

Three Loves by Graceann K. Deters

Excerpt: The Proposal

“I have a proposal for you.” She laughed nervously at first, and then fully, loudly. It took her a minute to collect herself. “I have a proposal, Bruno. A real proposal.”

“You would like to sell me a bridge in Brooklyn?”

“I would like to marry you.”

I almost fell off the stool; I literally had to grab the edge of the bar to steady myself.

“Betty, I don’t know how to, I thought you knew---.”

“Oh, no, I do know,” she said. “I know full well that you’re gay.”

“So you’re joking?”

“Not in the slightest, I’m dead serious, in fact, Bruno, if you marry me, you’ll get your green card and you’ll be able to stay in America.”

“But why? Why would you do this?”

“Look,” Betty said. The color was still high in her cheeks. “I like you. You make me feel comfortable and not many people do. And if I don’t marry you, I won’t marry anyone.” I started to protest but she stopped me. “Don’t interrupt me, Bruno, and don’t pity me. I need to say this all at once or I won’t say it at all. But here’s the truth. I have no illusions. I hate dating. I hate small talk. I hate parties, clubs, social gatherings of all kinds. It is hard for me, Bruno. People aren’t drawn to me. I’ve tried, but the fact is I’m happier in a room with a book or the TV, and I’d prefer to be happy than miserable. But I don’t want to be alone, either. Not forever, anyway. With no one to care whether I live or die? Why should it have to be that way when we both have something to gain from one another’s company? I see no point in waiting around for ‘true love,’ if such a thing ever exists, which I doubt.”