



# **The Binding Chair; or, A Visit from the Foot Emancipation Society: A Novel**

*Kathryn Harrison*

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## **The Binding Chair; or, A Visit from the Foot Emancipation Society: A Novel** Kathryn Harrison

In poised and elegant prose, Kathryn Harrison weaves in **The Binding Chair; or, A Visit from the Foot Emancipation Society** a stunning story of women, travel, and flight; of love, revenge, and fear; of the search for home and the need to escape it. Set in alluring Shanghai at the turn of the century, **The Binding Chair** intertwines the destinies of a Chinese woman determined to forget her past and a Western girl focused on the promises of the future.

Beautiful, charismatic, destructive, May escapes an arranged marriage in rural nineteenth-century China for life in a Shanghai brothel, where she meets Arthur, an Australian whose philanthropic pursuits lead him into one scrape after another. As a member of the Foot Emancipation Society, Arthur calls on May not for his pleasure but for her rehabilitation, only to find himself immediately and helplessly seduced by the sight of her bound feet. Reforming May is out of the question, so love-struck Arthur marries her instead and brings her home to live with him, his sister and brother-in-law, and their two girls, Alice and Cecily. In Alice, May sees the possibility of redemption: a surrogate for a child she has lost. And it is to May that Alice turns for the love her own mother withholds. But when the twelve-year-old is caught preparing her aunt's opium pipe, she is shipped off to a London boarding school, far from the dangerous influence of the woman who will come to reclaim her and to control the whole family.

**The Binding Chair** unfolds among scenes of astonishing beauty and cruelty, in a lawless place where traditions and cultures clash, and where tragedy threatens a world built on the banks of unsettled waters--from the bustling Whangpoo River to the lake of blood in the Chinese afterworld. By turns shocking, exquisite, and hilarious, *The Binding Chair* is another spellbinding literary triumph by the writer whose work Michiko Kakutani of *The New York Times* has called "powerful and hypnotic."

*From the Hardcover edition.*

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