could. “Your cousins Dr. John Todd, the noted surgeon, and Mr. John Todd Stuart, the esteemed attorney and Congressman, are making it one of the fine names of this fair state as well.”

Molly nodded demurely as a carriage pulled up before the hotel. Out of it stepped a tall man of aristocratic bearing who turned back immediately to help two women to the ground. Molly grinned and ran toward her sisters. “Look who’s here at last!” she said, throwing her arms about Elizabeth and Fanny. “At last! At last!” Molly laughed and gave each sister a squeeze.

Elizabeth stepped out of the embrace to appraise her younger sister. Six years older than Molly, Elizabeth would now be supervising her entry into society. Ninian Edwards, Elizabeth’s husband, would assume the role of her guardian. Elizabeth scrutinized Molly, seizing the mantle of Determined Protector while retaining the aura of what she unquestionably was: young Springfield Matron of Consequence. “I’m sure you feel you’ve been traveling forever,” Elizabeth said. “You look tired.”

“Well, I’m not!” Molly assured her. “I feel like my life’s beginning!”

“And so it is!” agreed Fanny. “You’ll be so glad you’re here!” Two years older than Molly, Fanny, a bride-to-be, fairly purred with contentment. Within a few short weeks she would embark on the adventure for which her whole life had prepared her: marriage and motherhood. “My real life began here. So will yours.”

Now Elizabeth’s husband joined them. Son of a man who had served as an appointed governor of the Illinois Territory and had been elected to the United States Senate, Ninian Edwards, although only thirty, exhibited a commanding presence. He bent to kiss Molly’s cheek, said, “Welcome,” and offered his hand to Hardin. “Shall we get up the hill where the air’s more fragrant?”

As they moved toward the carriage, they heard wailings and cursing. Turning, they saw four young men running hard along the packed earth of Jefferson Street. They dragged a fifth man by his arms and the rope belt that held up his pantaloons. As his boots stirred up puffs of dust visible in the fading light, the man roared drunken obscenities at his tormentors. The Edwards party stopped to see the commotion, the men alarmed lest profanity in the presence of gentlewomen should require them to take action.

The four men hurried past. They circled the horses tied at Spottswood's hitching post, approached the horse trough, and with a splash, tossed the drunk into it. After a moment he rose to the surface, blubbered and floundered. Ninian and Hardin chuckled. The women stepped back, hands pressed to their throats, Elizabeth and Fanny averting their eyes. Molly watched the drunk thrash at the water, then sit erect in the trough, roaring vulgarities. The horses at the hitching post neighed and grew skittish; they began to dance at the ends of their reins. To halt the obscenities one of the men put beefy hands on the drunkard's shoulders and pushed downward. He resisted, shouting vigorously, then slipped below the water. His arms flailed in the air. Now an unusually tall, steeple-thin, black-haired fellow straddled the trough; he pulled the drunk out of the water. Coughing as if he might bring up his intestines, the drunk went on cursing. The tall man put a hand over the blaring mouth and gave Molly and her sisters an embarrassed look.

"Shall we go into the hotel?" Elizabeth suggested.

"Let's do," said Ninian. "This isn't the best part of town."

Ninian, Elizabeth and Fanny started into the hotel. Molly stood her ground, Hardin beside her. "I want to catch the flavor of the frontier," she explained. She watched the tall man and his partners lift the drunk out of the trough. They stripped him of his shirt and laid him across the hitching post. The drunk roared louder than a pig being slaughtered in a barnyard. Molly felt his roars like a breeze of whiskey. "Cousin John," she asked mischievously, "will you tell me what he's yelling?"

"Not a chance. We're not quite civilized here yet."

"Well, we're civilized on the hill," said Ninian. He had returned with Molly's sisters. "Let's go to the carriage and get home."

The setting sun had turned the clouds orange, red and finally purple. Now the twilight was giving way to night. As Molly went to the carriage, she saw the four men rope the drunk to the hitching post, his back bent across it. The tall, black-haired fellow led a woman toward the drunk. She looked terrified. The tall man bent beside her, speaking quietly, encouraging her. Another of the men handed her a switch. She hesitated. Then suddenly, nodding her head, in the grip of a strange ecstasy, she stepped toward the drunk and raised the switch over her head. Molly heard it whistle through the air and snap against the drunk's back. He screamed. "Light in! Light in!" the four men urged the woman. "He does it to you! Let him know how it feels!" She struck him again. The drunk wailed.

