

Starry Eyes (By Robert Bee)

The expression ‘stars in her eyes’ must have been coined especially for Jenny Strauhan. Jenny was, to use another cliché, ‘star struck’. It was all she ever talked about, at work, on the train, at home – much to her long suffering parents annoyance – and on her nights out with her friends.

Jenny avidly read every goss magazine that detailed the comings and goings of the celebrity world, their romances, their marriages, their spats, their affairs, their break-ups. Everything. She knew all there was to know about the loves and lives of the movie and TV stars.

“I think Brad is making a huge mistake,” Jenny told her friend Marsha on the train one morning. Celebrity Brad was Jenny’s current pre-occupation and she followed his every move and movie. “This latest movie he’s shooting isn’t right for his career. It’ll flop and take him down with it.”

“Why don’t you tell him then?” Marsha asked. “I’m sure he’d appreciate your advice.”

Jenny completely missed the jibe. “I only wish I could, but when am I likely to meet him? His doesn’t answer my letters or emails. I need to see him personally.”

Marsha shook her head sadly. Jenny was a good friend, but her obsession with meeting the stars, not just reading about them, was starting to strain her patience. “You have to accept it Jen, these people lead well protected lives. They don’t mix with mortals like us. Apart from the red carpet walks, you’ll never see one in the flesh. You have as much chance as having dinner with the Queen.”

“No,” Jenny said. “I’m going to meet some one day, eye to eye. I just know I will.”

Marsha returned to her Stephen King novel. “Yes, Jenny.”

“It’s so frustrating,” Jenny fumed at the Club a fortnight later. “Tom was in town last week, for all of two days, and I didn’t know. I could have gone and seen him.” Tom was her latest major interest.

“And how would you have done that?” Marsha asked, sipping her drink.

“Oh, maybe park out on his hotel’s foyer lounge, just wait for him to walk by.”

“On the lounge? That might be a bit dangerous.” Marsha smiled inwardly at her wit, but as usual it was lost on Jenny.

“Not if I sit still and look like I belong.” Jenny sipped her drink and sighed. “Damn and blast! There must be some way for me to meet a celebrity.”

Marsha looked at her friend. “Maybe there is a way. Remember I was telling you about that cute hunk Grant?”

“You mean Kirsty’s brother?” replied Jenny. “He’s not a celebrity. He’s just a pen pusher in Public Relations.”

“So you’d think. But Kirsty let slip that Grant is on a first name basis with some really big stars. He goes out regularly on week-ends, sometimes to a secret hide-away they have in the hills outside the city. There are lots of them there. Kirsty said, the way Grant explained it to her, he just hops from one star to another, chats with them. He knows most of them by first name.”

“Wow,” Jenny was impressed. “And do they know his name?”

“Oh, you never know with celebrities. It’s just as likely they don’t even know he exists. But does that matter? He even gets to take their photos.”

“I’m impressed... and insanely jealous. Do you have Kirsty’s number?” Jenny dived into her bag for her mobile. “I think I want to get to know her brother a bit better.”

“But you don’t know Grant at all” Marsha pointed out.

“No, but a girl has to start somewhere.”

It took some aggressive, yet delicate, negotiations with Kirsty, but eventually Jenny arranged a date with Grant.

“It’s not really a date,” Jenny explained to Marsha on the train to work. “It’s more of an outing in each other’s company.”

“Does Grant know that?” Marsha asked.

“Well...”

“Trust me, Jenny” Marsha said, “Grant thinks it’s a date. He really has a crush on you. How could you be so mean to him? Raising his hopes like that.”

“Why should he be interested in me, anyway?” Jenny shot back. “He mixes with all those celebrities, I’m surprised he even agreed to take me with him.”

“You mean, with you being just a mere mortal?”

“Yes.”

“Maybe there’s more to Grant than you think,” Marsha said. “You might think differently after this date... sorry, Saturday night outing.”

It was approaching sunset when Grant picked Jenny up at her parents’ house. At first Jenny looked suspiciously at the jet black Holden panel van he drove up in but decided that surely Kirsty’s brother wouldn’t try to do anything stupid, at least on the first date... outing.

They drove out of town towards the hills. Jenny was so excited at the prospect of finally meeting some celebrities, she hardly listened to anything Grant said during the long drive. It added to the mystery and excitement that she would meet these lofty persons in some dark meeting place high up in the hills.

Grant occasionally looked across at the attractive young women by his side and felt happy also. He’d been admiring her every time he came across her with Kirsty, but couldn’t pluck up the courage to talk to her. Let alone ask for a date. And here she was going up into the hills with him. He could hardly believe his luck. She seemed to be fascinated with stars, but didn’t appear to hear a word he

said about them on the drive up. Strange.

They turned off the quiet country road into a long dirt track. As the van turned a sharp curve, Jenny saw against the dark tree line a suggestion of a log cabin with a red glow from the windows and door. At that moment, Grant turned off the van's headlights and continued with just parking lights.

"What are you doing?" Jenny asked alarmed.

"Where there, we don't want to spoil our night vision, or we won't see anything," Grant said.

"Anything?" Jenny repeated.

"Yeah, you know... stars."

"At last," Jenny exclaimed as she leapt from the van, looking about her wildly. "Celebrities... where are they?" She pointed towards the cabin. "Are they in there?"

Grant shook his head. "No Jenny, up there" and he pointed to the sky.

"What, the celebrities are up there?" Jenny craned her head to look upwards.

"No, but the stars are."

Jenny stood in stunned silence, taking in the beautiful dark sky, lit up by thousands of twinkling points of light and a carpet of Milky Way you could believe you could walk on. Eventually she turned and looked at Grant. "These are the stars you mix with, and talk to?" she asked.

"Sure," Grant answered. "What did you think I did out here?"

Jenny looked back up at the glorious sky. "Oh bugger" she said.

"What's that one called again?" Jenny pointed to a bright orange star high to the north.

"That's Betelgeuse," Grant replied. "And that one, above the Saucepan, is Rigel. They're both super-giant stars."

"G'day Rigel" said Jenny giggling. "Look at me. I'm talking to the stars on a first name basis." She walked back over to Grant's telescope which was just one amongst the dozen set up by Grant's astronomy society members that night. It was deathly quiet except for the occasional whir of a telescope drive and the sound of crickets. "Show me that Orion... thingy again Grant. It was beautiful."

Grant retrained the telescope on a point in the sky and Jenny placed her eye against the eyepiece. "My god," she whispered. "That's so cool." She looked up, walked across to Grant in the almost total dark and reached for his hand. "And you're cool too."

Grant gently squeezed her hand, then pointed up to the Milky Way. "Did you know that the Earth is actually traveling through space around the Sun at over 100,000 kilometres per hour, and the ground we are standing on is rotating about the Earth's center at over 3,000 kilometers per hour."

"You wouldn't know it," replied Jenny, impressed.

"Ah," said Grant. "But if you stand here in the dark long enough, and just stare up at the stars and Milky Way, and knowing that we are in space too, some believe that after a while, you can actually sense that movement?"

Jenny said nothing, but stared into the deep expanse of space, and held Grant's hand a little tighter.

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"So, Jenny, how was your outing last week-end?" Marsha asked. "Was it worth it? Did Grant deliver the goods?"

Jenny sat in the rocking train seat and looked dreamily into space. "Marsha, it was wonderful. I actually felt the Earth move."

Marsha stared, then turned back to her novel. "Yes, that sounds like a successful first date. I wonder if Kirsty has another brother."

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