



**FAME**

**Kate's Journey to Unexpected  
Celebrity**

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*Dedicated to Emilia Quintanar, my fantastic Explorer reading buddy. Thank you for your enthusiasm, creativity and passion for reading.*



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# Chapter One

## Dinner at the Minor's

Another gloomy winter day in Seattle had come and gone. Kate Minor was sitting on the floor, hidden inside the fort constructed out of her parent's mis-matched bed sheets. This was her happy place. She would set up her camera and record herself singing and upload her covers, and sometimes originals, to YouTube. Her fluffy white Westie Terrier, Snowball, would watch intently as she sang. She was always a great listener. Kate was a very creative girl who spent a lot of time by herself, with the exception of Snowball, of course.

"Kate! Please come down now. Dinner is on the table," her mother, Joyce, called from the stairs. The smell of spaghetti sauce made Kate drop her sheet music and quickly slide down the stair rail. When Kate plopped down in her chair, she sat directly across from her father, Sean, while her mother grabbed the salt and pepper for the table. When the family of three, plus Snowball who was laying underneath the table waiting for scraps to fall, was all situated with steaming food heating up their cold, pale faces they joined hands and blessed the food. Joyce and Sean were still in their work clothes from the day at the hospital and always had funny stories to tell. Kate's mother began the evening's

conversation stating, “You would never believe it! Today, a patient came into the emergency room with a Lego stuck in her foot. When I asked her what happened she said her little brother played a prank on her and as she was chasing him she stepped right on the small piece! I can’t imagine how bad that would hurt.” Kate nodded along but didn’t show too much interest as she twirled the long spaghetti around her fork.

“How was school today Mini?” Kate’s dad had given her the nickname Mini when she was only a few years old. Sean said it was because she reminded him of a mini version of himself and wanted Kate to follow in his footsteps as a neurosurgeon.

“It was fine. We finished No Talking today in class and my predictions were right about the winners. That was the only good part besides music class.”

“Make sure you eat your broccoli too Kate,” Joyce insisted.

“Yes Mom. Oh! Guess what? I got the lead vocals in our new song, *Let It Go!*”

“That’s great honey.” After dinner, Kate helped with the dishes and went right back to where she left off, practicing her part for the song in front of Snowball, her only audience member.



# Chapter Two

## The Car Ride That Changed Everything

The gray sky peeked through Kate's window at 7:30 as the smell of waffles drifted under her door. Once dressed, she quickly grabbed her backpack along with a paper plate burdened high with waffles drenched in syrup and loaded into her mother's silver Jetta. Part of every morning drive included listening to their favorite radio station, KEXP 90.3, where each morning they DJ's advertised contests, free concert tickets and, of course, the hottest music. Kate looked out the window and hummed along to her favorite song at the moment, Fame, by Sterling White. Sterling was one of Kate's biggest idols. Mainly because she thought she was beautiful, a great song-writer and could belt out notes like no one else. Kate had seen Sterling in concert twice before and was always impressed by her ability to command the stage. Kate also admired her bold style and her newly dyed pink hair was just one example. Kate clearly remembered Sterling's studded black leather jacket, freshly painted black nails and smokey eye make-up. She secretly dreamed that she could pull off this style too. When it came to Sterling's music, Kate never quite understood the hit song. In it, Sterling sang about how fame isn't all that it is cracked up to be and that she is being told to do things that she doesn't

want to do. How could this be? Who wouldn't want to be famous? The car rattled as it came to a stop at the drop off line of Kate's elementary school, Seattle Performing Arts Elementary. Kate licked her syrup covered fingers and quickly said goodbye. With her lunch box in hand and her purple headphones on (playing a Sterling song, of course) she skipped to class with her best friend Shirley.

The school bell rang and a sense of relief came over Kate because it was time for choir. Choir was her favorite class because she was the happiest whenever she sang, and, of course, there was no homework in choir. Most of the kids in her class were nice except for two particularly rude twin girls named Jamie and Peyton. They always wore matching clothes, always got the leads in the big performances and always bragged about being the best. They had teased Kate before but now that she got the lead in their next performance of Let It Go the girls were extra cruel.

"Are you feeling okay today Kate? Because it looks like you just got out of bed," Peyton jabbed, as Jamie giggled behind her. Kate rolled her eyes and gave an "I'm not laughing" fake smile at the two and took her position in front of the microphone. After rehearsals, as Kate and Shirley walked back to the carpool line, Jamie and Peyton glared at the girls and looked suspicious. The girls broke off and continued their path to their mom's cars.

"How was your day?" Joyce said before Kate could even shut the door.

"It was fine. Rehearsal was awesome except the mean girls were trying to make me feel bad just because they aren't getting all of the attention for once."

"I'm sorry honey. Would you like me to talk to a teacher?" Joyce asked sounding concerned.