Ninian stepped forward, placing his back to the hitching post. He gestured the women to hurry into the carriage. "Evening, Lincoln. Gentlemen," he greeted the four men. Hardin spoke to them as well.

"Hardin. Edwards. Ladies," said the tall man in a high-pitched voice that seemed strange for one so tall. He bowed slightly to salute the ladies. "Fine evening, isn't it?" He added, "We're doing civic education."

A moan escaped the lips of the woman, a sound that was half wretched, half exalted. Once again she laid the switch onto the back of the drunk. "Stop!" he cried,

sobered by the blows. "Stop her! Stop her!" The woman laid into him. Again and again she switched him.

"Heavens!" exclaimed Elizabeth. "Don't look, Molly. Fanny!"

Molly could not help looking. The very tall man with the black hair was no less a frontier type than the passengers in the stagecoach. But Molly noticed his gentleness with the woman and had a strange sense that her expectation about her new life in Springfield would be fulfilled.

Molly felt Elizabeth's hand on her arm. "Molly! Come along!" She pulled her toward the carriage. The Edwards party settled itself inside the vehicle. "Hurry on!" Ninian told the driver and off they went down Jefferson toward First Street.

"What kind of prairie education was that?" Molly asked, looking behind at the figures still clustered beside the pump. "Do you know those people?"

"Wasn't that the shoemaker?" Fanny asked.

"And his wife," acknowledged Ninian.

"What was going on?" asked Molly.

"When the shoemaker gets drunk," Ninian explained through tightened lips, "he beats his wife. I take it those gentlemen decided to offer the wife a chance to teach him a lesson."

"Hooray for them!" cried Molly. "I hope she scars his back." Beside her Elizabeth shuddered. Molly craned her neck, looking back for a glimpse of the woman and the tall, rail-thin fellow with black hair. But she could make out only the lamps glowing in the darkness outside Spotts-wood's.

"Mary, please," cautioned Elizabeth, using her given name now. "Don't crane your neck. We are Edwardses. That means something here."

They started down Jefferson Street in the silence the gentry required to separate themselves from commoners. Ninian raised a disapproving eyebrow to Elizabeth, as if he should have come to fetch Molly alone. Molly asked, "Who were those men?"

"Those vigilantes?" asked Elizabeth.

"The civic educators," replied Molly.

Cousin John Hardin remarked, "All four of those fellers were Whigs," because he knew their political affiliation would interest Molly. "Our people."

"Their behavior," commented Elizabeth, "gives the lie to the notion that all Whigs are propertied and gentlemen and educated."

"There were attorneys among them," added Hardin, teasing Ninian and himself, who were also attorneys, and grinning at Molly. "Though, needless to say, not graduates of Transylvania University. Like present company."

Ninian was Illinois's foremost graduate of Transylvania University in Lexington, Kentucky. After a moment and as if it were a confession he felt obliged to make, he acknowledged, "The tallest of that bunch is one of my brother legislators."

"One of the 'Long Nine,' as they call the Sangamon County boys," Hardin reminded Molly. "That's 'cause they made such tall promises to get the capital moved to Springfield." He winked at her.

"Lincoln's a bumpkin," said Ninian.

"That's harsh," Hardin replied.

"A farm boy with native wit and political cunning," Ninian continued, ignoring Hardin. "He has that peculiarly American kind of frontier-bred ambition to be something he'll never be." After a moment he reflected, "I confess that sometimes I have grave doubts about democracy."

"It's refreshing to see that kind of civic education," Molly said. "A man who beats his wife ought to get beaten once in a while himself." She noticed Ninian once again raise an eyebrow at his wife. It delighted Molly to see that she had administered a slight shock to Ninian's stateliness. She exclaimed, "Oh, I can't tell you how delighted I am to be here! I truly am." Then, because it was now her town, too, she craned her neck and peered behind her. But the gathering darkness closed off any view of vigilantes.

The carriage drove a mile south of Jefferson Street, up a gentle hill to an area where the orange glow of candles shone in the windows of large homes. It turned in at the circular drive before the Edwards residence, crunching over gravel, and deposited its passengers. The five people moved into an entryway filled with candlelight. Ninian led Hardin off to the parlor. Elizabeth took her sisters upstairs to the nursery where the Irish girl was sitting with Julia, now over two years old.

