

LOVE'S SUPRISES – CHAPTER 10

Background: In the previous chapters the University Communications departments makes all the arrangements for Katie and Shane to appear on the Gay Byrne TV show. Dr. McDermott speaks to Katie and asks her permission to date her mother. Katie tells him that permission is not hers to give but she does give her blessing. Later that evening, before Katie could talk about it, her mom tells her of the developing relationship with Dr. McDermott.

Engagements

Tuesday was one of their normal evenings with Fr. O'Malley. Katie drove into Rosseville to pick up Shane at his cottage on the grounds of the Glowing Lantern. He asked Katie to come a little early because he wanted to stop in the church before going in to see Fr. O'Malley. It was a glorious spring evening, cool after a day of warm sunshine. A gentle breeze blew in off the bay and it was a grand night altogether. It had been a cold and wet spring and a day like this day was rare enough on the cusp of summer.

Shane greeted her with a bear hug that lifted her off the ground and a kiss that transported her to the stars. "Wow," exclaimed Katie, "where did that come from?"

"I haven't seen you since Sunday and we hardly had a chance to talk at all. I missed you."

"I missed you too" said Katie. "Yesterday was such a busy day, I feel as though I've lived a lifetime in just one day. As I told you on the phone last night, I had a great meeting with Sean Hurley. He'll take care of everything and he'll have some of his assistants role play the obvious questions with us before the interview. I know they have been negotiating all day, but I expect that this will happen before the end of the week. Maybe it will be next Monday. They will have to advertise and for the likes of us they will have to lie a lot to get anyone to watch. Dr. McDermott asked my permission to date my mom. Permission is not mine to give but I did give him my blessing. Then I talked with my mom at dinner last night. She was so cute. She did not want to give up the secret that was as obvious as the sparkle in her eyes. I asked her about her feelings and she finally told me that she is falling in love with him. I told her about my conversation with him, that I gave him my blessing, and then told her that I was rooting for them."

"She is Angela, but you are the angel," said Shane.

"Well aren't you the nice one to say such sweet things," gushed Katie.

They walked up the steps to the entrance of the Rosseville Church and fortunately, the door was still open. The setting of the day still provided enough light filtering through the stained glass to illuminate the church. Shane walked her up the center aisle and stood before the platform on which the altar was set. He knelt to say a prayer and Katie followed as well. The quiet of the church was overwhelming.

“Katie, I wanted to come here for two reasons. First, I wanted to thank God for keeping us safe in that scuffle last Friday. Then he turned to her and said, “Katie, before God and before this community of family and friends, and the whole world, I pledge to take you for my wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, in sickness and in health, for richer or poorer, until death do us part.”

Katie picked up her cue and looking him directly in the eyes, and through her tears repeated these same words, “Shane, before God and this community of our family and friends, and the entire world, I pledge to take you as my husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, in sickness and in health, for richer or for poorer, until death do us part.”

Shane took the ring from his pocket and slipped it on her finger. He then gave her a toe curling kiss filled with star bursts. Each regained their equilibrium and turned to march out of the church. In the rear of the church was Fr. O’Malley. Katie was embarrassed about being seen kissing in church and apologized to Fr. O’Malley.

“Nonsense,” said O’Malley. “Kissing was invented by God himself and is at least a sacramental, something that belongs in a church as well as everywhere else. The lad told me he was going to do this. I didn’t want to interfere but I didn’t want to miss it either. Even I couldn’t think of a more brilliant idea.”

He locked the church as they left and walked with them to the priest house.

As they walked into the sitting room, the room was filled with the gentle glow of candlelight, soft music was playing on the stereo, finger sandwiches were laid out on the table, and the centerpiece was a bottle of Irish Mist, with some Galway Chrystal glasses.

“This is compliments of your men at the Lantern. I told them that I needed a low key engagement reception. They are overjoyed for you. Both raised their hands to heaven and cried, “finally.”

O’Malley poured out three drinks and offered a toast. “Your love for each other is mighty and not only *can* change the world, I expect it to. May God be your support, forever.”

Now exchange your letters.

“Father, before we leave tonight, I want a word with you. Shane can stay but I have a couple of questions.”

O'Malley nodded in assent, took his drink and a couple of finger sandwiches and retreated to his dark corner in the room.

"You'll have to read your letters by candlelight. Now that I have set this grand mood, I don't want to change it."

