

'Til the End of Time  
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“Mother! What *were* you thinking?”

Laura looked up from her desk at Annie standing in the doorway. Tall, elegant, with a flair for the dramatic, Annie was holding her hair away from her head, looking totally frustrated.

“Actually, I was thinking about the upcoming elections. Is that any help?”

Annie rolled her eyes. “Mother, *look* at me! Look at my hair! What were you thinking?”

“I’m very fond of your hair, darling. After all, I’m a redhead, too.”

“Then *why* didn’t you think? Why did you name me *Annie*! Of all the names in the world you could have picked, you had to choose *Annie*?”

“You know very well you were named after Meg’s mother. Do you want to tell me what this is about?”

Laura smiled as her daughter fell onto the sofa in her office. “My hair. I have *red* hair...red, *curly* hair. And you named me Annie!”

“And that’s a problem?”

“Mom, all I need is a bald father and a dog who says—” At the word “dog”, their dachshund, Copper, raised his head and barked. Even Annie had to laugh at his timing. Pleased that he’d made them laugh, Copper got up, disturbing his twin, Penny, and they both began to bark cheerfully.

“Hush, puppies!” Annie giggled.

As the dogs settled down again, Laura asked, “Now do you want to tell me what this is about?”

“Auditions, Mom. I have to get my resume together and my headshots for next semester. I started working on it and looked at my name under my picture and realized that every producer and director I audition for will be thinking of *that* Annie and not seeing me. I can’t even use my middle name instead since you gave me your name. Collins? Do I look like a Collins?”

“Actually, you do. Your grandfather and me.” Before Annie could protest, Laura held up her hand. “But I know what you’re saying. I’m sorry. When you were born your father and I weren’t exactly thinking of your future plans.”

“You should have been,” Annie muttered. “Think Dad would let me change my name?”

“When you turn eighteen next year you can do whatever you want. Do you have something picked out? I’ve always been fond of the name Melanie. How about Melanie Morgan?” Laura shook her head. “No, that sounds like a romance

author not an actress, unless you're planning on a soap opera career."

"The fact that I'm planning on a theatre career makes it a problem. And while we're on the subject of a career, I've decided not to go to college." Annie made the announcement as calmly as if she was asking for a glass of water.

"Guess again."

"It's *my* decision, Mom!"

"It's *our* money that supports you!"

"But Dad..."

"But Dad', what?" An amused voice came from the doorway and Annie turned to find her father leaning against the doorjamb, regarding her with that 'what's my little girl up to now' look.

Annie darted a glance at her mother who just raised her eyebrows and settled back to watch the show. Taylor and Annie were both such strong personalities that they clashed more often than they agreed and the "discussions" were never dull.

"So what's up, Princess?" Taylor pushed his daughter's legs from the couch and sat beside her.

"Dad, I've asked you not to call me that!"

"Only in private, Annie. So what's the disaster this time?"

"I just told Mom that I'm not going to college."

"Guess again," Taylor said.

"That's what Mom said, too!"

"She's right. You need to finish school before you start out."

"Why? You didn't."

This time it was Taylor who looked to Laura for help. She shook her head silently. This was going to be good.

"No, I didn't, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't."

"And it doesn't mean that I should!"

Taylor had an ominous sense of *déjà vu*...