"My darling Julia!" Molly enthused, lifting the child out of her crib to hold her close and kiss her. "How you've grown!"

"Thank you so much," Elizabeth said to the Irish girl as she left the room. Turning to the child, she grinned and announced, "This is your aunt Molly from Kentucky."

"Moddy! Moddy!" the little one exulted.

"What a fine daughter!" Molly marveled. She held the child, enjoying the warmth of her against her body, breathing in her child's smell, and told her sisters about the trip. "The Ohio River was teeming with people moving west," she said. "You'd see flatboats and huge rafts with whole families on them, including their livestock and wagons. I was so grateful to have passage on a steamboat."

She told them the news from home: As usual, their father was away as much as he was at home, off on business for the state-owned Bank of Kentucky, of which he was president, or in Frankfort for meetings of the state assembly or down in New Orleans buying cotton yarn and other merchandise for the Todd & Oldham store. As always, Molly said, quoting him, he was "not so poor as to beg my bread, nor so rich as to forget my Maker." Miss Betsey, the sisters' stepmother, sent her love. She was still producing a child every fifteen months, "a little like a prize sow," Molly observed, making her sisters giggle. "The farther we limbs of Satan are from Lexington," Molly observed, "the more she loves us." The sisters' maternal grandmother was healthy; so were their three full-blooded siblings, Ann, Levi and George, the youngest, whose birth had brought on the death of their mother. The house was practically a tavern so many visitors came. The slaves were well. Nelson had driven Molly to and from Ward's School every weekend for the past year. Mammy Sally, by whom she was charged to send a report of her sisters' health, was still helping runaway slaves on their way north; the fence outside the Todd home was still marked so that runaways knew they could find rest and a meal there before hurrying onward. "If Father knows about it, he's never said a word," Molly noted.

"Father's opposed to slavery," said Fanny. "But he needs help running a household full of children and entertaining all those guests."

"Help is certainly nice," remarked Elizabeth. "And Chaney and Betty and Mammy Sally all know their jobs." She sighed, smiled with exasperation and lowered her voice to a whisper. "My Irish girls need so much training. They always want to move on as soon as they can."

"Help is nice," agreed Molly. "But I'll be happy living in a state where men do not go sneaking down to slave cabins at night for recreation."

Elizabeth and Fanny nodded their heads to that.

Molly gazed at the child she held in her arms and rocked her gently, smiling at the eyelids slowly closing. "In fact," she went on, "I'm glad to be out of Kentucky all together. I'm tired of living in a place where men educate their daughters only to marry them off to men who prefer their wives not to think, and treat them like infants." Her sisters watched her tenderness with the child, reassured that motherhood and domesticity were where she was headed despite all the education she'd acquired, much more than any woman would need in Springfield. "As if all women want is sweet candy and fancy dresses," Molly said. "If I'd've stayed in Lexington, I'd've opened a school." The sisters seemed surprised at this remark. "Of course, Father opposed the idea. Miss Betsey absolutely forbade me to mention it. 'Todd women do not work,' Miss Betsey said. As if I was acting like an impoverished German or Irish girl washed up on the shores of America."

"Starting schools is what young men do in Illinois," said Elizabeth. She rose and took the sleeping child. "They teach school and read the law and then become lawyers." Molly wondered if Elizabeth meant that she was not to think of opening a school in Springfield. "And young women enjoy the best times of their lives."

"Is that what you've been doing, Fanny?" Molly asked.

Fanny smiled her bride-to-be smile.

"For a brief springtime season," said Elizabeth, "a young woman gets to be a full moon shining brightly in a dark night. She casts a lovely light on everything. The whole town watches her."

"Thank you," said Molly. "But I have left the place of the slave auctions. I do not intend to be put on the block, however much you talk of moonlight."

"Enjoy this time, Molly," Elizabeth advised. She put Julia into her crib.

"She's right," agreed Fanny. "This is your moment." While Elizabeth leaned over the crib, tucking a blanket about her child, Molly studied Fanny. She had blossomed in the two years since Molly had seen her. She smiled more readily, walked more self-assuredly, held herself with more confidence. She was no longer a waif in her sister's house, a refugee from Kentucky, hoping some man would offer her a role in life. If there was to be a waif now, she would be Molly. Fanny's man had come and by offering her marriage had raised her to a position of respectability in town. Molly would be expected to follow this path.

