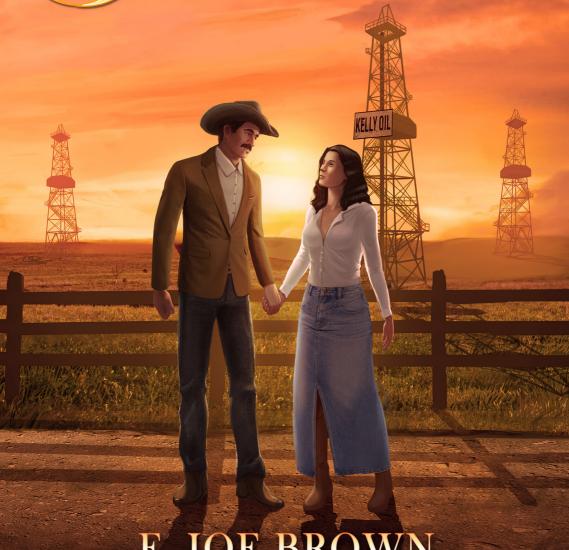


## COWBOY'S



E. JOE BROWN

## The Kelly Can Saga Book 2



Ву

E. Joe Brown



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First Edition



## Chapter One Honeymoon February 1919

THE SATURDAY AFTER HIS wedding, Kansas City's biggest in decades, Charlie Kelly sat at the breakfast room table off the kitchen of his father-in-law's home on Westover Road. It was the largest home in the city, and its indoor swimming pool and other features made it one of the fanciest as well. Charlie enjoyed his second cup of black coffee as he watched squirrels scurry across the backyard out beyond the pool. He smiled as his mind wandered through the events of the past two years leading up to his marriage to Susan. He shook his head at how his life had changed.

How can I be here this mornin', married to the most wonderful woman I've ever met? I know she's heir to the largest fortune west of the Mississippi River. The money's great, but I'm glad I fell in love with her long before I learned of it. How she fell in love with a poor thirty-dollars-a-month-plus-room-and-board cowboy, I'll never understand. But here we are, married as of yesterday, and we'll head out on our honeymoon tomorrow.

Charlie looked up as Susan, his beautiful wife, strolled toward him. His heart pounded, and he couldn't help but admire her glistening, raven black hair as it flowed down beyond her shoulders. His eyes never left her tall, slender body with its awe-inspiring curves. Her colorful Pongee silk robe with blue, red and pink flowers was loosely tied around her narrow waist, open enough to clearly show she wore nothing under it.

"Good morning, Charlie. How long have you been up, Sweetheart?"

His eyes finally finding hers, he said, "Oh, I guess I've been here about twenty minutes. Enough time to be on my second cup of coffee and consider all that's happened these last couple of years."

She bent down and kissed his forehead. "Yes, a lot has happened since you left New Mexico headed for the 101 Ranch in Oklahoma. I'm glad you stopped in Elmore City along the way, otherwise we would never have met."

Charlie pulled Susan to him and rested his head on her breasts. "It sure has. When I took the job as a clerk in Jasper's store, I never expected to find the love of my life."

She gave him a hug, pressing her breasts into his face. "And I never expected to find such a strong, sexy man who could fulfill me more than any man had done before."

Charlie pushed her away gently and looked into her eyes. "I always wondered if Jasper knew about us down at the creek and sort of encouraged it."

"He knew," Susan said. "It saddens me, the tragic way he died in the fire, but it meant we could then become husband and wife."

Charlie nodded and gave her a hug. Susan had cared for Jasper, but he also knew it had been a loveless marriage because of how Susan had at first flirted with him, and then done much more. "Oh, Susan, we don't need to talk through all of this, but it did lead us to each other, and now I couldn't be happier."

She took her seat and poured a cup of coffee. "I guess you're right, we don't need to go through it, but we do need to discuss our honeymoon to Jekyll Island and how we'll get ourselves the 101 Ranch as soon as we can. You still work there for George Miller, you know."

Charlie heard Susan's father coming down the hall from his bedroom. "Susan, it's your father."

She closed her robe and cinched the sash tight as she said, "Good morning, Father. How are you feeling this morning?"