"No, thank you, I think I can handle them myself." After the conversation about their day wore down, the radio got louder.

“Are you a tween who loves to sing?” the radio broadcasted in one of those wrestler match announcer voices. Kate’s eyes bugged out of her head as if the radio was speaking directly to her.

“Do you want to win a duet with the one and only Sterling White? And how about your very own record deal?” the radio host continued. Kate immediately began imagining herself as the most popular girl in school, dethroning those mean twins. She would finally be noticed and people would envy her talent. Joyce was also intrigued and Kate’s seatbelt was practically cutting off her circulation because she was leaning forward so much.

“Just go to our website to enter this once in a lifetime opportunity and you might be the next big thing!” Music faded in after some gibberish about contest rules and regulations, none of which Kate heard as her mind raced a thousand miles a minute.

“I have to do it Mom!” Kate exclaimed.

“There must be a catch, but we can certainly check it out when we get home.” The five minute ride home seemed like an eternity and before the car was even off Kate was in front of her dad’s computer searching the radio’s website. On the homepage was Sterling White’s album cover, showing her in a beautiful red dress with camera flashes on her face. Kate envisioned what it would be like to record with Sterling in the studio and she quickly read on. The instructions read: There are three rounds to the contest. Round one is a chance for all participants to test their endurance and performance skills. Kate squinted at the computer screen, not fully understanding what this meant or why it mattered, but she read on. Round two will be for the top five contestants. Each will have to create a billboard for self promotion so that people can vote. This scared Kate but she did have some hope in her creative skills and so she continued. Round three will be for the three winners from

round two and each must sing a song in front of a celebrity panel including Whitney Fox, Justin Thompson and Taylor Lot. Kate was 70 percent excited, 20 percent nervous and 10 percent sure she was about to pee her pants. She explained the rules to her parents and they agreed to help her apply for the contest. Kate signed up online and agreed to the terms and conditions provided. Some of the questions were easier than others. One question was, who is your favorite artist? This was a no brainer! Another question inquired about her past performance experience. A few minutes later, after finally going to the bathroom, Kate got an email from the radio station giving details about where to meet for round one. It read,

“Please arrive at the Noble Theater Saturday at 4:00pm sharp to check in. Prepare to work hard!” Kate didn’t know what to expect but was ready for the challenge. Nothing would stop her from meeting her favorite celebrity or keep her from her passion for singing. Kate didn’t get much sleep that night as she was counting down until the performance. She dreamed about winning and saw her name written in lights on a huge sold-out arena.

# Chapter Three

## Round One

A young, good looking man wearing a Sterling White t-shirt asked, “What’s your last name?”

“Minor,” Kate responded, looking back and forth from him to her mother who was standing beside her.

“Please wait right over there. Rob, the radio host, will be on stage shortly to give further instructions,” he said as he pointed to a large stage. Kate thanked him and put on her name tag.

“I can’t go past this line but I will be waiting right here for you when you are finished. Good luck!” Kate walked over to the stage and awkwardly kept checking the time on her phone until it finally read 4:00pm.

“Welcome everyone! Thank you so much for joining us. Who thinks they have what it takes to win the duet with Sterling White?” The crowd let out a loud fan girl squeal. Kate nervously giggled to herself and looked around at the competition.

“So to be as great of a performer as Sterling you must be in shape. If you win this contest your picture will be in magazines, on billboards and of course on the album cover with Sterling. You have to practice singing, dancing an obviously look good while doing it. Here’s what’s

going to happen. Each of you, in groups of ten, will learn a piece of choreography from Sterling's own choreographer, J-Rock, and will have to sing Sterling's new song Fame at the same time. The top five will move on to round two. Any questions?" Everyone looked at each other and then started warming up. Kate was put into a group with seven girls and three guys whom she didn't know. She was feeling very insecure all of a sudden. The choreography was difficult but came naturally to Kate since she had been enrolled in dance classes since she was three years old. When it was time to perform for Rob and J-Rock, Kate could hear her heart beating out of her chest. She had never danced and sang at the same time and she really didn't want to fall on her face. Once she started, Kate hit all the notes and showed off all the right moves. In the middle of the number Kate looked out into the audience and made Rob who was intently looking up and down the contestants which frightened Kate. However, she finished without falling off the stage or her voice cracking so she felt quite proud. Group after group, Kate watched the others and felt her confidence start to fade. She began to think she didn't have a shot anymore. Twenty minutes later, Rob gathered everyone to announce the five lucky winners.

"It was a tough decision but we have narrowed it down to five. Please come to the stage if I call your name. For the rest of you, thank you for coming and please continue to listen and support KEXP 90.3 FM. Can I please see on the stage..." This was the moment that would determine if Kate had a shot at reaching her goal and she had never been so nervous.

"Jamie, Peyton, Joey, Johanna and, last but not least, Kate." Kate was looking down, her thoughts taking her to another place when someone began to pat her on the back.

