

Chapter 7

While Joel was driving over to Aunt Grace and Uncle Tony's for dinner, Kristie was preparing for her date with Roger Penfield.

A pizza restaurant and a museum did not call for dressy clothes. She decided on a simple skirt and T-shirt combination. No nylons.

Roger was at her apartment at 5:30, and Kristie greeted him with a warm smile as she opened the door.

"Hello, Roger."

"Kathy, I'm so pleased to meet you at last. Your picture on our mutual dating service does you an injustice."

"Why, thank you. Such a nice way to start out the evening!"

She locked the door behind her, and they started for the car. Roger's picture, she thought, certainly did do him justice: he was every bit as good looking as his picture. But she said nothing. Best to be a little reserved.

Roger opened the car door for her. Yes, another point in his favor: gentlemanly manners.

Kristie had been planning to give him directions to get to Gino's, but he navigated his way there like a pro. Odd. He'd said he wasn't that familiar with Chicago.

"From what you said about not knowing Chicago that well, I'm a little surprised how easy you found your way here to Rush Street."

"I looked at a Chicago map before coming. If we made a few extra turns, you could probably get me lost quite easily."

At the restaurant, his manners were again impeccable: he opened both the car door and restaurant door for her. Yes, much more suave than Joel.

The hostess seated them at a booth for two. It was small, but already at this early hour, Gino's was too crowded for them to get a booth for four. The clientele was definitely young, and the motif was certainly not the Sixties.

For the last fifty years, Gino's was known as Chicago's premiere deep-dish pizza restaurant. Kristie actually preferred thin crust, but this was a date, and Roger had invited her to Gino's. He really did seem to know more about Chicago than she had thought.

"So, Kathy," Roger began after they had ordered, "tell me about Sixties rock-n-roll. What's it like? Why do you like it?"

Kristie thought for a moment. This was a great ice-breaker, but what would be the best way to answer him? If she told him how she really felt about the music, especially since he wasn't familiar with it, it might sound like she was pushing

things, being too forward talking about romance. Oh, well. Be honest.

"First, it was nothing like the rock today. No occult themes, no suicide themes, no degradation of women. Rock-n-roll from the Fifties and Sixties was about love and romance. Sweet romance. There were songs about your first crush during those confusing teenage years, songs about exciting first meets at dances, songs about dating. It was all in the music." Kristie was getting quite animated with her enthusiasm for this music.

"Try to picture it. It's 1964. You're out on a date with some guy who makes your heart do flip-flops. You'd like to hold hands, but he's scared, you're scared, you're both nervous. But you're listening to rock-n-roll on the radio, and the Beatles come on with 'I Want to Hold Your Hand.' And all of a sudden, you're holding hands, and you think you're in heaven.

"By the way, the connection between heaven and romance was actually developed into a song. Lou Christie had a big hit called, 'Outside the Gates of Heaven.' He's singing to a girl, and the song starts with him asking, 'Where is heaven?' and then he answers, 'In your heart.' Isn't that sweet? Actually, in the song, the girl had just broken up with him, and he wants to get back into her heart. The song doesn't say it, but I always assumed it had a happy ending."

Kristie smiled, hoping to underscore how romantic that assumption had been. Roger returned the smile, but she got the impression that his was simply perfunctory. However, she didn't let that dampen her excitement in describing the wonders of rock-n-roll.

"Most of the songs, of course, were sung by guys and guy-groups. But the girls loved it because they imagined their dream guy saying those things to her. One of the biggest hits ever was a song called 'Cherish' by the Association. The opening line was, 'Cherish is the word that I use to describe all the feelings that I have right in here for you inside.' I think the entire female population of dating age swooned every time they heard that song! It was number one on the charts here in Chicago for five weeks in 1966."

She tilted her head and gave Roger a quizzical smile. "Hey, have you ever heard of any of these songs?"

"Not the songs themselves, but I have heard of the Beatles."

"Well, you can still get my drift here. There were tons of other songs: songs about meeting girls, asking them out, asking them to dance. Back in the Sixties, a boy and a girl going steady often had their special songs, and they'd turn up the car radio every time they came on! Maybe the lyrics meant something special to them; maybe they'd heard that song together on their first date; maybe they enjoyed dancing to it.