Walter Kramer entered the room slowly and sat across from Charlie. "I'm tired. Yesterday, was wonderful, but I'm still weary as I start today. Can you pour me a cup, my sweet daughter?"

"Of course." She retrieved a cup and saucer from the bureau. "And you better take it easy today and for as long as needed until you feel better."

Beverly, the cook, walked into the room. "Morning, everyone. Can I fix you all your usual breakfasts? And Charlie, I've made a pan of biscuits using your recipe."

Charlie grinned. "Beverly, you're an angel." He looked at the others, and they nodded their approval. He turned back to Beverly. "Yes, we'll have our usual. And another pot of coffee would be nice."

Walter cleared his throat and said, "Kids, I've arranged for you to use my Pullman Car to make your trip to Jekyll Island. I've always thought it's the prettiest part of Georgia." He looked at Susan. "I haven't used the car since you came home from Oklahoma. I've never taken you to the railyard and showed it to you, have I, Susan?"

"No, you haven't. I'm sure it's nice, and it'll be wonderful to have our own rail car." She gave her father a piercing glare. "How come you didn't let me use the Pullman when I went to Vassar? I had to share a sleeping car with several others."

"If I remember right," Walter said with a grin, "those others included your friends also going to Vassar and you wanted to spend time with them."

Charlie took a sip of coffee, smiled, and said, "I think he's gotcha there. Thank you, Walter. I've never been on a Pullman. What's it like?"

Walter smiled. "You'll have all the conveniences of home, and it's every bit as luxurious. When you get settled in, look at all the mahogany wood. It's not used just for trim, but entire walls."

Walter coughed and struggled to catch his breath.

"Father, are you alright?"

He wheezed a few times, then said, "I'll be okay." He took a cloth napkin and wiped his brow. "Don't look at me that way, Daughter. I'll see my doctor next week."

"Okay, Father. I'm concerned since Charlie and I are leaving town."

Walter gave a reassuring smile and patted Susan's hand. "Don't worry about me. Now where was I?"

Charlie said, "You were describin' this beautiful train car I've never seen."

"There's a full kitchen and bath with a shower. The bedroom has a bed the size of Susan's here at home. There's a dining table, and in the main room where you'll sit most of the time, it has French provincial furniture and nice side tables. The car's like this home but on railroad tracks."

Susan said, "Father, it sounds like you spared no expense when you had it built. Now Charlie and I'll enjoy it and be thankful we have it. Will we have staff on the car to help us?"

"Yes, I wanted a comfortable way to travel and do business available to me. So, you'll have a chef and housekeeper to make your trip as pleasant as possible."

Beverly brought their breakfast, and the three of them enjoyed the meal and talked about the wedding. It had gone by in a flash for Charlie, so it was nice to hear about it from Walter and Susan's perspective.

As they finished up, Charlie looked at the time and said, "I need to go meet my parents and make sure they make it to the station. Their train back to Oklahoma leaves this afternoon."

"I'll get started on the packing for us," Susan said as Charlie stood up. She leaned forward and Charlie obliged her with a kiss.

He wished he had time for more, but it was going to be a busy day. *No rest for the wicked.* 

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Early Sunday morning, the newlyweds boarded their rail car at Union Station. Their Pullman would make the trip enjoyable and comfortable. As they settled in, the housekeeper put away their luggage with the help of the porter, and the chef walked in and asked what they wanted for lunch. As the staff got to work, Charlie and Susan sat down in the expensive French provincial chairs.

"This will certainly make the trip more bearable," Charlie said.

"We've got two days here before we reach Georgia," Susan said. "Then we'll catch the ferry out to the island."

They sat in silence for a few minutes. Outside the train, the conductor was making his final check and last-minute passengers raced to reach their cars.

After a while, Charlie looked across the main room of the Pullman at Susan. "You look like somethin' may be botherin' you. Can I help?"

"Oh, I'm just concerned about Father. He seems to be getting weaker. I'm sorry, I don't want to worry you or make it seem like I'm not excited to spend this time alone with you. It's been years since I've spent time at our cottage on the island, and I've always loved visiting there. I can't wait to share it with you."

"You'd not mentioned Jekyll Island until we were planning our wedding. Why?"

