



Summertime

by Kelli Stuart

Summertime, and the livin' is easy...

"Ahh, Katie. They're playing our song," Ed said looking lazily at his wife as Rosemary Clooney's sultry voice filled the room. Leaning further back in his lounge chair, Ed grabbed his wine glass and took a long, slow drink.

"You sure you don't want any wine, baby?" Ed asked, his words slurring slightly. Katie smiled gently at her husband and shook her head. "You say every song is our song, dear," she said, chuckling softly. Ed returned his wife's smile and shrugged.

"God, you're beautiful tonight honey," he mumbled.

Katie blushed and lowered her head, her dark, curly hair falling over her face. "Ed, please, you've said that a hundred times tonight. I'm feeling embarrassed."

"Ah, I'm sorry darlin'. But I can't help it. You're just gorgeous." Ed smiled again – a goofy, lopsided grin that caused Katie to melt into laughter. "I think you're drunk, my dear," she said, her vibrant green eyes sparkling.

"I wouldn't be if you would help me with this bottle of wine," Ed replied, pouring himself another generous glass. "God, I love Rosemary," he said. Ed closed his eyes for a brief moment and let the music fill his soul. Suddenly a deep sadness washed over him. A lump formed in his throat. "Katie?" Hearing no reply, Ed opened his eyes and looked over to the couch where his wife sat. She wasn't there.

"Katie?" Ed looked around wildly.

"Right here, honey," Katie said from behind him.

"Oh, baby, you scared me," Ed said. "I didn't know where you were."

Katie laughed. "I was wondering, Mr. Stevens, if I might be able to request a dance," she said to her husband.

Fumbling slightly, Ed pulled himself out of his chair and walked unsteadily to his wife. "I've had a little too much to drink to be dancin' baby," he said slowly. Katie stepped up and put her head on her husband's chest. "We don't have to move much," she whispered. "I just want to hear your heart beating." Ed wrapped his arms around his wife's small frame. Suddenly wishing that he would have stuck to that diet, Ed sucked in his protruding gut as he swayed back and forth.

"Dad?"

Ed jumped and pulled back from Katie as Travis entered the room.

"What are you doing?" Travis asked, his face slightly red.

“I’m dancin’ with your mother, Trav. It’s nothin’ to be embarrassed about,” Ed warbled. Travis looked uncertainly at his father. “Okay,” he said slowly. “Um... Well, I’m going out with the guys tonight so I’ll be back later.” Travis turned quickly to leave.

“Travis, wait!” Ed bellowed. “Get back here.” Travis turned back to face his father. “First you say hello to your mother, then you ask properly if you may go out.” Ed grabbed hold of the back of his lounge chair for support as the room spun slightly. He did not see the look of confusion, followed by anger that swept across his son’s face.

“Uh, hi mom, sorry,” Travis said, looking down at his feet. “So, can I go out with the guys?”

“Ed, let him go,” Katie whispered to her husband.

“Okay, you can go, but be home by midnight, got it?” Travis nodded and stared at his father for a brief moment before turning to leave.

“Katie, I’m sorry he is so rude to you. That boy needs manners!” Ed said as he scooped his wife into his arms once again.

“Oh Ed,” Katie sighed, “Travis is sixteen. He’s at a very confusing time in his life. Give him a little space to figure things out, alright?” Ed nodded, then stopped as Frank Sinatra’s voice greeted them through the speakers.

I fall in love with you, every day...

“Listen baby, they’re playin’ our song.”

Katie threw her head back and laughed out loud. “Okay, Casanova, it’s time for you to get some rest,” she said. She took Ed’s arm and guided him back to his chair. “I don’t want to sleep,” Ed slurred. “I want to be with you.”

“Yes, well I’m tired and I do want to sleep. You rest awhile and I will see you soon, okay?”

Ed nodded slowly and leaned back in his chair. “Okay, baby,” he mumbled. “But don’t go far...” Before he could finish speaking, Ed was asleep.

Five hours later, Ed awoke with a jolt. Rubbing his eyes he squinted at the clock, trying to make out the time. 2:00 a.m. “What woke me up?” Ed grumbled, his head still spinning. Then he heard the creak of the stairs behind him. “Travis?” Ed called. The creaking stopped. “Travis get in here!” Ed yelled, stumbling out of his chair.

Seconds later, Travis appeared in the doorway. “Yes dad?” he asked slowly.

Ed pulled himself up tall. “Come here,” he said. Travis walked slowly forward, tripping over the corner of the end table.

“Do you know what time it is son?” Ed asked. Travis shrugged.

“Answer me, Travis!”

“It’s 2:00, dad, okay?”

“Have you been drinking?” Ed asked leaning in closer to his son.

“No more than you have,” Travis mumbled.

“Did you drive yourself home?” Ed asked, his face growing red. Travis did not answer. “What the hell is the matter with you Travis? Do you have any idea what a stupid stunt that is? You could have killed someone!” Ed was yelling now, his face inches from his son’s.

“Oh, well gee, Dad. I’m glad you’re so concerned about everyone else’s well being. But don’t worry about me, alright?” Travis yelled back.

“Oh shut up, Travis. And lower your voice. I don’t want to wake up your mother. After the way you treated her tonight, she would be devastated to know that you came in drunk.” Travis looked up at his dad, fury flashing in his eyes.

“What are you talking about, Dad? What the *hell* are you talking about?” Travis shouted.

“What do you mean, what am I talking about?” Ed replied. “I’m talking about showing your mother a little respect from time to time.”

“Mom is DEAD, Dad! She’s been dead for over a year!” Travis trembled violently as he glared at his father.

Before Ed could stop himself he felt his arm lurch back and swing around with a crack across Travis’ face. A thin line of blood immediately trickled from the corner of his son’s eye. “Oh, God. Oh Trav, I’m sorry. I’m so sorry. Please forgive me son,” Ed cried softly as Travis spun on his heel and ran from the room.

“Travis! Oh Travis, forgive me!” Ed wailed. He was answered by the slam of the back door. A few seconds later he heard squealing tires and watched through the window as his son pulled out of the driveway. Ed collapsed in his chair and covered his face.

“Oh, God forgive me. Forgive me,” Ed said the words over and over. He closed his eyes and leaned back. He felt another wave of sadness press upon his chest. It was a deep, suffocating sense of dread and doom. He needed his wife.

“Katie?” he said, opening his eyes and looking around the room. “Katie?” He looked behind his chair where she stood earlier. “Katie?” the voice coming from his throat did not sound like his own. Once again, Frank Sinatra’s smooth voice jumped out of the still playing stereo.

Fly me to the moon...

“They’re playing our song, Katie,” Ed said weakly, tears dripping onto his cheeks. He waited for his wife’s magnetic laugh, but was met with nothing but the calm, melodic sound of the music.

“Okay, baby. Let’s get some rest,” Ed said softly. He wiped his eyes and leaned back. “I’ll see you soon.”