

Catelyn's Story

Catelyn took a deep breath, sighed, and began counting to 10 for what had to be the 30th time in the 6 minutes that she'd been home. "It's not her fault she's so stupid" she silently repeated over and over to herself. She slowly opened her eyes and looked over at her very stereotypical roommate. Blonde hair, blue eyes, and dumb as a brick. "How on earth did we get matched up as roommates? How?" she silently wondered yet again. "And how will I survive the next 8 weeks?"

As Kathy, Catelyn's roommate, kept talking about how someone had told her that MPH stood for miles per hour and how that couldn't possibly be true because no one could know that, Catelyn tried to go to her happy place. She was rudely interrupted by a knock on the door.

Catelyn leapt up and answered with only a hint of the desperation that she felt. "Hello!" Standing in front of her were three very tall, very good looking cowboys. "Hey!" the one closest to her said, extending a friendly hand. "My name is Jake! There's a dance in the town hall tonight and we were wondering if you ladies wanted to come." Normally Catelyn was, as a general rule, opposed to going strange places with complete and total strangers, but today she was not going to let any chance at getting out of her apartment pass her by.

"Yes. Yes I'd love to." She said, grabbing her jacket and her keys. "Kathy?" she added reluctantly, trying to remember everything her mom had taught her about being a good person, "you want to come?"

"No, that's okay. I'll stay in tonight. Have fun!"

"Oh thank my lucky stars." Catelyn thought. "I will! Thanks!" she shouted over her shoulder, "See you later!"

"So," Catelyn started cheerfully, if a little nervously, "what are the rest of your names?"

"Jake."

"Gideon."

Silence. The third man just drove, stoically staring at the road. "And, and your name?" Catelyn asked, a little bit more unsure of herself and wondering if she had in fact just gotten into a car with a serial killer.

"Oh, don't take it personally miss," Jake began apologetically, "he just hates his name."

"Well you would too if you were named Percival." Gideon threw in. "Honestly Per, what were your parents thinking?"

Percival just stared at the road. Silent.

"Anyways," Gideon continued, "what's your name?"

"I'm Catelyn."

“That’s a right pretty name Catelyn. Almost as pretty as you I reckon,” Jake shyly offered.

Catelyn instantly went bright red and mentally cursed her easily embarrassed face. “Thank you,” she stammered, “it’s no Percival, but I like it.”

With that comment the interior of the truck rang with laughter, including some from Percival, Catelyn noted with relief – she hadn’t wanted to offend him but the opportunity was too good to simply pass up. “Oh you’ll fit right in here in Ashland,” Percy chuckled, “right in.”

The rest of the 15 minute drive passed by very quickly. Jake and Gideon were an absolute hoot and ever Percy cracked a joke or two as he unbent a little more. They pulled up to the town hall and all three guys jumped out of the truck, elaborately assisting Catelyn out. “At your service,” Gideon bowed.

“Ever willing to serve,” added Jake, tipped his imaginary hat.

“Your highness,” Percy said, lifting his hand to Catelyn’s as she stepped down from the truck.

“Well, I’ll say this for Ashland,” Catelyn responded, smiling at them, “you sure know how to make a girl feel welcome.”

As the four of them walked into the town hall Catelyn felt truly happy for the first time since she had moved to Ashland two weeks ago. Her feet began tapping in time to the music – oh how she missed the dances back at home! Her feet were born to move and even though it’d been less than a month since she’d been twirling around a ballroom she already missed it fiercely. Yes she was a ranching girl, and sure she could rope a steer as easily as she could pitch hay but she was also an amazing dancer – although she hadn’t discovered it until her first year in college. One of her roommates, Shasta (her real name was Chantelle but nobody but her mother called her that), had harassed her into taking a basic dancing class with her. Catelyn had agreed strictly because the roommate code demanded it (Shasta HAD just been through a rough break up after all) and no one was more surprised than she at, first of all, how much she loved it, and secondly that she was a born dancer.