"Father had considered selling what his friends call Walter's Hideaway while I lived in Elmore City. I didn't know he still had it until recently. He told me last night he keeps our staff at the cottage year-around, and they're expecting us tomorrow evening. Charlie, you're going to love the island and our cottage."

Charlie rubbed his chin. "You said year-around. I'm confused. It's your cottage, so isn't it available anytime?"

"It's available, but most folks who own property there, whether apartments at the club or cottages, are from the northeast or somewhere cold in the winter. So, they spend those winter months on Jekyll Island and return to their primary homes in the spring."

"Your father, when he mentioned Jekyll Island, said the members included the Rockefellers, Vanderbilts, Morgans, and other very rich and powerful people. I think he mentioned the Jekyll Island Club was private. Is it?"

"Yes, you must be invited or sponsored into the club, and the membership must vote you in for you to become a member. After acceptance, you must buy into the club and become a shareholder or co-owner of Jekyll Island and the private club."

Although their Pullman was near the end of the train, Charlie and Susan heard the woo-woo of the train whistle, followed by the shush sound of the boilers, then the crisp clank from the couplings between the cars, and finally they felt the jerk as the train began to move. Union Station soon faded into the distance as the train's engine created its chugga chugga sounds, working hard to gain speed as it climbed to the east enroute across Missouri to Independence, Columbia, and beyond.

A while later, Charlie turned on the sofa, looked out the nearest window, and said, "Well, we're on our way, and it looks like we've already left Kansas City. We'll be goin' through St. Louis, Cincinnati, Chattanooga, and on into Brunswick by tomorrow evenin'."

Susan joined Charlie and snuggled against his chest. "I'm going to enjoy every minute of this trip, and as I said, I can't wait to show you Jekyll Island."

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The sun settled beyond the western horizon as the train pulled into the station in Brunswick, Georgia, on Monday evening of February 17th. Charlie looked out to see an elegant building with a slate roof and six gables. He marveled at its beauty.

As they disembarked, Charlie said, "Susan, the station's impressive; its Victorian style reminds me of the home you and Jasper had in Elmore City. The gables and the red-brown brick columns and chimneys."

"It's very nice. I've always liked Brunswick. It's lovely here, and there are shops and restaurants folks on the island enjoy while they are here. We need to catch the ferry, so let's get moving."

The Jekyll Island steamer met Charlie and Susan and ferried them the ten miles to the island's wharf on Jekyll Creek. The ride was less than thirty minutes, and land was in view the entire trip.

Charlie said, "I love what we can see, although it's gettin' dark. The air's moist. It seems like the smells are a mixture of the ocean with the pines and marshes along the shores."

Susan said, "You'll see lush foliage on the island, and yes, the smells are the salt air filled with many fragrances coming from the ocean and everything growing here."

As the boat pulled next to the wharf, Charlie pointed to the island. Over the tops of the trees, he could make out the top floor of a large Victorian building with a turret. He said, "I didn't expect to see a hotel."

Susan laughed. "Oh silly, that's the Jekyll Island Club's main building." "Well, it looks big enough to be a hotel."

"In a way it is, Charlie. The main floor has a dining room, offices, and some meeting rooms. We'll go there and sign in and then head on to our cottage."

As they went ashore, a porter loaded their baggage onto the back of a horse-drawn buggy to take them to the clubhouse. As the horses clip-clopped along the road, Susan swept her arm across their view and said, "Isn't this beautiful? I love the huge oaks with the Spanish moss drooping down."

Charlie said, "It's somethin' special. Those are palm trees along the road, aren't they?"

"They are, and we have some on our property at the cottage. Remember, we're in the southern part of the country now, and it's warmer here."

"Oh, I can feel it. It's muggy, and I need to get out of this coat. But I'll wait until we get to the house."

They signed in, and the desk clerk provided their table location in the dining room for when they chose to come for dinner. Then Charlie and Susan walked out front where a tall older man with salt and pepper hair stood beside a carriage.

Susan smiled. "Jarvis, how wonderful to see you."

The man said, "Miss Susan, my how you've grown. Whatta beautiful young lady you are."

Susan gave him a hug, then turned and pointed toward Charlie. "Jarvis, this is my husband, Charlie Kelly."

Charlie reached out his right hand. "Jarvis, pleased to meet ya. I'd say you've been a special friend to Susan for a while."