"There were a lot of girl-groups who sang rock-n-roll too. Their songs talked about romance from the girl's point of view. Of course, the biggest girl-group of all time was the Supremes, but there was another group called the Toys. Would you believe they took Bach's Minuet in G and turned it into a very melodic, beautifully romantic rock-n-roll song? It was called 'Lover's Concerto.'

"Then you grow a little older and there were songs for when love becomes serious. Our dating service, you know, took its name from one of them, 'Forever Came Today' by the Supremes. But, of course, romance doesn't always work out the way we'd like it to. So there were other songs, songs about broken hearts, unrequited loves, girls who cheated and guys who cheated.

"What was rock and roll like? Every experience you have from your first date to walking down the aisle: the scariest, the greatest, the most romantic time of your life was all there in the music. That's what rock and roll was like."

Roger sat there for awhile watching Kristie, a meditative look on his face.

"Well, I must admit that was quite a presentation. Very passionate, well organized, and spoken like an expert. You're a lot more familiar with that music--and more enthusiastic--than I had imagined. But as you portray it, the music really doesn't fit the adult scene, does it?"

"We're dating, aren't we?"

"Yes, and I can see you definitely have a romantic bent, but we're not teenagers any more.

"A lot of the songs resonate with me."

Roger continued watching her, but his expression had grown even more enigmatic. Kristie wondered whether he thought she was somehow locked into the adolescent phase of her life. It seemed her impassioned description of rock-n-roll and the beautiful love poetry it expressed had left him unmoved.

"It just seems to me that when adults date, they have to wrestle with, shall we say, issues of greater moment than holding hands and kissing."

His tone didn't invite further comment, so Kristie let the issue drop. However, despite Roger's implication, dating issues like holding hands and kissing were certainly not confined to adolescents! She had read a number of articles on Yahoo.com and MSN.com that discussed kissing in adult dating, especially that "first" kiss. Adults could feel just as nervous, uncertain, and shy about such things as teenagers.

She wondered too what some of these weightier issues might be. Whether to have sex on the first date or wait until the second date? When to move in together? Perhaps she was just overly sensitive on those subjects. Maybe he hadn't been thinking about sex at all. After all, there were other things that could cause problems between dating adults in today's culture. Balancing dating with parenting, for example.

Anyway, she decided that liking the same music might not be that important in a relationship.

"By the way," Roger continued, changing the subject, "when I mentioned going to the Planetarium to see a star show, you never said whether you'd ever seen one before. Have you?"

"Yeah, once, several years ago."

"On a date?"

Kristie hesitated. Was that too personal a question for a first date? Maybe she was being too sensitive about that too.

"No, not a date. A friend of mine was taking a course in astronomy at UIC and had to go to a star show at the Planetarium to complete an assignment, so she and I went together."

"I see. Well, I hope you enjoy it tonight."

"I'm looking forward to it."

Their pizza arrived.

"Do you have an interest in astronomy?" Kristie asked.

"Oh, a lot of things interest me. But in this case, it's not so much about astronomy as it is about crowds. Of all the Chicago museums, the Adler Planetarium probably draws the smallest crowds."

"You avoid crowds?"

"When I can. Besides, none of the other museums are open in the evenings."

Again it struck Kristie how well he really knew Chicago. Or maybe he just thought museums made good first dates.

She didn't want to ask quite as forward a question as Roger had, but she was interested in whether this was standard fare for him to take first dates to the Planetarium. Maybe she could guess the answer by how familiar he was with it.

"Do you know much about the Planetarium? I hardly know anything."

"Well, I know the word *planetarium* actually refers to the projection unit in the Sky Theater. It can show the apparent motions of the stars through a single night or through an entire year. Those motions can be displayed as they'd be seen from Chicago or from any other point in the world. They can also be displayed as they'd be seen at any time--past, present, or future. To identify the individual constellations, the planetarium can also project colored outlines of the mythological figures the constellations were named after. The motions of the moon and planets can be depicted as well. Of course, all that's been going on since the museum opened in the thirties. They've now added some really high-tech stuff in the StarRider Theater."