The discussion went on for one and a half hours. It was winding down before Fr. O'Malley brought it to a conclusion.

Katie gave Fr. O'Malley a big hug. "I'm so glad we are doing this and doing it in this way. I can't tell you how valuable this has been for us. Why doesn't everyone do this?"

"I would like them to," said O'Malley. "The success of the party depends on the gifts that one brings. Not everyone can bring the same gifts that you have."

"We would not have had a clue about any of that if you hadn't opened the door for us," said Shane.

"I only pointed to the door; you and Katie opened it"

"Oh boy, by the way, Katie, that ring I gave you is a fake. The jeweler gave me that one for a few days. We have to go by his shop later this week to pick out the one that you like best."

"Hmmm," said Katie, "a fine was to start off an engagement."

"Actually, I thought it was a pretty good idea." pouted Shane.

"Don't be an eejit; I was just teasing you. I'd like to keep this one too and savor the memory. This was the most beautiful night of my life."

"Katie, what did you want to ask me before you left tonight," asked O'Malley?

"We may not be able to deal with it tonight. We are going on the Gay Byrne show for an interview, God help us. I have very mixed feelings about what happened at my mother's house. I have no regrets that I saved Shane's life. The knife was about to plunge into his chest. I bopped the guy with a frying pan. I almost killed him. In fact, he may not recover all of his wits."

"Aha," said Fr. O'Malley, "a moral dilemma to be solved. Katie, it would be no problem at all if you weren't such a good person. I empathize with your concern but we'll leave it to the first order of business on Friday when you come."

"Father, we both thank you for the celebration. It was wonderful."

"Not at all," said O'Malley, "thank *you* for the celebration."

Shane and Katie walked hand in hand back toward the Lantern. “Shane, I’ll come in to thank Liam and Chris for their work tonight, but I should go back to Galway. I want nothing more than to be with you tonight, but I don’t want to set a bad example for my mother, especially since she is vulnerable to the insanity of being in love.”

“Are we insane,” laughed Shane?

“I’m sure we are in some eyes, but I hope it lasts forever.”

When they walked in the door of the Lantern, the entire place erupted in applause. It was an unusual crowd for a Tuesday evening but apparently Chris and Liam spread the word, even though Shane did not say a word to either of them about his plans. Fr. O’Malley leaked it to them to prepare the setup at the Parish House and they leaked it to the entire town of Rosseville. Everyone wanted to greet them, hug and kiss them, and engage them in the revelry of the moment. Apparently the party started early without them. The craic was mighty in the house on this night. It took Katie and Shane an hour to greet and thank all the well-wishers. Katie asked Chris to tap the Rescue Bell behind the bar so she could talk with everyone at once.

“Shane and I want to thank you for your good wishes tonight. You know we love you all and that you are a big part of our lives.”

Shane, chimed in, “This has taken a long time but, believe me, it was well worth the wait. We have worked toward this moment with Fr. O’Malley and if anyone wants to get married, I recommend that you work with him. It is only the beginning of the rest of our lives, but it has been a marvelous journey. Thank you for being part of it.”

“And now,” said Katie, “I have to go. I have to work tomorrow as do most of you. Over a hundred young people in my auditorium seminar expect my best. Enjoy the rest of the party.”

Shane walked her to her car. They kissed and held each other until she reluctantly opened the car door. She started the engine, blew him a kiss, and drove off on the road to Galway.

Her mom was still up, slightly worrying because Katie was usually home earlier from her sessions with Fr. O’Malley.

“Well, it has finally happened. I am spoken for. Shane had prepared this elaborate scenario and it was so wonderfully romantic. I will never forget it.”

She told her mom every detail of the evening and Angela listened through her own tears of joy.

Katie had preparation work to do for her seminar and Angela went to bed. Toward midnight, Katie put out the light and just lay in her bed reliving every moment over and over again.

Katie slept a little later than usual and was wakened by a call from Sean Hurley. He wanted to have lunch with Katie, after her seminar, in the faculty dining room. He had finished the negotiations with Gay Byrne and wanted to go over them for her approval.

“By the way, Sean I am an honest woman at last. Shane and I became engaged last night.”

“Katie, you were never less than honest and I offer you my most heartfelt congratulations. I’ll see you about half twelve.”