Jarvis nodded. "Pleased to meet ya too, Mister Charlie. And yes, I remember Miss Susan as a kiddo. Now she's a full-grown lady. Let's git y'all to the cottage."

Charlie asked, "How far is it?"

"Not far, we'll be there in a few minutes."

As they passed several houses, Charlie asked Susan, "What does your cottage look like?"

"It's shingle style like many you would see in New England. Father loved what Mr. Pulitzer built and used those ideas for our cottage. Here we are, Sweetheart."

Charlie lay back in the carriage and exclaimed, "This isn't a cottage. It's as big as Westover."

Jarvis looked back at Charlie as they entered the driveway to the cot-

tage and said, "Mister Charlie, I don't know anything about Westover, but we have nineteen rooms and five baths in these three stories."

Charlie just shook his head and smiled.

As Charlie and Susan climbed the stairs to the porch, two people stood there waiting for them. Susan introduced Hazel, a short, redheaded woman of about forty, as the cook, and a slender, young blond as Winnie, the housekeeper. They helped Jarvis to bring in and unpack the luggage.

Charlie looked at Susan. "I'm hungry. It's a little past 7:00. Is there any food in the house?"

Hazel said, "Ma'am, I can whip ya up somethin' real quick."

Susan smiled as she shook her head. "No, Hazel, how sweet of you to offer, and we'll certainly have breakfast here in the morning, but I told the folks at the reception we would come down to the club for dinner tonight."

Charlie put his arm around Susan's shoulders, winked, and said, "Let's let Hazel fix us somethin' so we can stay in together. We can see the dinin' room in a day or two." He gave her a passionate kiss.

"Oh, Charlie," Susan said with a sigh and returned the kiss.



## Chapter Two Ms. Post

February 1919

FTER A FEW DAYS of passion, the honeymooners decided to have an evening meal at the clubhouse dining room. As they walked out the front of their cottage to Riverview Road, Susan pointed and said, "Over to our left, with those large palmettos in the front yard, is the Pulitzer cottage; the John Albrights live there now. They moved in while I was at Vassar, so I don't know them well."

Charlie said, "You keep callin' these cottages. Susan, they're large homes. Each of these easily compares to some homes in the Country Club section of Kansas City."

Susan said, "Yes, but these folks have homes in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, or some other city that are larger and more elaborate than these. Our cottage, although large, is about half the size of our home on Westover Road."

The couple turned right and walked under a Spanish moss-draped canopy of live oaks as they headed toward the clubhouse about a quarter of a mile away.

Susan pointed to their right. "Charlie, this Mediterranean stucco two-story house is the Goodyear cottage, and I understand Frank Jr. uses it now. Frank should be about twenty-eight years old, and he's someone I remember playing with as a kid.

"Next is Mistletoe Cottage. Its owners are the Henry Porters. Henry must be in his late seventies. He's a businessman and a past member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Pennsylvania. He influenced my father to consider sharing his profits with employees. Now you know why, when we discussed the subject, I was so quick to agree. We knew Mr. Porter, and

his company grew rapidly as he shared the wealth with his key leaders.

"And this three-story house is called Indian Mound. William Rockefeller owns it. You met the Rockefellers; William and his older brother, John, attended our wedding. Along with the Morgans and Goodyears. Several of our other neighbors on Riverview Road and around the island sent flowers, gifts, and best wishes."

The clubhouse came into view as they finished the walk.

Charlie put his arm around Susan and said, "Well, this island and the people here are inspirin'. Walkin' and seein' this place lit up this evenin', it's beautiful. I'm a little startled by havin' these powerful people as neighbors. It's not fear, mind ya, just me gettin' used to havin' this kinda life."

Susan snuggled into Charlie. "You'll be great, just like you have been at the 101. I do love this place. It's pretty and romantic too. The dining room's elegant, and I hope we'll have a table which gives us some privacy."

As they walked into the Grand Dining Room, Charlie noticed the maître d' looking at his boots. While the maître d' led them to their table along a wall of windows overlooking the courtyard, Charlie smiled and nodded to the other guests seated in the room. A woman seated alone at the table next to them was the only one who returned his gesture. After being seated, and sliding his hat under his chair, Charlie said, "I'm guessin' you don't see too many folks wearin' cowboy boots and hat here on Jekyll Island?"