"Congratulations, you were great!" A random girl

from the crowd said.

“What?” Kate replied.

“You won! Go up on stage.” Kate was so excited she practically sprinted to the stage. Once there, she was handed a ticket that said she was officially a finalist. She was filled with so much adrenaline that Kate didn’t even recognize that Peyton and Jamie were the other finalists. She didn’t even know that they knew about the contest, let alone tried out. Rob gave everyone the instructions for round two and excused them to their parents with either great or upsetting news. Kate ran up to the car with a smile reaching from ear to ear.

“Mom! I won the first round!” Kate exclaimed.

“Wow! That is awesome! What are the next steps?”

“I get to move on to round two and tomorrow I need to go to Clever Magazine studios to do a photoshoot!”

“That sounds like fun! Are you up for it?”

“Of course! I can’t wait to tell Dad!” Kate was feeling more confident than ever before and was hoping that now the cute guy in class would notice her and maybe even talk to her...





# Chapter Four

## The Photoshoot

When Kate arrived home from school the next day, she brushed her teeth and spritzed on her favorite Bath and Body Works Paris perfume to prepare for the photo shoot. Once she arrived at the studio there was an empty makeup chair and she was pampered with a new outfit complimented by purple bows for her hair and even high heels. Well, not really high heels but a small wedge. This was just enough to make her feel so much more sophisticated than her ten years. Kate had a simple style and had never gotten this dressed up. When she was finished getting glammed up by the beauty squad, she was the first one up to take the pictures. At first Kate was shy in front of the camera but quickly warmed up and struck some adorable poses.

“Blow me a kiss! Now, sit on the stool and laugh!” The camera flashed and before she knew it, her turn was over. Her parents hugged her when she was done and flooded her with compliments.

“You look so grown up Mini!” Sean said. Kate’s nerves were calmed when she saw that the others were just as nervous as her. However, Peyton and Jamie were feeling confident because their parents had hired professional photographers before. When everyone was finished, the

contestants and their parents gathered around the studio lounge and were told what to do with the pictures. The radio hosts said that each contestant needed to take their best headshot and post it all over their school to promote the contest, and so that people could vote for them by calling the radio or visiting the website. Knowing that her entire school would see the poster made Kate super uncomfortable. She still wasn't quite sure how she felt being in the spotlight!

“What if they think I look stupid in heels? Or I don't have any chance in winning?” she worried. As if Kate's embarrassment wasn't enough, she caught a glimpse of the twins laughing at her while she was posing. The photographer gave Kate her printed posters with instructions to post them around town and all over school to boost her chances of winning.

The next day, Kate went to school thirty minutes early to hang the posters. She felt so awkward. She didn't want anyone to see her hanging up the posters and hoped people didn't catch her in the act and ask a million questions. Just when she was going to hang a large poster of herself, she turned the corner of the library and saw Peyton and Jamie on a ladder hanging up a banner that stretched as far as the soccer field. Kate looked down at her meager poster and felt very intimidated by the twins. Kate decided not to hang up her last poster because she assumed no one would even lay eyes on it, compared to the twins over-the-top effort in trying to win. Soon the school bell rang and it was time for math class. Kate walked to class with her head down. When she walked in the room she noticed a group of girls in the corner gossiping. As always, the twins were at the center of the action. Saved by the bell, Kate took her seat in the front row and the room was quiet.

She kept thinking, “This day can't be done soon enough.” Lunch wasn't so bad though, she got to spend it with her friend Shirley on the playground doing fun tricks on the

monkey bars. Shirey always helped her get her mind off of things.

“That is so cool that you were chosen for the top five! Congratulations!” Shirley said swinging from bar to bar.

“Thanks,” Kate responded.

“Are you okay? You seem upset,” Shirley asked.

“I’m okay. I was not expecting this but it is pretty cool. It is just that Peyton and Jamie got selected too,” Kate shared.

“Well don’t let them hold you back. They are just mean girls and you have a way better voice than both of them combined,” Shirley encouraged her.

“Thank you. That is really sweet of you to say. I just don’t want to lose and have them make my life even harder than they already do by pushing me in the halls and teasing me,” Kate explained, nervously avoiding eye contact.

“Trust me, if you just try your best, that is all you can do. Win, or lose, you will still be my best friend and I will protect you from them,” Shirley said as she took a seat next to Kate on the planter box.

“Thank you! Now let’s go play hopscotch,” Kate said with a genuine smile slowly appearing on her face.

That afternoon, after school, she was exhausted. After dinner Kate started to feel funny and quietly said, “Mom, I don’t feel so good.”

“What’s wrong sweetheart?” Joyce sounded concerned.

“My throat hurts...hopefully I am not coming down with a cold the night before tomorrow,” Kate said, panic building in her voice.

