

A novel by Terri Gillespie

The Hair
mavens
Book Two

Cut it Out!



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Chapter 1

Katya Stavropolsky

“I feel pretty, oh so pretty. I feel pretty and witty and bright ...” Half-dressed for work, Katya Stavropolsky jumped onto her bed, holding her large round brush like a microphone.

She was no longer Katya—formerly the Mouse, Kathy Smith—she was Maria from *West Side Story*.

Pointing to the dresser mirror, she crooned, “See that pretty girl in the mirror, there—” The reflection pointed back at her. “See that pretty girl in—”

What was the rest of that line?

Saturday’s Mavens’ Monthly Movie Night choice had been Harriet’s. When Harriet found out Shira and Katya had never seen *West Side Story*, she complained about schools and how it was un-American.

Maybe Harriet was right, but one thing for sure, Katya had fallen in love with the musical—even though it was very sad. Since that night she had not been able to get this one song out of her head.

Her hand dropped to her side then lifted. “See that pretty girl in the mirror there?” *Oh, how does it go?*

She huffed. If she waited any longer for her memory to click in, she would miss her bus. There was no way she wanted to be late. Shira was back in town from Beverly Hills—for good—and had scheduled

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a big meeting. She jumped to the floor and opened her closet, then pulled her black Hair Mavens torso shirt with the capped sleeves off the hanger.

Someone had designed a nice logo for the Hair Mavens Salon—a curl with the salon name—and Shira had purchase different style blouses with it embroidered in pink and blue. She pulled the shirt over her head and thrust her arms through the sleeves.

The new logo was cool. The salon was nearly finished—all updated and beautiful. She examined herself in the mirror, gave a quick stroke of the embroidered pink lettering over the left breast, then fluffed her curls and dabbed some clear gloss on her lips. Her life was so different from what it was a year ago—thanks to the mavens. It was not like it was when she lived with Yuri in Manhattan, but in many ways it was better. She continued humming the tune as she grabbed her purse and black cardigan sweater.

Was that why she felt safe enough to not hide behind a fake name? She was learning to be the Katya Stavropolsky who was not so afraid. The Katya who felt happy almost every day. *I feel pretty ...*

Her hand was on the door when she remembered Harriet’s reaction to the scene of Maria and her friends in the sewing shop. Harriet had jumped from her recliner with her fists on her hips singing, “I feel pretty ...” She sang the whole song.

Every part—even what the shop girls sang.

Shira, Beulah, and she had laughed until tears covered their faces. Katya giggled at the memory as she opened and entered the quiet hallway.

Her cell jingled like sleigh bells. She fished her phone out of her purse, trying to swallow the last of her giggles. “Hello.”

“Hey, kiddo,” Harriet said. “I’m stopping by Delicious Bakery. You want a—”

Katya could not stop the laughter from spurting out like a dropped can of hair mousse.

“Okay.” Harriet sounded annoyed.

“I-I am sorry, Harriet.” She snorted. “I was remembering you singing ‘I Feel Pretty.’”

Harriet’s silence made her stomach do a flop. Her laughter turned to a hard hiccup. She remembered how the “old” Harriet got so grumpy and mean.

Finally, Harriet’s croaky chuckle broke the pause. “I feel charming. Oh so charming ...”



The song continued to play in Katya’s head, as she rode the Septa to The Hair Mavens Salon. Oh how she wanted to belt out the song like she and Harriet had done a few minutes before, but the bus probably was not the best place to sing right now. Her elbow rested on the window, her palm cradling her chin. Outside buildings and people went by in a bumpy rhythm.

The other mavens thought it was time for her to learn to drive. Beulah even offered to teach her, but she liked watching the people and listening to their conversations. The crowdedness of the bus reminded her of growing up in Minsk. Drexel Hill and Gladstone were so much tamer than she was accustomed to. Still, sometimes a babushka or two would ride and she could speak with them in her native tongue and feel like she was back in Belarus.

Paying attention to the other people around her also helped with her English—at least that is what she told everyone who bothered her about driving.

Shira said her accent was exotic. That Shira noticed at all was most likely because before the fire—when she was too afraid to be Katya—she had not spoken much at all.

Life was good now, and not just because The Hair Mavens Salon was nearly ready to reopen, but because the mavens would be working together again.

Harriet and Beulah finished their last week in their temporary stations at Sarah's Family Hair Salon. Shira had finished training her replacement in Beverly Hills. And Katya's last day at the Hyatt Regency Salon and Spa had been yesterday. She was glad she had taken Beulah and Harriet's advice to stop punishing herself and quit her maid job to take a temporary position at the hotel's beautiful salon.

The bus hit a pothole, everyone groaned. She smiled. How so like what happened to The Hair Mavens. They had hit a few potholes and now life would be smooth. No one would believe her at the Regency Salon when she said she missed washing and setting her little old ladies. Her time at the hotel was good financially—for the tips were generous—and it allowed her to brush up on her more advanced skills. When the new Edna's Beauty School opened in a few months, she would be teaching classes on styling and blow-drying. A teacher. Mama would have been so proud.

The bus driver stopped and pushed the lever to open the door. A few of the regulars boarded and found their seats. She smiled at those who made eye contact with her. The last one in was a tall, thin man with stringy, poorly dyed black hair. His pale skin was covered with black tattoos—arms, neck, and on his face was a black spider. Its legs held onto the man's jaw as though ready to sink fangs into his cheek. He scanned the faces of the passengers, as though looking for someone.

Katya ducked down before he spotted her. Her heart stopped then picked up speed like a race car. She did not know him, but she knew that look—the look of a predator. Someone who wanted to—

She felt more than heard him walk down the aisle, his chains rattling and rings clicking on the metal seats as he grasped them. The bus had hushed.

The sound of a body flopping into a seat a few rows ahead released some of her tension. Seconds later the subdued murmur of conversations resumed. Still, Katya could not calm herself. Instead, the pictures of Justin slithered into her brain.

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Justin pinning her against the wall. Slapping and punching her. Throwing her to the cold marble floor. Choking her. Then—

She shook her head trying to scatter the bad pictures attempting to etch themselves into her mind. Trying to ruin this sunny day. It frightened her how quickly she could be torn away from the light.

No one—not one maven—knew what had happened to her. And Edna had taken that secret with her to the grave. Her body shuddered. That was not true—there was one other, the man who raped her.

Stop, Katya!

She too must bury her secret deeper inside her, not let anyone ever again force her to that dark place again. *Ever.*

How was the sneak peek? If you've read book one, you'll understand the metamorphosis of Katya with the second book in *The Hair Mavens Trilogy*.

Katya has big plans for the mavens. She wants to turn her pain into something positive—yet she also wants to hide it. Not a good combination—but it makes a great story. A story I hope you'll love.

Oh, and there are two new mavens who have joined the ladies at the Hair Mavens salon. One of them— well, you'll just have to find out for yourself.

I hope you'll continue to get to know the mavens and love them as much as I do.

Thanks for reading this first chapter!

God Blessing and keep reading!

Terri Gillespie