"Wow, you do know quite a bit about it, 'well organized and spoken like an expert,' as you would say."

"I like the place. I've been there a number of times."

Kristie resisted asking, "On dates?" Apparently, he wasn't going to volunteer

the information.

They continued eating in silence for awhile, but soon they had to leave for the Planetarium. On the way, they drove by Buckingham Fountain, but Kristie didn't turn to look. She was on a date; now was not the time to relive any painful memories.

Roger parked the car, and they walked toward the underground entrance to the Planetarium. Kristie wasn't sure what to expect, but he didn't take her hand. Instead, he simply placed his hand lightly on her back in that rather formal way a man guides a woman.

She turned to look back at the Chicago skyline. They were effectively out a ways into Lake Michigan and looking west toward the magnificent panorama of Downtown Chicago at night.

"Isn't that the most beautiful skyline you've ever seen?" she asked. "I've always thought the best view of the skyline was from the east. Usually I see it from Navy Pier, but it's truly breathtaking from here." The location had a kind of romantic magic, she thought: the stars overhead, the spectacular skyline to the west, and the gentle sound of the waters of Lake Michigan rolling in against the causeway.

"Yes, I agree. This is certainly viewing the city at its best."

As they walked into the Sky Theater, everything was pretty much as Kristie remembered it. The great projector sat in the middle of the large circular room with concentric rows of specially constructed, theater-type seats surrounding it. The backs of these seats were set at a greater angle than normal theater seats so the viewers could easily see the projected sky on the domed ceiling.

No doubt much to Roger's liking, the crowd was light. They took two seats in the outer circle. When the theater lights went out, the projector displayed the stars on the ceiling as they appeared from the Chicago area on this date. The effect was awesome--like being transported to the center of the universe for a brilliant display of the heavens. The last time Kristie was here, she had come with her girlfriend. This time it struck her how very romantic the setting was. She also noted that the reclined seats were very conducive to sitting close and holding hands in much more than a casual way. Probably not many couples could resist the magic of this atmosphere.

But somehow Roger Penfield managed.

After the show, they walked around the Planetarium looking at the various astronomical exhibits. The Sky Theater was in the center of the building, so the floor space containing the exhibits was actually a wide, circular corridor around the theater. There were three such levels. The lighting was subdued. That was helpful for the display of astronomical exhibits, but it also created another romantic setting, which again seemed to go unnoticed by Roger.

As they were walking, he spotted an exhibit coming up. "Hey, Kathy, look at this. It's really interesting."

She looked. "Six scales?"

"Not just any scales. You'll notice they're marked, Mars, Venus, Jupiter, and so on? Well, you stand on the scale, and it'll tell you what you'd weigh on that planet."

"Why wouldn't my weight be the same as it is on earth? Do you lose weight during space travel?"

"No, not in the sense you mean, but you're really referring to mass, not weight. Your mass is the amount of matter your body contains. You'd have the same mass on any planet. Weight is the pull of gravity, and that depends on the mass of the planet. Here, come on over to this one." He pointed to one of the scales. "This one is for the moon." His mouth curled into a barely noticeable smile. "Now, of course, I would never presume to ask a lady to reveal her weight, but let's just see what you would weigh on the moon."

Kristie got on the scale. "Nineteen pounds?" she exclaimed, thoroughly shocked.

"Sure, the moon's smaller than the earth, so you would weigh less. But here's my surprise: your real weight here on earth is about 114 pounds."

She looked at him with a dumbfounded expression. Then she started smiling. "You've been leading me on! All this gallant talk about not asking a lady's weight. From my weight on the moon, you must be able to calculate my weight on earth. You were hoping I wanted to keep that a closely guarded secret! Then you could spring your trap, much to my chagrin."

"Guilty as charged. It's a simple calculation. Your weight on the moon turns out to be about a sixth as much as it is on earth. Therefore, nineteen times six gives 114.

"Actually, I weigh 115, but I didn't realize how careful a girl has to be around you! I wonder how many other tricks you have up your sleeve."