“I am sure you are just tired. This weather can also make you feel run down, but let me take your temperature just in case,” Joyce said as she reached up for the thermometer.

“You have a fever of 101.” she said, tucking Kate into bed.

“This can’t be happening,” Kate whined. “I have to practice my song before tomorrow night when I perform for the judges.”

“If you rest your voice and stay home from school tomorrow you will sing better than you ever have for those judges.” Joyce said.

Kate woke up to Snowball licking her face and the familiar sound of a light rain. She yawned, put on her slippers and headed towards the bathroom, coughing through the hall. She washed the drool off of her face and brushed her teeth hoping the mintiness would soothe her sore throat. She walked downstairs with Snowball and when her mother said,

“Good morning”, she gasped at Kate’s response. Her lips moved but no words came out.

“Oh no!” Joyce said looking back and forth at Kate and her husband Sean. Kate had completely lost her voice and today was the day that was going to determine if she won the contest.

“Okay everything is going to be all right. We will take you to the doctor right now.” Kate just nodded, the familiar feeling of panic creeping its way back in.

When they arrived at the doctor, Joyce’s co-worker said that Kate had come down with the flu. He requested that she rest for the next few days and try her best not to talk to heal her voice. He said that she was pushing her vocal chords to hard and strained them. Joyce explained that she had to sing tonight but she understood the orders since she had given the same ones to her patients a million times before. Although Joyce knew that Kate should rest she knew it was very important to her. With the doctors hesitant okay, she allowed Kate to go to the theater and sing her one song.

# Chapter Five

## The Winner Is...

Kate didn't talk all day which was very frustrating and difficult for her. On the car ride to the theater, Kate thought of all of the bad things that could happen. What if no words come out? What if I embarrass myself in front of the judges and the twins and my parents? What if I don't win and never get a chance again to sing with Sterling? Kate had practiced so hard and had already hurdled over some of her confidence issues. As she entered the theater, the DJ handed her the microphone and it was go time. The track started to play. It was Sterling's hit song "Childhood Memories", a ballad that was really difficult to sing well. Time was ticking, the judges beady eyes were looking her up and down and you could see the beads of sweat on her forehead from a mile away. Her heart was beating fast and loud and when finally Kate attempted the first words of the song? Nothing came out! She looked at the crowd and thought she was going to pass out. Everything was blurry and moving in circles but she managed to whisper the rest of the song. As she exited the stage she saw the confused looks on everyone's faces. She quickly took her seat and watched the four others sing and, once again, had the same feeling of failure. This dumb cold ruined her chances of becoming the star she knew she

could be. Kate was so upset she thought about running out and never looking back. She had no hope of moving on in the competition and this fact only made it harder to listen to the others complete their turns. As the judges took the stage to announce the winner, Kate kept her eyes on her sparkly shoes. The last thing she wanted to see was Peyton and Jaime's face as their names were announced.

"Thank you so much for trying your best but there can only be one winner. Although the judges were not unanimous, the decision was made to have the contestant with the most potential move on. And the winner is...Kate Minor!" Quickly, Kate's parents rushed to the stage and picked her up and twirled her around. Kate was in complete disbelief! How could this happen? As Kate stood there, a look of shock still on her face, one of the judges handed her a silver microphone trophy.

"We heard you sing during the first round and we were very impressed. We know you are under the weather right now but we chose you because we think you have demonstrated perseverance and you have incredible potential. You will sound great with Sterling. KEXP 90.3 wishes you the best of luck with your singing career but don't forget where you came from. We love your positive attitude and want to interview you next week at the studio. Let's hear it one more time for Kate everyone!"

Kate and her parents went out for shaved ice as a celebratory cold treat that would hopefully help Kate's throat. When they all sat down, before anyone took their first bite, Joyce got a call from an unknown number.

"Hello. Doctor Joyce Minor speaking. May I ask who is calling?"

"Hello Mrs. Minor this is Sterling White. I heard that your daughter Kate won the local radio contest and I can't wait to meet her. Can I talk to her please?" Joyce dropped her phone in a sticky puddle of melted shave ice on the table

but like a hot potato grabbed the phone and held it just close enough to her ear to hear the other end.

“Who is it?” Sean asked, concerned.

“It is Sterling White and she walks to talk to Kate!” Joyce whispered as she pulled the phone away from her face so Sterling couldn’t hear them fangirling.

“She would love to but she lost her voice. I am sitting with her right now and she is so upset that she can’t talk but is beyond excited to meet you!” Kate was on the edge of her seat wanting her mom to hang up so that she could tell her what Sterling had said.

“Thank you again. We will see you next week at your house...we just need you to get your address.” Kate was standing now with her hands covering her mouth in utter disbelief.

“I will have my people get you the information tonight and I will see you tomorrow.” Sterling said and hung up the phone just before Kate screamed. With her sore throat, however, she sounded like a dying frog.

