
Everything Stops on His Desk

“I think that about wraps it up,” said Douglas Danvers as he looked around the table at the senior management team of Danvers Industries. It was Monday afternoon, and they were holding their weekly staff meeting. “Does anyone else have anything to bring up?”

There was a murmur of negative answers, but Katie Danvers, Vice President for Product Development and granddaughter of CEO Douglas Danvers, was quiet. In fact, she didn’t appear to be paying much attention.

As people got up to leave, Gavin Kerr, Executive Vice President and Katie’s fiancé, moved to her side and sat down next to her.

“Earth to Katie. What’s going on?”

Katie looked at him in surprise, as if wondering where he’d come from.

“Nothing,” she replied unconvincingly. “I’m just thinking.”

“Uh-oh. That can be dangerous. Who’s in your sights?”

“It’s nothing,” she said with a tiny shrug as she got up and moved towards the door.

Gavin hesitated a minute before following her. She’d been

‘thinking’ a lot lately. He hoped she wasn’t having second thoughts about their engagement.

She had a long history of breaking up with boyfriends each time it became serious. Normally this wouldn’t have been a problem, but her great-grandfather, the founder of Danvers Industries, had included a now-very-outdated provision that forbade an unmarried woman from taking over as CEO. Ever since her uncle had been killed in an accident, Katie had been her grandfather’s heir apparent, but as time went on and she didn’t marry, her grandfather had brought in Gavin Kerr from the European operation to act as his right-hand man.

Grandfather hadn’t realized at the time that he was dealing with fire. Nine years earlier, when Katie was barely out of business school, she’d spent some time in Scotland to learn about the operation there. She and Gavin had ended up having a passionate affair, at least until the day he’d spanked her. Shocked by the unexpected turn of events, Katie had run back to Atlanta and proceeded to block him out of her life.

When Grandfather brought Gavin into the Atlanta office, she’d reacted very badly at first, but Gavin had forced her to see things in perspective, and soon their affair from nine years ago was rekindled. They’d been engaged for a couple months now, and Grandfather was overjoyed.

“I thought you were going to report on Safe Spray,” Gavin commented as they walked the short distance to Katie’s office. “What happened?”

Katie shrugged again. “I don’t know. I’m waiting for some new information.”

“Are you done for the day? Are you ready to head home?”

For the first time in at least half an hour, Katie perked up. “We need to eat first. I’m starving.”

“What do you feel like?”

“Maybe barbecue.”

"ARE you sure nothing's going on?" asked Gavin. They were seated in The Greater Good BBQ dipping tortilla chips into a big bowl of Jalapeno Cheese Dip. "You were lost in your own world this afternoon. Your grandfather looked at you strangely a couple times."

Katie shrugged, something else she'd been doing a lot lately. "I just have things to think about."

"Like?"

She sighed. "I don't know. Everything. I was watching Grandfather in the meeting and thinking about all the things he's responsible for. It seems like every single thing stops on his desk."

Gavin looked at her strangely. "He's the CEO, Katie. Of course everything stops on his desk."

Katie was silent a minute and then said almost sadly, "If you're doing everything, you don't have time to do anything in depth."

"I guess that depends on your definition of depth. You certainly have to delegate, but you know all this."

Gavin wondered where her concern was coming from. Katie had known from the time she was a teenager that someday she'd inherit her grandfather's office, and she'd worked closely with him for many years. Something was obviously bothering her that she wasn't saying. He'd give her time. Usually she confided in him when she was ready.

"Have you talked to your mother recently?" he asked instead.

"Yesterday. She said they may come back in another month or so."

"Good. Is your father's leg completely healed now?"

"Pretty much. She said sometimes it bothers him, but of course he doesn't like to admit that, and anyway, he's hurrying to get his work done there."

Katie's parents were in Botswana, where her father, David

Danvers, an internationally acclaimed photographer, was working on his latest book. When he'd broken his leg earlier in the year, Katie had gone to visit him, and soon Gavin had followed with a ring in his pocket.

To everyone's surprise, Katie had accepted the proposal, and Grandfather had been overjoyed when they'd returned an engaged couple. Now there was a wedding to plan, and Katie's mother, Maggie, intended to come back to Atlanta to help.

"Mama said she might come back before Daddy. I think she's really afraid Nana and I will do everything without her."

Because of her parents' nomadic lifestyle, Katie had come to live with her grandparents when she was twelve, and they'd become like a second set of parents to her. She was very close with her grandmother, whom she called 'Nana', and frequently confided things to her that she wouldn't to anyone else.

"You can't do much planning if you don't choose a date," Gavin reminded her. This was a topic they'd discussed on and off ever since returning from Botswana, but no decision had been made.

Katie smiled mischievously. "I thought we'd just get up some morning and say, 'Today's the day', and then go down to the courthouse and find a justice of the peace. What do you think?"

"I think not."

"You don't want some big Disney production, do you?"

"No, but I'm pretty sure there's a lot of territory between those two extremes."

Katie didn't answer but instead looked around for a waitress.

"What do you need?" asked Gavin.

"More chips and tea."

Once the table had been refreshed, Gavin returned to the topic of a wedding. Katie had been very indecisive about what she wanted, but it was time to be making at least the basic decisions, like a date.

"What month do you think would be good for the wedding?"

"I don't know. I'd like it to be good weather here and in Scotland both. That means waiting until maybe May. What do you think?"

"May would be good."

"Okay," said Katie easily, as if everything had just been decided.

"Okay, what?"

"Okay, we can use May."

Gavin chuckled. "I think you'll probably have to be a bit more specific if you want to reserve a church or even tell my family when to come."

Gavin's family was in Edinburgh, and the plan was for them to come to Atlanta for the wedding and then, after returning to Scotland, they would give a large party for their own friends and relatives. Katie and Gavin would of course be there.