"Ambitious and adventurous young men will pay you court," Elizabeth assured her, moving away from the crib. "Some of them are talented and destined for great things."

"And as soon as one of them wins me," Molly observed, "he will turn me into a brood cow. And if the high hopes he has for himself are not realized, he will blame me." While her sisters smiled at how little she knew of what she really wanted, Molly pulled herself to her full height. "I do wish sometimes I could be a lawyer or a lawmaker or a politician," she declared. Her sisters glanced at one another in surprise. "I'm surely better educated than most members of the Illinois legislature. Not that education is everything."

"We must accept what we cannot change," Elizabeth said.

"We may have to accept it," agreed Molly, "but we don't have to like it."

"But generally speaking," Elizabeth replied, "we're happier if we do." Molly might not agree, but allowed Elizabeth the last word. After all, it was her house.

As the three sisters left the nursery, Molly thought to herself, "Think of being that shoemaker's wife! Married to that kind of man and unable to get away."

After they had gotten ready for bed, Fanny sat in the wing chair in the room they would share and watched Molly unpack the large trunk that had accompanied her. She placed its contents into bureau drawers.

"I was hoping we'd go into Spottswood's," Fanny confided. "The most famous room in all of Illinois is in that hotel."

Molly looked up from arranging stockings to find Fanny smiling as if she had a secret. "Why didn't you tell me? I could have fainted and been carried inside."

"Ninian and Elizabeth say it's a low tavern."

"What in heaven's name happened there?"

"A cold-blooded murder." Molly stopped arranging the bureau. "With witnesses." Fanny's eyes brightened as she spoke the words. The victim, she recounted, was Jacob Early, a man well known in central Illinois as a physician, Methodist preacher and Democratic politico. He had been sitting in Spottswood's parlor after dinner just left of the fire, reading a *Sangamo Journal*, when a man he knew, Henry Truett, the son-in-law of Congressman William May, entered the room. He was carrying a gun.

"Wait," Molly interrupted. She sat on the bed near where Fanny lolled in the chair watching her, ready to bite at this gossip. "Didn't May and Early have a bitter political feud? May was a Whig and Early a Democrat."

"How do you keep all that straight in your head?" Fanny exclaimed. "It's two years since you were here. Have you had that in your head all this time?"

"Don't tell Elizabeth. She'll remind me that politics is not for women."

Fanny wasn't aware of the confrontation's political angle; she was not even sure what it was all about. May seemed to have gotten Truett, his son-in-law, appointed to a valuable sinecure, as Registrar of the government Land Office somewhere. Truett thought Early was conniving to get him removed. When Truett confronted him at Spottswood's, brandishing a pistol, Early rose to his feet and grabbed a chair. He brought it before him as a shield and advanced on his assailant. Truett pulled the trigger. Early slumped over and fell to the ground. Three days later he was dead.

"Elizabeth never wrote this news," said Molly.

"She didn't want Father to know."

"I suppose it sounds too frontier, doesn't it?" In Lexington, where Molly's father and stepmother understood that a higher level of civilization pervaded than in Illinois, such matters were settled by dueling, a social ritual of long tradition, esteemed by gentlemen, but abhorred by their ladies, who regarded it as legalized murder or maiming. If one gentleman considered himself dishonored by another, he issued a challenge. If the matter could not be worked out amicably, it was settled on a dueling ground. Obviously such matters were handled differently in Illinois. Molly tried to take this all in.

"So what do you suppose happened?" Fanny asked, hardly masking the glee in her voice.

"Was Truett arrested?"

"Of course, and it went to trial." To Molly that suggested a higher form of civilization than Kentucky's, although her father might not agree. "Since Truett had shot Early in cold blood," Fanny continued, "he naturally got himself the best legal talent in the state to defend him, expense be hanged. Better that expense should be hanged than him." The girls laughed at Fanny's turn of phrase. "Illinois's best legal talent wanted the fees, of course, but not the fame of losing a notorious case." Fanny paused, to give impact to the climax of her story. "So the lawyers bring in a yokel without reputation to do the summation."

Molly imagined one of the lawyers Elizabeth had mentioned, a fellow who'd come from a farm somewhere with just enough education to set up a school and who had read law books in his spare time until he could get some judge to admit him to the bar. The situation amused Molly. "Who was he?" she asked.