“It looks like we are going to meet Sterling next week when you are better and I am your new manager. Or should I say momager?” They all laughed and hugged and danced around while the other customers gave them strange looks.





# Chapter Six

## Words of Wisdom

The day had finally come. Kate's cold had vanished after days of rest and lots of cough drops. She was finally going to meet her idol. Joyce thought it would be fun to ride in style and rented a limousine for the drive to Sterling's house. Even the snowy day couldn't dampen Kate's spirits. She must have tried on over five outfits and finally settled on her puffy white scarf and pink rain boots. The drive to Sterling's felt like an eternity with each second ticking slower than the next. When she finally arrived, Kate and her family were greeted to a beautiful mansion with a large wooden door, "SW" carved in bold letters. Joyce knocked three times and looked down at Kate who was now shaking from the chilly winds and, more likely, the nerves.

The door opened and finally Kate was face to face with her idol. She had dreamed of this moment for so long.

"Hello! Please come in," Sterling said, gesturing to the massive living room just beyond the foyer. The floors were a shiny marble, the chandeliers were sparkling and the fire was crackling. This was Kate's dream come true.

"I wanted to invite you here today so we could get to know each other better and to start brainstorming on what we should sing for our debut. By the way, your boots are so

cute!” Kate was in awe.

“Thanks,” Kate muttered with an daydreamy smile.

“Would you like some tea and lemon to warm up your voice?”

“Yes, please,” Kate answered. She was having such trouble focusing on everything. Her eyes were darting from the wall covered in platinum albums to the shelves that housed so many awards. It was too much to take in all at once. As Kate waited for the tea, she and her parents sat on Sterling’s big black couch covered in silver blankets right next to a crackling fireplace.

“So what do you do for fun when you are not in school Kate?” Sterling asked as she gently sipped her tea.

“Well, I like to rollerblade, do arts and crafts and, of course, sing.”

“I loved to do those things as a kid too. My favorite though was to build forts!”

“Me too!” Kate exclaimed, already feeling closer to Sterling. Twenty minutes passed filled with chatting and getting to know each other. Kate was shocked that a celebrity like Sterling was so open, friendly and down to earth. Sterling even shared with Kate something that most people didn’t know. Sterling had an eating disorder. When Sterling explained her story, Kate and her family were overcome with sympathy.

“Nobody made me have an eating disorder but I do think that being in the spotlight all the time, with people waiting for me to mess up, affected me and twisted my thinking. I started to believe everything the magazines wrote. Things like “Sterling looks like she hasn’t brushed her teeth in weeks!” and “Sterling shouldn’t wear those red jeans because she bulges out of them!” None of the rumors were true but it was hard to ignore the comments especially when it feels like you are stranded on a desert island.”

“I had no idea. I am sor—” Kate started to say but

got cut off by Sterling.

“Don’t feel bad. I had a little rough patch but I got through the struggle. I am a lot better now and I owe everything to my friends and family. They helped to show me where I came from. I just don’t want you to get sucked in like I did. I have heard you sing and you are great. You can hit notes that I can’t!”

“Thank you so much for the compliment...and the advice” Kate said with awe that her idol just gave her a huge compliment.

“Now what do you say we go to my recording studio and get to work?” Sterling asked leading them out of the room. The three got up from the cozy couch and followed her downstairs to find the huge in-home studio. As they began to think about their duet, Kate threw out the idea of doing her favorite song, which, of course, was a Sterling White hit. She explained that “Lazy Day” was her favorite because she felt the song was calming and she liked the lyrics.

“Great choice. Thank you! I wrote that song one lazy day, imagine that?” Sterling explained. “I was thinking about all of the blessings in my life. It is great being famous and all but I really appreciate the friends who like me for me, not for my image. That’s why that song is one of my favorites too. Should we run it from the top and work on some harmonies?” Kate was eager to begin too and after an hour of rehearsing the two began to record the final track. Soon it was done and the tape literally held the dream of every girl in Seattle, a duet with Sterling White. Kate left that day having learned so much about singing, developing her own style as an artist and how the record industry worked. Sterling explained very seriously not to get caught up in all of the money and glam but to stay humble.

“Do not let your success change who you are,” Sterling warned. Kate went home on cloud nine and the first thing she did was tell Snowball everything about what

happened. After she began selecting a picture from the day to post on her instagram. She was really hoping for at least two hundred likes so she could make it onto the popular page, which shouldn't be hard considering Sterling was in the picture.

# Chapter Seven

## School Comes First

Kate slept like a baby. She woke up still pinching herself, not quite sure if she had dreamt the whole experience. On their way to school, as they always did, Kate and her mom turned the radio to KEXP 90.3. Kate was still in la la land and was hardly listening as she watched the rain hit the window when her mother suddenly gasped.