Early in the year, when Katie's grandparents had taken a cruise, Katie had told Gavin she might be a 'teeny bit jealous', so Gavin had suggested a cruise to Europe to start their honeymoon. Then they could visit his family in Scotland for the big party and later fly back to Atlanta. Of course nothing could be finalized until Katie chose a date.

In fact, not much of anything could be done until the magic date was chosen, so Gavin's immediate goal was to get Katie to commit to one. Her agreeing to May was partial success.

"Why don't I check cruise dates and see what's going on," he suggested now. "Maybe we can choose a cruise that we like and then work backwards from there."

"Okay."

Gavin smiled. He'd seen chick flicks where brides-to-be turned into crazed control freaks, but obviously Katie wasn't going to fit that mold. He supposed he should be grateful, but a specific date would be very helpful to all concerned.

"Come on," Gavin said now as he motioned for the check.

“Let’s go home. I’d much rather see you out of that dress than wearing it.”

“What a dirty old man!”

Gavin grinned and wiggled his eyebrows. “Guilty as charged.”

“MUCH BETTER,” remarked Gavin a half hour later. They were back at Katie’s condo in the 2828 Peachtree building, and she was in her ‘lacies’, as he liked to call them. Today it was a two-tone little bra-and-panty set in fuchsia and navy. As was usual with Katie, the panties barely covered her cheeks. Gavin sometimes wondered why she even bothered to wear them, but then the mysteries of women were many to him. He had a younger sister, but it hadn’t done anything for his understanding of female behavior.

“Come over here and let me enjoy your body,” he invited her, but she didn’t immediately move.

“I’m about to pop,” she answered instead. “I think I ate too much.”

“Maybe we should take off the rest of your clothes so they don’t squeeze you.”

“You’d like that, wouldn’t you?” she retorted, frowning at him. “You don’t even care about my discomfort. You just want to ogle.”

Gavin laughed. “That’s me, the ogle king.”

Just then the notes to *Hickory, Dickory, Dock* sounded, and Gavin shook his head in amusement as Katie reached for her phone.

“Hi, Nana.” Katie smiled as she greeted her grandmother.

They spoke for about five minutes and then Katie hung up.

“Is everything okay?” asked Gavin.

“Yes. She had a message that she'd forgotten to pass on, that's all.”

She laid her phone on the coffee table and then hesitated. Gavin was motioning that she should come sit on his lap, but she fixed him with a faux stern look. “If I come over there, your hands may not behave themselves,” she informed him primly.

“That's a distinct possibility.”

“You're not allowed to touch the merchandise until you've paid for it.”

“What would you accept as payment?”

Katie was having a hard time keeping a straight face. “I don't know, but I can't be giving too many samples. You know what they say: Why pay for the cow if you can get the milk for free?”

Gavin laughed out loud. “I think I actually heard that growing up.”

“You should have taken it to heart.” She giggled and then went and sat on his lap, snuggling into his arms as he wrapped them around her.

“I keep meaning to ask you and then I get sidetracked,” he said once she was settled. “What are those crazy ringtones you have for people?”

“They're not crazy,” replied Katie indignantly. “They make a lot of sense to me.”

She moved around until she was straddling his thighs almost saddle-like, allowing her to look into his face.

“What makes sense about your grandmother having a *Hickory, Dickory, Dock* tone?” he demanded.

“Well, that one's a bit fanciful, I admit, but it's fun, and I think Nana's fun.”

“Okay. How about your grandfather? I think you have *Old MacDonald* for him. Why?”

“That's easy. Old MacDonald is the CEO of the farm. Everything there comes under him.”

“What’s the song you have for your parents? I’ve heard it several times, and it sounds like German singing.”

“It is. It’s the German folk song *Mein Vater War Ein Wandersmann*. Do you know what that means?”

“My father was something or other,” he replied tentatively.

Katie nodded. “You’re almost there. A ‘Wandersmann’ was someone who wandered from town to town. It’s not exactly what my parents do, but it’s still a good ring for them.”

Gavin studied the scantily-clad and ever-surprising woman sitting on his legs. He loved the unconventional way her mind worked.

“Okay, one last question. Why do you have *The Wheels on the Bus Go Round and Round* for me? What possible connection does that have?”

Katie’s eyes danced as she laughed. “I programmed that when you first arrived.”

“So? What was the connection?”

“Do you know a song more annoying than that one?”

Gavin did a double take. “You programmed the most annoying song you could think of for me?”

“Yes.” She gave a mischievous little giggle.

“Why?”

“Gavin! When you first arrived, I totally didn’t want you here. You know that. I was really pissed that Grandfather had brought you in. You were like this huge annoyance to me.”

Gavin considered a minute and then nodded. “Fair enough, but why haven’t you changed it? I’m not sure you should have your most annoying song as the ringtone for your fiancé.”

“Now it just seems normal. I’m used to you being the bus wheels.”

He put his hands around her and pulled her closer to him.

“I want a new ringtone,” he whispered in her ear.

“I like it the way it is.”

“Well I don’t. I want you to like the sound when I call.”

Katie giggled.

"I'm serious," he persevered. "New ringtone."

"I'll think about it, but it's my phone."

"I suspect it's paid for by the company."

"So? It's still mine."

"Well, okay, if that's the way it's going to be, just remember, turnabout's fair play. I think I'll put a new ringtone for you on my phone."

"Something about a beautiful woman, no doubt."

Gavin smiled mysteriously. "Not exactly."

"What then?"

"You'll have to wait and find out."

"Gavin!" She hit his arm.

He grabbed her fist and laughed. "You were wrong about one thing. There is something much more annoying than the bus song."

"Not much."

He smiled again, a smile of satisfaction.

"Think Teletubbies—your new ringtone."