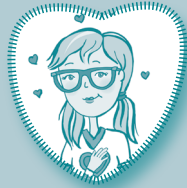




Just Call me kate






Kate Makes Her Mark




Zachary Donaldson. Zachary Donaldson. His name is like poetry or something.

As I lifted my pencil to the pink bathroom wall, I had a quick conversation with myself.



Maybe I shouldn't do this. But I need to do something to get his attention. The high school cheerleaders use our gym for practice sometimes when their gym is being used. So if one of those girls sees this, then Zachary's definitely going to find out about it since he's a football player, and that will be so perfect. And this isn't really graffiti since I'm doing it in pencil. It can totally just be erased. No big deal, right?





My hand was shaking as I began to write in huge letters "Z-A-C-H-A-R-Y D-O-N-A-L-D-S-O-N." I finished by surrounding his name with a big heart.

When the secretary's voice came through the speaker dismissing students to their buses, I jumped.


All right, Kate, I said to myself. Let's hope this works!





When I got home after school, my mom handed me a huge piece of homemade lemon meringue pie.


“Hi, Katie. How was school?”




“Mom, *please* try to call me Kate! I’m twelve years old now. Katie sounds like a little kid’s name!”

She gave me a hug. “Honey, you’ve always been our little Katie and that’s a pretty difficult thing to change.”


I sighed. “I know. I know. Just please try. Okay, Mom?”




“Okay,” she said. “So did anything interesting happen at school today?”



“**No.** Nope. Nothing different happened at all. I didn’t do anything different or anything. Just the same old boring day of school I always have. I’m gonna go eat this in my room. See you later, Mom!” I bolted up to my room before she asked me anything else. I’m a terrible liar and if she kept probing, I would have ended up spilling everything about the bathroom wall.



It doesn’t usually take me very long to do my homework, but my brain was totally spinning. It was hard to think about anything except Zachary and how he might react when he finds out what I did. I finally closed my social studies book when I smelled burgers cooking on the grill through my open bedroom window.



“Meow! Meow!” Sharkey, my cat, was curled up on my bed and wanted some attention. I stroked his long white fur and began telling him about what I did in school that morning. Sharkey’s almost always on my bed. He weighs twenty-five pounds and doesn’t move much. Just as I was explaining the part about drawing the heart around Zachary’s name, I heard the front door slam and loud boy voices making their way into the kitchen. It was my brother, Pete, and his best friend, whose name happens to be . . . Zachary Donaldson.

Yes. I have a major crush on my seventeen-year-old brother’s best friend.


After I gave Sharkey one more good scratch under his chin, I looked in the mirror and made sure my ponytails weren’t crooked. Then I cleaned the smudges off my glasses with the bottom of my shirt and headed downstairs.

My brother and Zachary were going over that day’s football practice.

“Dude! You so totally rocked the house when you threw that pass!” Zachary said.

“I heard *that*, Z-Dog! It was sa-weet!” my brother agreed.

They speak in kind of a different language. I pretty much get it, which is good because sometimes my parents need an interpreter.



“Hey, Pete. Hey, Zachary.” I blushed as they both gave my ponytails a tug when I walked by them.

“Hey, little sis,” said Pete.

“Whussup, Kate the Great?” Zachary said. It’s so cool that he and Pete both call me Kate, not Katie or my full name, Kaitlin. When I become president of the United States, I plan to go by Kaitlin, but not now. I’m saving it.

I grabbed some soda and opened it, trying to be chill, like I didn’t care if they were there.

Pete turned back to Zachary and said, “Dude! I’m totally stoked for the game on Friday! If we beat Grant High that would be off the hook!”

Pete is the star quarterback for the Marion Sharks. I don’t understand everything about football, but I do know that my brother pretty much rocks. It’s mainly because of him that the team was undefeated last season.

“Yo, Pete,” said Zachary, “I was wondering if I could just hang here this weekend. The fam’s got a thing they’re doing and I just wanna get out, if that’s cool with you.”

You would think that since my dad’s a pastor, people wouldn’t want to hang out at our house or something. But that’s definitely not true. Our friends always want to come over—especially Zachary. He’s been spending the night at our house a lot lately. Mom says it’s because Mr. and Mrs.

Donaldson need lots of time to talk, but I'm **positive** it's because he likes playing video games with me.

"Whatever, man. My casa is your casa, right?" said Pete. They high-fived. That's how they hug, I think.

Grabbing a couple bags of chips, a box of snack cakes, and a two-liter bottle of soda, they headed down to the basement to watch TV and stuff their faces, even though we were just about to eat dinner. I guess Mom has finally realized that nothing can possibly spoil Pete and Zachary's appetites. They eat 24/7. It's unbelievable.



When they were out of sight, I sat at the table and made a list in my head of all the things I like about Zachary:

He's the coolest guy on the planet.


He's kind of short and shaves his head.

He has this really goofy laugh that sounds a lot like a big, barking seal: "Arf! Arf! Arf!"

He wears his grandfather's dog-tags from world war II on a chain around his neck, which is so mature. (He is 17, after all.)



But the thing I like most about Zachary is that his left eye is brown and his right eye is blue. Sometimes when I'm sitting across from him at the dinner table I just look at his eyeballs while he slurps up spaghetti noodles and I wonder how they got that way. Mom says it's kind of like a birthmark, but I think it means he must have some kind of special power . . . like he can set things on fire just by looking at them. I seriously get a little freaked out when he just sits and stares at a game on TV. I don't want our TV to explode or anything.



I took another gulp of my drink and began tracing "ZACHARY" onto the side of the can with my finger. Who would be the very first person to notice Zachary's name on the bathroom wall?