“What? What’s wrong? Wait,” Kate stopped and looked at the radio in pure disbelief, “Is this our song?”

“Yes it is!” Joyce turned up the volume. She pulled over her car and grabbed her camera to record Kate’s reaction. It wasn’t clear who was reacting more, Kate or her mom!

“My little baby girl is on the radio! This is so exciting.” The two danced and sang along until the radio host came on and said,

“That was our favorite fourth grader, Kate Minor, singing with Sterling White on her hit single *Lazy Days*! We can’t wait to see where Kate goes from here. We here at KEXP 90.3 are quite impressed that she won our competition even when she was sick. You can support Kate by buying this song on iTunes now! Your daily dirt is coming up next at eight o’clock.” Kate was squealing with excitement.

“They are saying such nice things about you sweetie!

I wonder what is next for you!” Joyce said as she finally started to drive to school again.

“That was awesome! I hope I can sing with Sterling again. She was so nice!”

When Kate walked into her first class students were whispering among themselves but then started cheering and chanting Kate’s name. Kate blushed shyly and took her seat. A girl she had never met before came up to her and hugged her, congratulated her and told her that she had heard her on the radio that morning. Kate was overwhelmed by all of the attention but also found that she really liked it. At lunch a cute older boy came up to her and asked for a selfie. Kate was now wishing that she had put more effort into her outfit today because of all of the attention she received. After school, she was stopped by the principal, Mrs. Hart, who congratulated her on her win but the conversation led to the principal asking if she was going to miss any school because of her newfound fame.

“I am not sure yet. I have a photoshoot tomorrow during first period so I will be late and next week I am flying out to California for a meeting with the record label.”

“Wow! It looks like you have your hands full but please remember that your education should come first. Maybe you could read while you’re on the plane so you don’t get left behind?”

“I will Mrs. Hart, thank you,” Kate rolled her eyes as she walked away. Kate thought that people were overreacting to her win. All she had done was win a contest and now people wanted to know all about her future. “Geez! One win doesn’t mean I am going to flunk out of school or get too popular.”

“How was school, sweetie?” Joyce inquired as Kate flopped in the front seat.

“It was weird but a good weird.” Kate responded.

“Okay? How was it weird?”

“Well a ton of people came up to me asking for my autograph and for pictures. It was like I was Sterling or something. Then Mrs.Hart told me to keep up my good grades and blah blah blah.”

“That must have been new and exciting but your principal is right. School comes first...always Kate, okay?”

“Yes mom.” Kate said looking out the window trying to block out the nagging of her mother. When they arrived home the family gathered around the kitchen table for a snack. Joyce was making hard boiled eggs, Sean was hanging up his large gray sweater on the coat hanger and Kate was sitting on a bar stool with Snowball at her feet waiting for her to drop some of the eggs. She started her math homework but quickly got distracted by social media. She was on a magazine website and her eyes widened when she saw the front page. Someone at school must have snapped a picture of Kate when she was rolling her eyes at the principal! The headline read “New breakout artist is already showing her spoiled side. Will she stay on top or will she flop?” Kate was so angry and upset that she ran up to her room crying with the laptop in her hands. Joyce and Sean quickly followed with concern.

“What’s wrong Mini?” Sean asked rubbing Kate’s back.

“Nothing! Go away!” Kate yelled into her pillow.

“Something is obviously wrong. What is it Kate?” Joyce tried the calm approach.

Kate sniffled and wiped the tears from her eyes.

“Go look at Star Gossip magazine online.”

Joyce opened the laptop and her eyes scanned the article and pictures of her daughter.

“Oh no Kate! Why did you roll your eyes? That wasn’t nice. This whole contest thing has changed you and you are not being yourself.” Joyce said as Sean shook his head.

“You are now in the public eye and have to make smart decisions. Maybe we should get you a publicist?” Sean offered.

“No. That wouldn’t be a good idea. I will call the magazine and ask if they can take it down but you need to realize that people are waiting for you to mess up. So don’t give them the opportunity. Okay, sweetie?” Joyce said.

“Okay.” Kate said looking at Snowball in the doorway. “I am proud of myself for winning the contest and I love making music but I don’t want people to hate me.”

“Nobody hates you honey. You just need to try your best and be on your best behavior constantly.” Joyce said.

“Yes Mom.”



# Chapter Eight

## Kelly's Party

The next day at school was different than Kate expected. Kate had spent all night worrying that everyone saw the magazine and would start bullying her again. Much to her surprise, instead of people gossiping, they were still shocked that someone “famous” was at their school and instead wanted to talk to her.

“Hey Shirley!” Kate said as they walked into choir.

“Hey! Did you practice your part for Let It Go?” Shirley asked

“Oh no! I totally forgot! I was really upset last night because I saw an article where they were ripping me apart saying that I wasn't talented and becoming spoiled.”

