

I ALWAYS WANTED TO HAVE STARS IN
MY EYES



“*H*ow was your date last night?”
“Josh and I decided to break up, Grandfather,”
replied Katie easily as she added some muesli to her yogurt.

The silver-haired gentleman didn’t appear pleased. “I spoke to Josh just yesterday morning, and he seemed to think the relationship was on solid footing. What mortal sin did he commit?”

Katie gave a small shrug. “Nothing in particular. He’s nice enough, but I just couldn’t see a future with him.”

Just then her grandmother entered the room with a cheery, “Good morning, everyone. I’m sorry I’m late.”

Grandfather smiled at his wife before looking back at Katie and saying, “We’ll continue this discussion later.”

“What discussion is that?” asked her grandmother, known to Katie as Nana.

“Katie and Josh broke up last night.”

“Oh.” She didn’t sound overly surprised, and she glanced at Katie to see whether this was good news or bad. Katie looked just fine, so Nana decided it was simply a case of one more of her granddaughter’s discarded men. “Poor Josh,” she commented softly. “He really was quite taken with you, you know.”

Katie sighed. "Yes, he made that quite clear."

Her grandfather frowned, but Nana smiled at her granddaughter. "There are worse things than a man who places you high on his list of priorities."

"So I've heard." Katie took half of a raisin bagel and spread cream cheese on it.

Grandfather started to say something, but his wife shook her head at him almost imperceptibly, and he maintained his silence. He might be CEO of Danvers Industries and have the final say in all things regarding the business, but he'd learned long ago to respect his wife's advice in their family life as she had an uncanny habit of being right.

"Will you be here for dinner tonight?" asked her grandmother, still looking at her granddaughter.

"I'm not sure yet, Nana. I'll let you know later."

Katie had her own apartment in her grandparents' sprawling Conway Drive residence in the Buckhead area of Atlanta, and she truly enjoyed living with them most of the time. There were other times, though, that she simply wanted more privacy. Her grandparents tried to give it to her, but her guests' parked cars or a late-night romantic swim in the pool were sometimes too open to view, so she also had a nice little corner condo in 2828 Peachtree that served her purposes when she wanted a bit more privacy.

As Douglas Danvers folded his napkin loosely on the table and pushed his chair back, Katie swallowed her bite of bagel quickly and said, "Don't forget I've got a meeting off-site this morning, Grandfather."

"I remember. Will you be back by lunch?"

"Probably. Why?"

"It's Jean's birthday today, so I've arranged a special lunch for her."

Katie smiled broadly, and her eyes looked amused. "You arranged it?"

Jean was her grandfather's indispensable administrative right

hand, and normally it would have been her responsibility to arrange a luncheon.

“Yes, *I* arranged it,” he replied with a clear edge to his voice. “Is that so surprising?”

Before Katie could reply, Nana jumped in.

“It’s just that you’re always so busy, Douglas,” she said diplomatically. “Jean usually takes care of those details for you.”

“Well, since I’m not yet senile, I somehow managed to make the phone call myself.”

He could hear his own voice sounding unusually testy, and he wasn’t quite sure why. Lately he’d found himself getting impatient with his granddaughter more quickly than he used to. He sighed. Why couldn’t she just settle down with a nice man? He’d thought perhaps Josh was the one. He was bright, well educated, and good looking, and he even came from money, removing the worry that Katie’s eventual inheritance might be the attraction.

There were times when he felt tired, and he’d so like to know that the family business would be in good hands if something were to happen to him. He’d devoted his life to nurturing and growing Danvers Industries, started by his own father, and he’d like to see it stay in the family. His father had been a brilliant businessman, but he’d been a man of his time, and he hadn’t considered women as equals. His desire had been that the business stay in family hands, but the founding tenets of the business required that an unmarried woman couldn’t take over as CEO. For some reason, that had seemed a logical thing to his grandfather at the time, but now it was quickly becoming a problem.