After she had discovered this hidden talent there was no dance that Catelyn didn’t learn. Ballroom, swing, jazz, country, Latin – she loved it all, and she learned it all. For one crazy semester she’d thought about switching her major to dance, but she knew she couldn’t leave the ranching life behind. Much as she loved dancing she loved her outdoors, her rams, her cattle even more. So she remained in agriculture, which was what had brought her to Kansas in the first place.

All these thoughts flashed through her mind as she stepped into the building and then she didn’t have time to think as Gideon grabbed her hand and whisked her onto the floor. Catelyn was just mindlessly happy as she spun, ducked, and twisted, she felt so at home, and everything felt so right. Gideon was also a good dancer, at least at these country dances, and they were very evenly matched. As he smiled at her with his deep green eyes and two matching dimples appeared Catelyn’s heart flipped inside of her stomach – maybe these eight weeks really would fly by.

“Wow,” Jake let out a whistle of admiration, “that girl has got moves! I mean, I assumed that she could dance when she agreed to come out tonight, but I didn’t think she’d dance like that.”

Percy added his silent agreement as his eyes looked Catelyn up and down appreciatively. “She does look like she was born to move.”

“Yeah, and she looks great with Gideon. Looks like he’s found his summer romance? Huh? Huh?” Jake added, nudging Percy in the side.

“Yeah,” Percy agreed in a toneless voice, “looks like it.” But inside his mind was racing faster than a speeding bullet. This same sort of thing had happened so often that it was becoming a tradition in Ashland. Gideon found some cute girl who was there temporarily, be it for an internship, visiting a relative, taking a class – whatever it may be – romanced her, had a fun few weeks, and then moved on the second she left town. He never invested and he never seemed to mind too much if the girl got a little teary eyed when she left. Percy didn’t think he was ever purposefully malicious, he just didn’t care if the girl liked him more than he liked her. It never really bothered Percy before though – sure, it wasn’t what he would do, but he wasn’t Gideon, and it never affected him or his life. But this girl, something about her was different. She was refreshingly fun and open to life. She was vivacious and he was interested in her – which was definitely new to him, normally he just kept to himself and his horses. But, he reminded himself, it doesn’t really matter. If Gideon wants her for the summer then Gideon will get her. Still, maybe it wouldn’t hurt to try and give her a little advice...

“Hey Per,” Jake interrupted his thoughts, “weren’t you thinking about trying to learn how to dance?”

“No.” Percy said quickly, “YOU were thinking about me trying to learn how to dance.”

“Basically the same thing. I was just thinking – I bet Catelyn could teach you. She clearly knows what she’s doing. Then you wouldn’t look like such an idiot every time we came to one of these things.”

“That’s not a bad idea actually,” Percy responded thoughtfully, “maybe I’ll ask her after this dance.” After all, he reasoned silently, it would give me a chance to talk to her and tell her about Gideon. And I really should learn. Everyone else in this town seems to know how. “Yeah Jake. Good plan. I’ll ask her.” As he walked away he chuckled at the bemused look on Jake’s face – he clearly hadn’t expected Percy to agree so quickly.

“Well, well, well,” Jake said in befuddlement, “Percy likes our little Catelyn. This summer just got interesting.”

Gideon tucked Catelyn’s arm into his as he led her off the dance floor, “So Catelyn, where are you from? In fact, why don’t you just tell me everything about you?”

“Oh, um, well there’s not much to tell really. I’m from a small town in Nevada, much like this one actually. I’m 20, I love my ranch more than anything, and I’m here for the next eight weeks working on my internship. What about you?”

“Oh it’s a lot the same. I’m from here, 23, getting ready to head off to school as soon as the summer is over.”

“Really? Where did you apply?”

“Lots of places, Ohio State, University of Arizona, BYU-Idaho –“

“Are you Mormon?” Catelyn blurted out in surprise, before she had a chance to think.