"A fellow Cousin John Todd Stuart had just taken in as a partner, the sorriest excuse for a lawyer you could ever hope to see, even on the frontier." Molly laughed to think that the Todd girls—"Never forget that you are a Todd!" Miss Betsey always said—had come to live, and in Fanny's case marry, among such people. Fanny leaned forward. "This yokel's job was to convince the jury that the most cold-blooded, obviously premeditated murder in the history of Illinois, even going back to the time of—"

"And he did it!" Molly said.

Fanny looked stunned. "Molly Todd!" she exclaimed. "It's no wonder you're almost a spinster. What man in Kentucky would want to go through life with a woman who jumps on the ending of his stories!"

"I am not almost a spinster!" Molly stated, almost offended enough to challenge Fanny to a duel. "How could I be?" She gave her voice a dramatic and ironic tone. "This is my moment! I'm a full moon shining brightly in a dark night, casting a lovely luminous light o'er the landscape." She giggled, then asked, "Did Truett get off?"

"Can you believe it?" exclaimed Fanny. "The bumpkin convinced the jury that he feared for his life. Said he had personally fought with Jacob Early in the Black Hawk War and knew that a chair in his hands was a deadly weapon. The jury acquitted."

"Sometimes bumpkins surprise you." Molly rose from the bed and returned to arranging her bureau.

"There's more," Fanny said. Molly turned to find a curious grin on Fanny's face. Molly frowned, wondering what had gotten in to her sister. "You saw him, that man," Fanny said.

"I did?"

"Outside Spottswood's. The tall fellow with black hair."

Molly remembered Ninian and Cousin John greeting the man by name. What had they called him? "Didn't Ninian call him—was it Lincoln?"

Fanny nodded. "They serve together in the Legislature."

"Native wit," Molly remembered. "Ninian said he had 'native wit.' I guess he must."

"And political cunning," Fanny added. "Lincoln's as responsible as any other legislator for getting the state capital moved to Springfield."

Molly cocked a mischievous eyebrow at her sister. "And has a peculiarly American ambition to be something he'll never be," she recalled her brother-in-law's words. "Which, if Ninian says it, must mean someone like him."

"Oh, he'll never be like Ninian," Fanny assured her. "Socially he's hopeless. Ill at ease. Has no idea how to talk to a woman."

"Do we know him socially?" Molly asked.

"Not socially," Fanny said. "He comes to the house sometimes. With the Coterie." Fanny shrugged as if that gesture might cover social irregularities on the frontier. "After all, he's in the Legislature with Ninian." Dispensing with murders and men, Fanny went to her side of the bed. "You must be exhausted. Finish unpacking tomorrow." She began to blow out the candles. "I tell you that story, dear sister, to assure you that there are interesting men in Springfield. Joshua Speed is still unattached."

Molly brought up a memory of Speed, part owner of a store. He had the good looks that reminded ladies interested in poetry, which Molly was, of the famous Lord Byron. "The handsome Mr. Speed paid no attention to me two years ago," she said.

"He was probably in love. He falls in love quite regularly. Never mind. There are other interesting men in this town."

"Let me assure you, dear Fanny, that I did not come here to find a husband."

"Neither did I." She smiled, leaning over the final candle. "But find one I did." Matter-of-factly she added, "It'll take at least a year." She blew out the last candle.

Tall, lanky Lincoln strolled down the middle of Main Street, gazing at the stars and enjoying the breeze. He kicked the dust off his boots, let himself in at the James C. Bell & Co. mercantile store, walked without needing a light to the winding stairway and climbed it to the second story. "We took the shoemaker swimming, Speed," he remarked to the young man reading by lantern-light.

"He take the temperance pledge?"

"Judging by him, I think I'll take it."

The man sat down on a chair and pulled off his boots. "Looks like another of Ninian Edwards's wife's sisters has come to town."

"Edwards'll be holding a ball one of these days so we can get looked over."

"She's a tiny thing. Men over five feet eight need not apply."

"You get the shoemaker's wife to beat him?" Speed asked.

"We did."

"Will that make it a better marriage?"

"I wouldn't be surprised if the two of 'em are snuggling in bed together this very moment, pledging to each other that it'll never happen again."

"You know nothing about marriage, Lincoln," Speed offered.

Lincoln laughed softly and replied, "And maybe I never will."

