

Characters:

Carrie (f), 15/ adult

Graham (m), 16/ adult

Dialogue is in italics, direct address is normal text.

Intro music: Save it for Later by The Beat

CARRIE: *Mum! Everyone's going to be there. I'm meeting the girls from school and we've got sparklers and..*

I don't tell her that the boys from the school next to ours will be at the town fireworks too. Boys. Cute boys. Boys that make my face burn and my brain buzz. Boys that make me wish I was really cool like Diana Preston who wears fingerless gloves and a scowl in Maths and speaks in a sexy growl like a lioness. Boys who will appreciate newly dyed hair from mouse to fair to brilliant blonde, my eyes ringed in blue, a smudge of pink gloss, swish of blusher. But no, I've got to take my little brother to the crappy primary school display instead of giggling with my friends in the park. Mum will drop us off at 7 and pick us up at half past eight. I mean, kill me now, Mum! Cathy was going to bring vodka in her dad's hip flask.

(To her brother) Come on then, dick breath. Thanks for ruining my life. Don't go out of my sight! God!

She stands and watches the fireworks and despite herself her eyes light up and she's enjoying herself. Graham Boyd rolls a cigarette and watches her.

GRAHAM: *Who's that blonde girl over there? I don't remember seeing her before.*

Wayne L thinks it's Carrie Whatsit. What, Carrie Thomas the square? Yeah, goes to the convent school. Does girl guides with Jenny

Thingummy but he's more interested in my can of strongbow.

When you grow up in this place you kind of know everyone or know someone who knows them, their name, their face. Your lives crash and part like the stones on the beach and the tide pulls you into each other. I wonder what wave brought her here to the primary school. Her crowd usually go to the big display in town.

CARRIE: A firework crack, our eyes lock.

GRAHAM: A spark

CARRIE: Pure light

GRAHAM: Something ignites.

CARRIE: And it's not the roman candles fizzing in the drizzle.

GRAHAM: Her eyes are green.

CARRIE: I stare, I probably shouldn't.

GRAHAM: That blue eyeliner is...
Terrible.

CARRIE: It's the eighties.

GRAHAM: The decade that style forgot.

CARRIE: Hair that grows bigger and wider with each year.

GRAHAM: Before mobile phones, internet, social media, keeping tabs...

BOTH: Thank god.

GRAHAM: When I was:

CARRIE: Gorgeous Graham Boyd, hunk of the parish. On Mondays at guides it's all Jenny McPherson can manage to gasp about.

'He's so gorgeous but he never notices me! Do you think I should undo my shirt button? Roll my skirt up a bit more?' she sighs, her skirt so short it reveals the dimples on her salami thighs.

Sometimes his school bus and mine reach the stop at the same time and I watch as the long

back of him walks away, disappears, rollie poking out from behind his ear, coat flapping open. Does he see me?

I'm fifteen and invisible. I'm:

GRAHAM: Carrie Thomas. I see you, with your Princess Di hair and your sweet smile and burning cheeks even in the half light of the bonfire and I find myself walking over.

All right?

CARRIE: *Hello.*

Awkward pause then they both speak together.

GRAHAM:) *Fireworks are a bit shit aren't they?*

CARRIE:) *Fireworks are pretty good.*

And again-

GRAHAM:) *Thought you'd be at the town display.*

CARRIE:) *I was supposed to be at the town display but..*

She indicates her little brother.

GRAHAM: *Hey, mate. Here's 50p. Go and get yourself a toffee apple.*

I'm Graham.

CARRIE: *Graham. I know. I mean...*

GRAHAM: *Carrie, right? I think our mums know each other.*

CARRIE: *Yeah we go to the same church. They. They go to the same church. I don't... I mean, god. Right? Who?*

GRAHAM: *Yeah. Want some?*

He offers her the can of cider. His can of cider. She takes it and holds his gaze as she takes a gulp.

CARRIE: *I think your friends are trying to say something.*

He turns and flicks two fingers at Wayne and Wayne.

Graham: *Mates, eh? They're pretty immature.*

CARRIE: *God yeah. With friends like that..*

GRAHAM: *What bands are you into?*

CARRIE: *Er, U2...er... Smiths, Clash, the usual.*

GRAHAM: *Thank god, I thought you were going to say Wham or something shit like that.*

CARRIE: *Every wall of my room is papered with George Michael, I dream he'll marry me one day, take me away from...*

God, no.

Combat Rock is right up there.

GRAHAM: *Not London Calling?*

CARRIE: *I can't remember. I'm just repeating what Diana Preston has scrawled on her rough book. What was that song...*

It's ok but just a bit...

GRAHAM: *Long?*

CARRIE: *Long. That's it. Long. Yawn.*

Silence.