Gideon looked a little taken aback but smiled as he answered, “Yeah. Yeah I am. I take it you are too?”

“Yes. I just, I don’t know, I guess I didn’t expect to find another Mormon so soon in the middle of Kansas.”

“Well you didn’t find just one. Jake and Percy are too. And our families. There’s a few others in the area – not a ton, but about 100 or so.”

“No way! I am just, well, why haven’t you guys been there on Sunday?”

“Well we’ve been going to our families wards. The church is so small out here that the closest singles ward is about 20 minutes away – near where you’re staying actually. Not too bad but since the home wards are so small too they can really use our help in the callings. You’re looking at the proud teacher of the 5 year olds.” He puffed out his chest and smiled shamelessly. “Jake teaches the 12 year olds and Percy is in Young Mens.”

“You all just got so much more adorable,” Catelyn said. Then, as she realized what she’d said she quickly turned the shade of a boiled lobster, “I meant –“

“Don’t worry about it,” Gideon smiled. “I’ve never been called adorable before but I like it. Especially if it’s coming from you.”

“Thanks,” Catelyn shyly tucked a strand of hair behind her ear. “So, um,” she desperately cast her mind about looking for a new topic, “Which, which school did you end up deciding on?”

“Oh, BYU-Idaho. I heard they had a pretty great agricultural department and I’m kind of curious what it will be like living in a whole town full of Mormons. I served my mission in Poland where they were pretty few and far between and I’ve lived here my whole life before that so...I’m curious.”

“Well, it has its pluses and minuses. Lots of pluses really. Especially if you live with fun people.” Catelyn tried to keep her voice steady so she wouldn’t betray how excited she was.

“Wait, you go there?”

“Yeah! I’m just here for my internship and then I go right back. I have about two years left.”

“Why this is just great! You can tell me all about it! Catelyn, can I buy you lunch tomorrow? Or dinner if you’re working?”

“Yeah, yes, yeah,” Catelyn stammered. “I get off around 6.”

“Perfect. It’s a date.”

Percy almost spat out his punch as he eavesdropped on Gideon’s and Catelyn’s conversation. She’s Mormon? He shouldn’t have been surprised – now that he thought about it her dress was surprisingly modest, and she hadn’t taken any of the offered coffee. He had heard a muffled “Shit” earlier when she’d almost walked into a pillar but that didn’t really mean much on a ranch. At least, it didn’t in his family. Great. Just great. Another reason to find her likable. Just as she was finding so many to like Gideon. “I should just walk away now,” he muttered, “I mean, come on Percy, do you remember what happened last time you and Gideon went for the same girl? He ended up with a girl to write him faithfully every week on his mission and you ended up fleeing to Provo for a semester to get away from the humiliation until you left on your mission. He’s clearly superior in this field.”

But something in him wouldn’t let it go. “*I have to try.*” “No you don’t,” his stubborn side came out. “You’re leaving in two months to go to Idaho for school. There’s tons of girls there and Gideon can’t date all of them – although it probably wouldn’t stop him from trying – there’s bound to be a girl for you. Just let him have this one and focus on work.” “*Yeah, actually that’s a really good idea.*” But just as he settled in within himself that he was going to let it all go he found himself stepping in front of Gideon and Catelyn.

“Hey,” he opened with an easy smile, “mind if I take you for a spin on the dance floor?”

At that Gideon did spit out his punch. And not gracefully. “You Percy? You don’t dance.”

“Well no, not really, but Catelyn did it so well that I was hoping she could teach me a move or two.”

“Oh yeah, of course I could. It’s the least I could do for thanking you for driving me here. I’m not a very good teacher though.”

“I’m sure you’re great. Just great.” At his second ‘great’ Catelyn burst out laughing.

“What? What’s so funny?”

Catelyn just laughed harder at his confused face. “I’m sorry. I’m sorry. It’s just an inside joke. It doesn’t matter.” She was still chuckling as Percy led her on to the dance floor.