Susan laughed. "No, probably not. You're within the dress code and you won't cause a stir." She smiled and put her hand on his. "Sweetheart, I don't think I'd recognize you without your boots and hat."

She looked around the room. "Now, what do you think about this place?"

With a disbelieving shake of his head, Charlie said, "This is somethin.' It might be fancier than the Mission Hills Country Club dinin' room where we had our weddin' reception. Those two sets of white pillars down the length of the room, the tables, chairs, and fine China all make it obvious you're wealthy and powerful to be in this atmosphere. My granddaddy would've called it 'livin' in high clover.'"

Susan squeezed his hand and said, "Well, it's true the members want to live in luxury even when they are away from their primary home and daily business environment." Looking past Charlie, she added, "My, there's a young, attractive, and refined lady at the table next to us."

Charlie nodded. "She certainly is. She's a mighty fine-lookin' tall brunette like you. Do you know her?"

"No, and she's there alone."

Charlie said, "She seems friendly enough; maybe you should at least

speak to her."

"Well, okay." Susan looked directly at the lady and said, "Good evening, I'm Susan Kramer-Kelly. I don't believe we've met."

"No, we haven't. I'm Marjorie Post-Close. I'm not a member here but a guest of the J. P. Morgans. You may be acquainted with Jack and his wife, Jane. I'll be staying here a few more days."

Charlie turned and said, "I'm Charlie Kelly. The only Posts I know started the town in the Texas panhandle and made the cereal that was available from the 'coosie' at the 101."

Marjorie gave a small laugh. "Well, that's my father C. W. Post. He started Post cereals. And he built Post City in Texas on land he bought from the U Lazy S Ranch."

Charlie nodded. "I know the ranch, though I never had a chance to work there myself."

Marjorie turned to Susan. "And Susan, you must be the daughter of Walter Kramer. My father spoke highly of him."

"Yes, and I believe we share the role of being the only child of powerful men, do we not?"

Marjorie laughed. "That's one way to describe it. I heard from Jack that your father is not in good health. We talked earlier on the phone; he said he and Jane spoke to him at your wedding."

Susan leaned closer to Marjorie. "He's not doing well. He had to beg Charlie and me to come here. We hated the idea of honeymooning this far away from him." Susan hesitated, then said, "Are you here alone?"

Marjorie took a sip of wine, smiled, and said, "Yes, I needed to get away for a while. You know how life can throw you challenges, and I needed a break. The Morgans kindly offered me the use of their apartment in the San Souci across the street from the club." She noticed Susan was about to ask a question. "I'm fine," she assured her, "and I certainly don't want to bring my troubles into the celebration of your new life together."

Charlie waved his hands. "Oh no, we didn't mean to pry, and we don't need to hear any more."

Susan shot Charlie a stern look and turned back to Marjorie. "We're sorry to hear this, but if there's anything we can do to support you, we offer our help. I would love to spend some time with you to learn how you stepped into your role as the Post company leader. I know my father has done a lot to prepare me, especially as his health has failed him. But hearing your experiences would be educational and interesting."

Marjorie leaned forward. "Thanks for your kind offer and for respecting my privacy. I would love to get to know you two, and if I can be of any help to you, it would be wonderful."

The waiter arrived to get the Kellys' order, and the conversation with Marjorie ended with an agreement to meet the next day for lunch. She left as Charlie and Susan began to read their menus.

After a few moments, Susan said, "Sweetheart, a ribeye medium and a bottle of cabernet to share will suit me fine."

Charlie smiled and looked at the waiter. "Make it two ribeyes, one medium and the other medium rare. We'll have a bottle of cabernet, and you can bring it immediately."

After dinner, they walked back to their cottage and opened another bottle of wine to enjoy on their back porch. As Charlie and Susan sat within arm's length on their lounges, sipping their cabernet, Susan said, "We don't have a swimming pool, but the beach is close. Let's walk down there in the morning."

She had already unbuttoned her blouse and when she rolled over, giving her man his favorite view, he immediately responded.

"That's my Charlie; now let's make another night on Jekyll Island memorable."