Katie’s seminar went well, although some of the students noticed an ebullience they had not seen before. She was a very popular lecturer, always well prepared and organized, something which the students appreciated. The semester was ending in a couple of weeks and undergraduates start getting restless when the weather turns warm. She excelled in smaller classes and in her work with graduate students. She was very patient with them and motivated their best work.

She left the lecture hall and walked briskly along an inlaid stone path to the commissary where she would meet Sean.

The commissary was a big impersonal cafeteria type hall. The faculty dining room looked like one found in an ancient manor house. The beamed ceilings were over twenty feet high and the center of the room was a huge granite fireplace. The tables were oak and the chairs were lined with soft red leather. The floor was carpeted and together with hanging drapes, muffled sound to ensure private conversation at the individual tables. Waiters and waitresses served food that would never be seen in the commissary. Meals were subsidized, a faculty perk, to encourage camaraderie through use of the facility.

A maitre d’ greeted Katie and led her to the table where Sean was already seated with an associate, Michael Mahon. Both stood to greet Katie and the events of the previous evening warranted hugs, kisses, and congratulations. Sean teased her about being Wonder Woman and described for Michael the whole series of adventures she and Shane had encountered.

Michael indicated that he was following these adventures in the papers and on TV because Katie, who had always been popular on campus, was now something of a celebrity.

“Believe me, Michael I could do with a lot less adventure. I think I chose teaching and research because it promised a quiet life,” said Katie. “Instead it gives me more time to get into trouble. What scares me is that I am starting to like the adventure of it.”

“Well the Byrne people were very easy to work with. First, they don’t pay interviewees. They volunteered the suggestion of contributions to charities in the name of you and Shane. I suggested a thousand pounds each to the Newman Center, the St. Vincent dePaul Society at the Rosseville Church, and to the Sea Rescue Foundation. They did not even blink which made me think I should have asked for more.”

Katie was impressed. She would have to think better of Mr. Byrne.

“Katie, they want to do the interview for airing next Monday. You and Shane will have to do the taping on Saturday. Is that alright?”

Katie nodded, “yes.”

“Unfortunately, you will be his only guest. He will do his monologue at the beginning of the program. He will do some of his routine from his desk. After the commercial he will introduce you and Shane. The program will conclude with his musical guest which on that evening will be, now get this, U2. Expect to be on for a half hour. The network is pulling out all the stops for you.”

“Wow,” exclaimed Katie, “I love those guys. Maybe I can get Bono for a guest lecture.”

“Well, their presence takes some of the heat off of you. They see you and Shane as great guests, and I would too if I was in their shoes,” explained Michael. They expect you to be an attractive presence, witty, talkative, informative, playful, and fun.

“I think I can do playful and fun,” said Katie.

“Yes,” exclaimed Michael, “that is just the kind of attitude they are looking for.”

“What questions will they ask us during the interview part,” asked Katie.

“We can predict them pretty closely. The whole key to the interview is who has the control. We will work with you and Shane on Friday afternoon to role play questions and see if we can’t get a discussion going that will mimic what you will tape on Saturday. We’ll start that now. We’ll order lunch and just chat. Have a good time with this. You will make a couple of million people very happy on Monday.”

During their lunch, Katie told the story of Shane saving the crew of the Nina G and saving his own ship and its fourteen passengers in the face of a rogue wave. She talked about Leveegee and her life growing up there. She discussed the public details of her mom’s life. Then she gave a vivid description of the attacks on her mother’s home. She discussed her conflicted feeling about her role in the serious injury to the young man who about to stab Shane, but insisted that she preferred Shane alive.

Sean told her that she had more than enough to talk about and the Shane should tell his share of the story. “You can control the conversation in several ways, direct and indirect

questions, and using all the time to tell your story,” said Sean. “The man is a comedian, so play off of him to bring wit into the discussion. I have no doubt that both of you will charm the questioner and his immense audience. Bono’s presence will take a lot of pressure off of you, although he may not appear until the musical part of the program. You will have time to meet him in the Green Room as well as after the show. If Byrne asks you anything too personal you can finesse your answer, meaning to give him your answer without directly answering the question. Keep the conversations flowing and you will do well. You and Shane can rehearse this tomorrow with our role players. You will feel even more confident after that.”

“Sean, I don’t know how to thank you.”

“You will do yourself and the University proud Katie. I have such confidence in you; I might even host a party, to watch it.”