“I'm sorry Kate. If it makes you feel better, I didn't see it and none of that is true. You are gorgeous and talented. You will rock Let It Go. You don't need random people to tell you who you are or how to act. You are a sweet girl who is my best friend.” Shirley said in a motivating tone.

“Thank you Shirley,” Kate said appreciately.

“I have a great idea. There is a Nancy Drew movie marathon this Friday. Do you want to come over for a slumber party and watch it with me?”

“I would love to thank you!” Kate said with her

signature smile.

Singing was the best escape. Kate's passion for songwriting shined through and loved to learn about music. Kate loved to daydream and for the first time it seemed like things were going her way. Someone even asked her if she could perform at their graduation party. Kate was quickly becoming addicted to the praise and did not see a problem with that. However, some did and this frustrated Kate.

"Hey bestie!" a random fifth grader said approaching behind Kate.

"Umm do I know you?" Kate asked, trying remember if she has even seen this girl before.

"Not really but I just wanted to invite you to my house for my birthday party this Friday night." The girl handed Kate a small pink invitation.

"What is your name again?" Kate questioned as she put the invitation in her backpack.

"Kelly Johnson!" the blue eyed blonde girl said with what Kate thought was a creepy smile.

"I will try to make it." Kate responded arrogantly. The rest of the day consisted of boring math class and more compliments which was very fun for Kate.

When Friday finally rolled around, Kate got all dressed up to go to Kelly's house for her birthday. Her mom dropped her off at Kelly's house around five o'clock.

"Text me if you want me to pick you up earlier." Joyce called from inside the car as Kate walked to the front door with a gift in her hand with a large pink bow on top. Kelly's parents had a really nice house, nothing like Sterling's, but a cute typical house for a small family in Seattle slightly decorated for Christmas that was rapidly turning the corner. Ding dong! The doorbell rang it a generic tune.

"You must be Kate Minor! I have heard all about you. Please come in," Kelly's mom answered the door. She was wearing a nice red top and black pumps holding a wine

glass in her hand.

“Yes I am. Nice to meet you Mrs. Johnson.” Kate responded stepping inside. Kelly came running to the door wearing the same dress as Kate.

“Omg! We’re twinning!” Kelly said in an annoying high voice.

“Yeah it sure looks like it,” Kate said a lot less enthusiastic than Kelly.

“Come meet my friends. Only two other people here go to our school.”

“Okay. Who is it?”

“Peyton and Jamie. Do you know them?” Kelly asked leading Kate to the garage where the party was. Kate didn’t know how to feel. Certainly she began to feel out of place. She didn’t know how Jamie and Peyton were going to treat her since she hasn’t seen them since the third round of the contest.

“Hey I want you to meet my best friend, Kate Minor. She won the Sterling radio contest and she is basically famous now!” Kelly said entering the room. The small crowd waved and Kate made eye contact with Jamie and Peyton. The twins whispered among themselves and glared at Kate. Kate could already feel an awkward tension building and wanted to text her mom but she also didn’t want to be rude and leave within minutes of arriving. So she sucked it up and tried to wait it out a little bit longer. Kate tried to talk to one of Kelly’s other friends but they were just as obnoxious as Kelly. Annoyed, Kate walked to the snack table to fill up her cup with some pink lemonade. She was caught off guard when two girls quickly approached her.

“Hi Kate,” Jamie said, not quite friendly, as she reached for some cheeto puffs.

“Umm, hey,” Kate said nervously.

“So we wanted to congratulate you on your win,” Peyton chimed in.

“Really? That’s nice. You guys sounded great too.” Kate attempted a compliment but it felt strange since these girls were so mean before.

“You really shouldn’t have won though. I mean you barely sang and your shoes were hideous. Right Peyton?” Jamie said with a wink and an evil smile.

“Yeah Jamie, you’re right and who brings their dog to their audition? What a loser?” The twins giggled and Kate began to shut down.

“I don’t get it. I just said you sounded great. Why do you have to be so mean? You are just jealous” Kate said as her voice was getting louder. Kelly noticed and walked over.

“Are you girls okay? We are having cake in five minutes,” Kelly said as she tried to break the tension with a smile.

“I’m fine but I have to go. I’m sorry Kelly.” She walked away looking upset. Kate texted her mom to come as soon as possible. Instead of sitting miserably inside by herself, Kate waited outside. To kill the time before her mom arrived she began playing on her phone. Immediately she noticed she missed a call and voicemail from Shirley. Kate suddenly felt nauseous. She completely forgot she told Shirley she could hang out tonight. She clicked on the notification and listened to the voicemail.

“Hey Kate, it’s me, Shirley. I’m at my house right now waiting for you but I am going to start the show because it is an hour late and I assume you are not coming. It is great that you won but I really think you have changed. Hopefully you are not at Kelly’s party right now because she was the one who took that picture of you rolling your eyes at Mrs. Hart. I know she is having a birthday party but she is just using you to make herself look more popular. I guess I will see at school but I’m pretty disappointed to be honest. Bye Kate.”