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Charlie and Susan slept late for them, arising at 7:30. After Hazel's breakfast of eggs, grits, and bacon, the couple walked to the beach across River Road along Jekyll Creek. They enjoyed the warm, for February, temperatures and the gentle ocean breeze as they strolled along the beach.

"Susan, I see us bringin' our kids here some day and it's excitin' to me. When I left New Mexico, my biggest dream was to become a cowboy at the 101."

Susan squeezed his hand. "I want kids someday, but right now, to me, our kids are banks, department stores, railroads, and a construction company."

Charlie nodded his head slowly. "Okay, Darlin'. Remember I come from a big family and that's how ya make sure yer farm or ranch is successful. I understand, as long as ya see us havin' kids someday."

"I want kids too, but with me assuming Father's position within Kramer, I need the Board to see me as no different than Father."

"Okay, Sweetheart. Since your father and I already added a kid, you didn't mention oil in your list, can we add another one?"

"What are you talking about?"

"A ranch."

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Later the Kellys met with Marjorie, taking advantage of a windless

75-degree afternoon to enjoy lunch on the patio at the club. Susan and Marjorie ordered Waldorf salads, and Charlie enjoyed the roast beef in his French Dip.

They began sharing their personal lives and, not long into their conversation, Charlie said, "It sure looks to me like you two have a lot in common. Marjorie took over the family business in her twenties, and Walter is turning the day-to-day operation of the Kramer Group over to you, Susan, and you're in your twenties."

Marjorie smiled and nodded. "Susan, I think we both share a strong desire to take what our fathers created and make it our own, don't we?"

Susan said, "I have so much respect for what Father built, but Charlie and I have dreams requiring us to create more and move into new areas of the business world."

"It sounds like you two make such a good team, and it takes one. What areas are you two looking into for expansion of your companies?"

Charlie said, "Her father and I have been talkin' about the oil business. After watchin' friends like Harry Sinclair and John Rockefeller have big successes, he already had an interest. I'm now workin' in the oil business with the 101 Ranch Oil Company. We also know we want to own and operate ranches and be part of the beef industry. When we return from our honeymoon, I'll be immediately returnin' to the 101 Ranch in northern Oklahoma."

Marjorie said, "As I mentioned yesterday, my father built Post, Texas from ranch land. He also owned a ranch, and I got involved some in running the ranch, so I understand how you feel and I can see you being very successful."

Susan reached over and took the hands of both Charlie and Marjorie and said, "I guess we're the Three Musketeers, aren't we?"

They laughed and threw their hands up and gave out a hoot. Others nearby looked over in surprise and then shared their laughter. A solid friendship had begun.

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The next two weeks became a mixture of daytime activities, often with Marjorie, and evenings filled with romantic and intimate walks around the island.

On Monday, March 3rd, while having lunch with Marjorie, the maître d' came to their table and said, "Mrs. Kelly, you have a telegram." He held a silver platter toward her.

Susan took the telegram as Charlie continued to tell Marjorie a story about working on the  $101\,\mathrm{Ranch}$ . It took them a moment to realize Susan

had gone very quiet. Charlie turned to his wife and noticed she had gone very pale. He reached out a hand and noticed her's were shaking.

"What is it, Darlin'?"

Susan's lips trembled and she shook her head slightly. She handed the telegram to Charlie, and Marjorie reached over to hold Susan's hands. Tears welled up in the corner of her eyes.

Charlie read the telegram:

Susan
Your father is in the hospital - STOP
The doctor says it's serious - STOP
Come home immediately - STOP
Curt

"Oh, Charlie," Susan finally managed to say, and she fell into his arms. Charlie rubbed her back. Marjorie gave a questioning look, clearly wanting to know what the telegram said but also not wanting to pry. Charlie said, "Walter's in the hospital."

Marjorie nodded, understanding fully the importance of those simple words. She gave Susan's hand a squeeze. "I'm so sorry. Susan, my heart hurts for you, my new friend." She looked at Charlie. "You know the different ways to reach me, so please keep me informed of what you find out when you get home. Please go pack, and I'll let the staff at the front desk know what's happening. They can have the ferry ready for you."

Charlie sent a return telegram stating they would be leaving immediately.

Back at the cottage, Charlie began making the additional arrangements needed for them to leave. The next train out of Brunswick was departing later that evening.

They'd be on it.