GRAHAM: *You go the convent, right?*

CARRIE: *Full of bitches and nuns. Nuns that are bitches. Bitches that act like nuns. Wish I went to your school.*

GRAHAM: *Mine's full of fuckwits like those two.*

He waves to Wayne and Wayne.

CARRIE: *And Jenny McPherson*

GRAHAM: *How do you know her?*

CARRIE: *Just, y'know round and about.*

I'm not going to mention girl guides and things and hanging out with fat Alison and the German twins.

GRAHAM: *Do you smoke?*

CARRIE: *No. I mean, I would but I play the flute so got to...(pats chest)takes a lot of blowing-hard blowing- breath- long passages, technique, you know so... I'm in the school orchestra.*

GRAHAM: *Cool. Another swig?*

She swigs long and hard from the hip flask.

Steady on, girl!

CARRIE: *Why? It's the weekend!*

GRAHAM: *Yeah fuck it.*

He takes a swig too.

CARRIE: *Fuck it! FUCK IT!*

GRAHAM: *You're funny.*

CARRIE: *Funny ha ha or funny peculiar?*

GRAHAM: *Funny cute.*

CARRIE: *Thanks. I try.*

Oh my god am I flirting? The words flow and the sparks fly and it's not just the fireworks igniting the sky.

GRAHAM: And later it's in the middle of my History exam halfway through an essay that my skin goes cold, my mind empties. It's the dark of the night, waking at three, that stupid Saturday job in the café by the quay and every time I wonder did I...? I mean, I didn't mean to. It wasn't my fault that

CARRIE: the mind has a way of putting things in boxes, shutting away...

GRAHAM: *What are you doing on Saturday?*

CARRIE: Doing my homework, babysitting my brother, washing my hair.

Oh I dunno, Why?

GRAHAM: *Just wondered if you wanted to do something together.*

CARRIE: *Oh yeah?*

GRAHAM: *I mean we could go to the HMV in town or something. Have McDonalds.*

CARRIE: He calls me, he actually rings. We talk for an hour and we have so much in common despite... My mum is ok with it even though Graham lives in a council house because of the church thing.

GRAHAM: I've got exams but Mum says it's ok because Mrs Thomas always says hello at church on Sundays even though they live in a detached house and drive a Volvo.

Me, Wayne L and Wayne R in the park on swings.

'You snogged her yet? You frenched her?
Touched her up? Felt her/

Graham swipes at him.

Shut up, prick. Don't be disgusting.

And yeah, I want to do those things but I don't know how to talk to a posh girl like her even if she used to be a bit of a square. I'll write. Better than talking face to face.

CARRIE: 'A letter! God you are soooo lucky! All the girls in our year fancy him,' says Jenny McPherson at Guides and fat Alison and the German twins are round-eyed with awe. I am a girl with a date and status but I make sure I finish my homework and practise my scales before we meet and

GRAHAM: years later, I'm married, kids

CARRIE: Married, kids at university-

GRAHAM: divorced, married again-

BOTH: Not to each other.

CARRIE: We've not seen each other since...

GRAHAM: *I think of you, about...*

CARRIE: *I once looked you up on Facebook.*

GRAHAM: *I can still see the girl you were.*

CARRIE: *The boy you used to be.*

GRAHAM: *And still I wonder... Did I...? I mean, we both wanted...*

CARRIE: The box stays shut.

Mum and Dad look me over before I go.

'Our little ugly duckling' says Dad.

'I think she may have the makings of a swan,' adds Mum.

'One day,' smiles Dad.

'One day,' smiles Mum.

And the newly hatched swan is plucked leaving just a grey girl, bare.

I hide beneath my hair.

GRAHAM: I buy her bus fare and walk her home like my mum told me. 'We don't want them thinking I'm not bringing you up properly. DON'T LET ME DOWN.'

CARRIE: And Graham holds my hand as we walk around the town. Fingers trusting, warm.

I have literally no idea where we went, what we did and what we talked about until...

GRAHAM: *So here we are.*

CARRIE: *Home, sweet home.*

GRAHAM: *Yeah.*

Silence

He leans in for a kiss.

CARRIE: Oh god he's going to kiss me. What do I do now? Think! I pretend it's a photo story from a teen magazine.

A series of stylised freeze-frames with exaggerated poses that resemble a photo story.

Freeze-frame one:

Carrie and Graham hold hands and smile at each other.

GRAHAM: (oddly deep and sexy voice) *Oh Carrie, I've had the best time today and I'm wondering if you'd be my girl.*

CARRIE: *Oh Dirk, I thought you'd never ask!*

Out of freeze-frame

GRAHAM: (normal voice) Dirk?

CARRIE: I've been reading my mum's secret stash of Mills and Boon. The name Graham isn't exactly...

GRAHAM: Yeah, fair enough.

Freeze-frame two:

Carrie stares into middle distance, Graham still holding her hand.

CARRIE: *I hope he kisses me.*

GRAHAM: *May I...kiss you?*

Freeze-frame three

Carrie winds her arms around Graham's neck.