Joyce pulled into the driveway and was greeted by Kate sitting on the cold concrete with her head in her hands. Kate was blinded by the car's headlights and was cued to get in the car. As soon as she got buckled the tears started to pour down her face and her mascara started to run. Joyce was tired of seeing Kate upset and started driving home in the light rain.

Joyce asked the repetitive question, "What's wrong? Did someone at the party make you upset?"

"Jamie and Peyton were there and confronted me. They said that I shouldn't have won which made me upset and I didn't know anybody there and then I forgot that I had plans with Shirley and she called me and told me Kelly was the one who took the magazine picture and she probably doesn't ever want to talk to me again," Kate's words spilled out with sniffles in between.

"I think we should take you off the label. I love your voice and I think you should keep singing because you love it and you are happy when you sing. But I hate seeing you upset. I am going to cancel the meeting in California." Joyce said looking at her daughter.

"I think we should go home and relax and take tomorrow off from school. You can go over and visit Shirley to apologize. I am sure that she will accept your apology. She knows the real you, the one before you became sucked into this new world." Kate nodded along agreeing that she had become fake and lost sight of herself and her true friends. It was time to get back to reality.



# Chapter Nine

## Lessons Learned

The next day Kate used her day off to sleep in. She waited until 3:30 when Shirley got home from school and walked to her house across the street. Knock knock!

“Hey can I talk to you?” Kate asked when greeted by Shirley at the door.

“Sure. You can come in,” Shirley said.

“I have been a huge jerk lately and I am so sorry. I didn’t mean to become the kind of spoiled brat that we always make fun of. I am going to quit the record label and the fancy stuff that comes along with it because it’s not fun. I just want to make my own music and enjoy my fourth grade year,” Kate confessed.

“It’s okay Kate. I figured you just forgot about our plans and I am glad that you can see that you were starting to go downhill,” Shirley said understanding.

“Are we still best friends?” Kate asked.

“The bestest.” Shirley responded with a smile. The two hugged it out and went back over to Kate’s house to play in the fort that they built a few days before. They sang and played and Kate finally felt like herself again.

“As the principal of Seattle Performing Arts Elementary, I am proud to present our award winning choir

group.” Mrs. Hart said as the curtains rose and the crows gave some welcoming applause. The girls and boys lined up back stage waiting for the musical introduction. Kate was first in line, followed by Shirley, Peyton, Jamie and the rest wrapping around the wings. Kate had just felt the heat of the spotlight warming her cheeks when someone suddenly tapped her on the shoulder from behind.

“Hey Minor!” Peyton said not making eye contact. Kate scrunched her face, like tensing up before getting punched. She expected the girls to try and get in her head right before she was going to do her solo but was caught off guard by her soft tone. Kate had a feeling that it wasn’t just because there was no talking backstage.

“I just want to apologize for mine and Jamie’s rude comments to you lately. I don’t want to make excuses but we have had it pretty rough lately. Our parents are getting a divorce and we don’t really know how to deal with it.” Peyton said as she nervously played with her silver “P” necklace as Jamie agreed looking back and forth at Shirley and Kate.

“Thank you. I am sorry about your parents. I was proud of myself for winning and you guys really hurt my feelings. I had started to become someone who I always hated but I learned my lesson and I am sorry too. Let’s put this all behind us and make a truce?” Kate said as the music que faded in. Shirley looked at the girls and for the first time didn’t feel like she had to protect Kate. The four smiled and resumed positions.

Everyone took their places on stage wearing their glittery blue matching dresses. Kate looked out into the pitch black audience with her ankles shaking in her performance heels. She was front and center once again but she wasn’t nervous about singing this time. Kate wanted to clear up any rumors and was given the opportunity to do so at her choir performance. The whole school gathered in the auditorium



to watch the group.

“Hello everyone. Before we perform for you I would like to say a few things to clear the air. My name is Kate Minor and for those who don’t know, I won the Sterling radio contest. It was great at first. I got to meet famous people, sign autographs and people wanted to take pictures with me. I have never had that much attention and it was really exciting. But I got trapped in the industry and I sort of lost my way. I got to see who my real friends were. After learning more about myself and taking a break to focus on my family and my goals, I have decided to quit the label because the pop star life isn’t for me. I am going to continue to make my own music and will continue singing with the choir. I hope you all understand.” Kate felt like she was rambling when all of a sudden the crowd started clapping for her honest and brave speech. Kate smiled and took her position with a microphone in her hand. She sang her heart out and as she did, she felt herself lightening up and releasing all of the negative pressures. Kate learned that fame isn’t all that it is made out to be and that she should enjoy her life as a kid to the fullest.