He laid his hand lightly on her shoulder. "You'll never know until I spring them!" Then he laughed. "You know, a number of years ago, I tried to pull this stunt on my mother. She's a bit overweight and never wanted to say how much she weighed. So I tried to convince her to get on the moon's scale under the pretense of cheering her up--making her weight seem so small. But she didn't trust me and wouldn't get on."

"A wise woman! So you've always been devious."

"Let's say 'fun-loving.'"

After leaving the museum, they walked around the grounds for a little while, again admiring the beautiful views. Directly north across the water they saw Navy Pier and the Chicago Lighthouse. To the northwest, they could see the Standard Oil Building, the John Hancock Building and the Sears Tower. Soldier Field was slightly southwest, across Burnham Harbor, and just south of the Planetarium was Northerly Island. With Meigs Field now gone, all ninety-one acres of this man-made peninsula

was a beautiful park maintained by the Chicago Park District. It could have been a very romantic walk. Could have been.

It didn't take too long to drive from the Planetarium back to Kristie's apartment. She was disappointed that Roger seemed completely unaffected by any of the romantic atmosphere that had surrounded them throughout the evening--at Gino's, in the Sky Theater, walking around under the real stars. So many missed opportunities to show at least a spark of romantic interest in her. Well, what was she expecting? After all, this was only a first date. He probably thought reserve was in order while they were just beginning to discover each other. Still...holding hands, at least, would have been nice. A wave of the old discouragement washed over her. Maybe he was discovering that he really didn't feel much chemistry between them. But then she wondered how much chemistry she'd felt. The external atmosphere had been there, but the chemistry did seem to be missing.

As they pulled into her apartment parking lot, a multitude of conflicting images and feelings flooded her thoughts. On the positive side, there was a growing excitement over whether everything might suddenly change and he would want to kiss her goodnight. But then some of the memories of those early dates she'd had from MyForever.com came back--the ones she had complained to Joel about. Maybe that's why he showed little romantic interest. He was interested only in other things, things he might bring up now. Would he want to come in? Would he suggest spending the night? It had been a rather confusing evening, and Roger presented many mysteries.

At her door, Kristie's heart was beating faster. What was going to happen? She decided to speak first. Since he had asked her out, she wanted to give some expression of thanks--and take him off the hook. She extended her hand for the non-committal handshake, looked into his eyes, and smiled.

"Thanks for a great time tonight, Roger. I really enjoyed it, especially the star show."

For the first time tonight, what he did really surprised her. He took her hand in his and squeezed tenderly. Then with his other hand, he reached out and stroked the top of hers with light movements from her wrist to fingertips. He continued to hold her hand gently, seductively, longer than normal.

"I enjoyed it too, Kathy." He paused and said nothing more for several seconds while his eyes bore into hers.

What he was doing to her hand had its effect on her. Kristie moved a few inches closer to him. That was all he needed. He drew her into his arms and their lips met. He pressed hard. It was a forceful, hungry kiss. That too surprised her, but instead of melting her heart, it raised an alarm somewhere in the back of her head.

When he lifted his head, his arms still around her, he said nothing and seemed to be waiting, almost as if expecting her to say something. What? She didn't want to answer that question. She had basically liked Roger, had even hoped for another date with him. But another part of her realized that there could be only one thing he was waiting to hear.

When she said nothing, he dropped his arms, and their embrace ended naturally.

"Goodnight, Roger." She kept her expression warm.

He nodded his head and returned her smile. "Goodnight, Kathy."

After Kristie was back into her apartment, she sat down on the sofa to think. Had he really put a move on her to get in and spend the night? She remembered reading about that little maneuver with the hand shake. It was called the "flirty handshake." Some Internet article on dating had talked about it. Why had he used it? She couldn't believe it was just to make holding her hand more romantic. He'd had all night to romantically hold her hand and never did. Was it to send a message that he wanted to kiss her? Maybe.

And what was he waiting for after they kissed? It sure seemed as if he wanted her to invite him in. But maybe it was being too harsh on Roger to think he wanted to spend the night. He might only have been hoping for an invitation to have a nightcap before leaving. If only she hadn't had all those other bad experiences, she wouldn't be so suspicious.

Kristie finally decided that she would like a second date with Roger. It might reveal lot more about this rather enigmatic man, things that she would like about him.

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