Douglas’ younger sister had died of influenza at age five, leaving him the only child, and later he and his own wife had had two children of their own, Douglas Junior and David, Katie’s father. Douglas Junior had always been interested in the family business and so was naturally seen as the heir apparent.

David had instead been fascinated by photography and had followed his heart. After graduating from Yale’s School of Fine

Arts, he married and took off to roam the world, venturing into areas not frequently photographed. His training, talent, and sense of adventure paid off, and his work started earning international recognition and fame. After his daughter Katie was born, she went along with her parents on their adventures for the first decade of her life. Finally, though, it was decided she needed some roots and more formal schooling, so at age twelve, she went to live with her grandparents, where it soon became evident that she'd inherited the family head for business. She'd listen with interest to discussions over the dinner table and during high school would sometimes accompany her grandfather to his office.

During Katie's third year of high school tragedy struck. Her Uncle Douglas, the heir apparent, was killed in a skiing accident, leaving a gaping hole in Danvers Industries' management team and uncertainty about the company's future. Katie's father mourned his older brother, but he had no interest in taking his place in the business. As for the next generation, Douglas Junior's only child, Luke, had struggled his whole life, shuffling from school to school and being bailed out of small scrapes by his family. It was obvious he was not CEO material, so all eyes turned to Katie, still young but very bright and talented.

She studied business at Harvard, earned her MBA from Wharton, and then returned home to assume her place at her grandfather's side, where she'd quickly proved that, when the time came, Danvers Industries would be safe under her guidance. Even though she was young, or perhaps because of it, she'd been responsible for new product ideas that had helped the company keep growing. Things were looking bright, but now it was time for her to get serious about her personal life. If her future was as CEO, it was time for her to marry.

Katie was well aware of the requirement, but, as young people do, she assumed she had plenty of time. Her grandfather was healthy, or so it seemed to her. True, he was past eighty, and there had been a small scare several years back when he'd had a minor

cardiac event, but now he was fine again, and his mind was as active as ever.

It's not that Katie would mind being married, but the men she went out with were all uninspiring in the end. The sex was good, but something was missing. In her heart of hearts, she sometimes wondered if she still had her childhood longing for the white knight who could slay dragons and command the world. She'd read that it could be a problem for accomplished women to find a man who could still tweak a romantic spark, the spark that was becoming almost politically incorrect.

"Why don't I just meet you all at the restaurant?" suggested Katie as her grandfather started to leave the breakfast room. "Where have you booked?"

"Blue Ridge Grill at twelve-thirty."

"Okay. I'll see you there."

Katie seemed to be dawdling over her breakfast, so Nana stayed too. She took a moment to study her granddaughter, admiring her sun-streaked, dark blonde hair and her lively hazel eyes. Good looks had always come easily to her granddaughter, who seemed at times unaware of the eyes that often followed her when she was in public.

"You know, darling, your grandfather worries about you. He's so afraid something might happen to him before you find the man of your dreams."

Katie chuckled at her grandmother's choice of words, but Nana continued, undaunted, "I suspect you could have just about any man you chose."

Not having a daughter of her own, she'd been very close with her granddaughter after the young girl was left in their care. Katie had always been bright, energetic, and sometimes a bit too independent for Nana's comfort, but she realized it was a result of her early unconventional upbringing. Her mouth could be quick, but it was never malicious or intentionally hurtful, and any rough edges

were usually smoothed over by Katie's big heart and sense of humor.

"That's kind of boring, isn't it?"

Nana looked surprised. "Boring?"

"Having a cafeteria of men waiting to be chosen."

Her grandmother looked thoughtful. Maybe it *was* boring to always have what you wanted. She looked at her granddaughter and asked, "What's your suggestion then?"

Katie sighed deeply. "I don't know. It's not that there's anything the matter with most of the guys, but I always wanted to have stars in my eyes, maybe even to be madly in love like in those silly romance books. I know it's old-fashioned and unrealistic, and if you tell anyone, I'll never forgive you."

Nana leaned across and squeezed Katie's hand. "Your secret is safe with me. Now where can we find someone who can put stars in those beautiful eyes of yours?"

"If only I knew."