

About Katherine Hardy.

by Caroline Roberts

Introduction:

Set the scene. Raise the curtain. Velvet whooshes aside. Nothing, dark emptiness. Black as pitch. The audience anticipates. Pop the switch. Bing, bang, boom. Light exhilarates darkness. Music interrupts emptiness. *La valse d'Amélie*. A romance score.

Tonight's host arrives. The audience roars. He bows deeply. Nose touching knees. His eyes sparkle. Smile is wide. A short pause.... At long last! The players enter. Two insignificant individuals. The audience subdues. Introductions are made. Down the line. Pay close attention.

"Bienvenue, mon public. To Katherine's mind." Applause thunders, echoing.

"Now, let's begin! Character: Katherine Hardy. Character: Jeremy Finn."

They bow deeply. Noses touching knees. A moment passes. The air swirls. Props in place. Players in position. Setting: apartment party.

The scene, set. Hush the crowd. Dim the lights. Cue the action.

Act 1: Expectations. (The music swells. *The Ice Dance*. Score: Danny Elfman. Enter Katherine Hardy)

A dim room. Glowing in red. Red, gorgeous balloons. Red, shining streamers. It is afire. A scorching visual. Teenagers wade about. Shoulder to shoulder. Sea of bodies. A birthday party--well, not exactly.

A party justification. An after-class special.

The crowd parts. Cue the spotlight. There she is. Lovely, Katherine Hardy.

Lighting is perfect. Dress sways gently. Curls shining prettily. Shoulders proudly positioned. Makeup impeccably applied. 18 and confident. With quick wit. And easy smiles. She is lovely. A sharp being. Completely, utterly spellbinding. She stands alone. Waiting for something. Perhaps, for nothing.

The crowd parts. The spotlight widens. A path emerges. White light shining. Enveloping second figure. Handsome, Jeremy Finn. A sweet boy. Long, lean figure. Of innocent demeanor. With charming attributes. A striking appearance. Their eyes meet. Time stands still. The music swells. Violins reach forte. Horns trumpet harmoniously.

Meeting is inevitable. Although lacking reason. It doesn't matter. They draw together. Led by fate. A dream-like march.

The crowd swirls. Eye of vortex. They whisper secrets. Faces close together. Hands trailing skin. Tracing mysterious trails. An electric connection. Everything is effortless.

They fall deeply. Months fade away. Seasons change colors. (Props move accordingly. Rotating different skylines. Dazzling fake snow. Birds chirping melodiously. Gusty winds blowing.)

Long, enticing conversations. Discussing transcendental Thoreau. Fitzgerald's May Day. Law school ambitions. Desiring two children. Living in downtown. They walk merrily. Hand in hand. Silver screen aesthetic. They are perfection. Katherine and Jeremy.

Stage fades black. Music tiptoes out. The players exit.)

Applause booms, thundering. Audience begins stirring. Heaving longing sighs.

Act 2: Reality. (Violins begin humming. The audience stills. Solomon: Hans Zimmer. Props moved about. Re-enter Katherine Hardy.)

A dim room. Drowning in red. Red, gaudy balloons. Red, dripping streamers. It is afire. A scorching visual. Teenagers wade about. Melting into globs. Thickening like wax. A birthday party. Well, not exactly. A party justification. An after-class expectation.

Bodies swarming evasively. Pushing, shoving, grinding. Drinks spilling everywhere. Lazy, clumsy apologies. Katherine hates this. Another night out. One after another. What's the point? Who to impress? Everyone drinks fast. Lacking in emotion. Lacking in authenticity. Paper doll relationships.

Katherine's smile hurts. Pulled by hooks. Stretched beyond repair. She dressed nervously. A flattering dress. Curls hastily flattened. Shoulders shoved back. Makeup carefully applied. With quick wit. And easy smiles. She is kind. A sweet being. Merely a girl. Unsure of herself. She stands alone. Waiting very patiently.

He's in sight. Lovely Jeremy Finn. From Geology lecture. Talking with friends. Any minute now. He'll look over. Time will stop. Conversation will ensue. He'll fall deeply. Hours will pass. In this moment. Expectations meet reality.

Time shuffles by. Spotlight doesn't widen. No path emerges. And no Jeremy. Face burns hot. Hands balled up. Ready to punch. Heart is pounding. Head is dizzy. Her chest aches. She feels ugly. She feels unwanted. Katherine looks around. At Jeremy Finn. At the crowd. Possibility of someone. Possibility of anyone? Decision waves in. Time to leave. Spotlight following closely. Fighting toward escape. Except- an idea. A mere thought.

Why not *her*?

Time momentarily pauses.

She looks back. He's still there. Leaning against wall. Talking with friends.

She breathes deeply. Smooths her hair. This is reality.

Now or never.

Katherine walks over. Her heart pounds. Nervousness tightens chest. Her smile flashes. He smiles back. He remembers her.

Memories are retold. Terrible group projects. Presentations about mud. They laugh awkwardly. Her smile loosens. Wires start snapping. The hooks release. Everything feels...natural.

Time passes quickly. Panic begins boiling. What to say?

“Wanna go out?”

“Roses are red. Violets are blue.”

“You’ve had Starbucks? Because you’re hot. Like a latte.”

In the end. Wit is unnecessary. She merely asks. A ten-digit promise. Tap. tap, tapping. Phones click closed. Future is uncertain. Nothing to expect.

They leave separately. Perhaps meeting again. But perhaps not.

(The violins carry. Swelling slowly, ending. Smoldering lights brighten. Illuminating audience faces.)

The Last Call.

End the scene. Silence deadens air. The players bow. Noses touching knees. They exit quickly. The host emerges. He bids adieu. Takes his bow. Claps his hands. Smack, smack, smack! The sound echoes.

He’s shown them. Dosage of authenticity. Perhaps it’s useless. He knows them. What they want. Puffy, glittery, messes. Hollywood heart busters. The audience disperses. Grumbling over reality. They whisper softly. *Could that happen? Where’s the romance? What about fate? Where’s the magic? The perfect ending?*

Many shrug, unconcerned. They’ll continue on. Boats against current. Struggling with expectations. Waiting for something. Perhaps for nothing.

Lower the curtain. Velvet tosses, closed. A red wall. Hiding pulleys and cranks. Shielding the machines. Plays, skits, films. They show them. What is illuminated. What is mused. But not real.

Flip the switch. Bing, bang, black.

Caroline is a Sophomore majoring in English and International Studies with two minors in Women’s Studies and Spanish. When she’s not drowning in research papers, she enjoys creating or studying unconventional styles and forms of art through film, music, photography, and writing.