CARRIE: *Oh Dirk, I think I love you.*

GRAHAM: *I think I love you too.*

Out of freeze-frame, in real life, they dodge and weave awkwardly, negotiating where to put arms, heads, noses and then as Graham leans in...

CARRIE: *Hang on a sec...*

She turns and removes her retainer, shoves in her pocket.

My retainer.

Graham looks momentarily grossed out, then shrugs. They lean in again and before the kiss-

GRAHAM: And Wayne L thumps my back, 'Oh my god, did you snog her? Snog the square? Get in there!'

CARRIE: And Jenny sighs, 'Oh my god did he snog you? I think I'm going to die!'

GRAHAM: Mum's waiting to pounce when I come downstairs next day.

'Have you done any revision yet?' she says.

God Mum, I've just woken up. it's Sunday.'

'Don't you take the Lord's name in vain at eleven o'clock in the morning when you've got mock exams coming up. You spend too much time listening to The Crash on that record player and gadding around town with girls and not enough time revising. What about university? Or do you want to be stuck here for the rest of your life? Stacking shelves in Tesco. Do you?'

I stomp back upstairs, my feet still bare, music on loud. Sod university. I don't fucking care.

CARRIE: For our second date we go for a walk by the beach, rain threatening and wind reaching inside freezing our bones.

Carrie and Graham sit on a bench.

Silence.

Really awkward silence.

GRAHAM: *Do you wanna...?*

CARRIE: *Huh?*

GRAHAM: *Walk for a bit or...?*

CARRIE: *What do you want to do?*

GRAHAM: *We could walk into town. Get some cider or...*

CARRIE: *Ok.*

GRAHAM: *Go back to mine.*

CARRIE: *Ok.*

GRAHAM: *Which? Cider or...*

CARRIE: (As adult Carrie) My kids laugh at me when I say to them, 'you know you've got a voice, an opinion, right? You get to make your own choice.'

'As if,' they sigh. It's a different world now but still I worry all the time.

(Teen Carrie) *You decide.*

GRAHAM: We go back to mine. Mum's at work but there's a note reminding me to do my homework. I chuck it in the bin.

Do you want anything to eat or...?

CARRIE: *No, I'm fine.*

Thanks.

His house is small and smells of Mr Sheen polish and boiled mince. There's a crochet dolly on the spare toilet roll in the loo. We sit on the bed in his room.

GRAHAM: *So do you wanna...*

CARRIE: At guides Jenny McPherson says, 'Graham is in a study group with Annette Strong. She has dark hair so long she can sit on it and they say she does it with anyone. Sorry, thought you should know.'

GRAHAM: At school Jenny McPherson whispers to me in Maths, her breath hot and stale on my neck, 'You could have any girl you want' she says, 'why are you wasting time with that boring little virgin from the convent?'

CARRIE: *I should probably...*

GRAHAM: *Yeah, me too.*

He goes to kiss her awkwardly and she turns her head.

CARRIE: *Mum! Do I have to?*

(To her brother) Come on then, dick breath, I've got to take you to the village fair. Thanks for ruining my life. Don't go out of my sight! God!

Mum says I need to get out of the house, I look pale. The fresh air will do me good, take a scarf, make sure your brother wears his hood.

And I always do what I'm told because I'm the good girl, the polite girl who doesn't let others down.

I see him before he sees me, hair in his eyes, coat open in the breeze and despite myself I smile but at the same time I turn away.

GRAHAM: *Hey, mate. Here's 50p. Go and have a go on the raffle.*

All right?

CARRIE: *Yeah.*

Awkward pause then they both speak together.

GRAHAM:) *Looking after your brother again?*

CARRIE:) *Looking after my brother again.*

And again:

GRAHAM:) *Fair seems ok this year*

CARRIE:) *Fair's a bit shit this year.*

GRAHAM: *I can't stay, got revision and my mum, you know. So I'll see you around then.*

CARRIE: And he presses a letter into my hand, the familiar looped writing bleeding through the paper, words burning my soul because I know what's written there but I control my face.

And as my little brother tries to win the sherry on the raffle, face sticky with crumbs of lemon drizzle...

'Got my mocks coming up...'

GRAHAM: *'Too soon after my last girlfriend...'*

BOTH: 'Didn't mean to lead you on.'

CARRIE: Because he's Graham Boyd, hunk of the parish and he can get any girl he likes and I thought he liked me and it hurts like I've been punched.

GRAHAM: But I was too awkward and ashamed and tied up in my own life to see.

And still I wonder did I... I mean, was I...? I didn't make you, did I?

CARRIE: I shut the box

GRAHAM: That time

CARRIE: That day...

GRAHAM: At mine.

They're back on the bed at his house.

This next section should be stylised rather than literal, perhaps with some movement.

GRAHAM: *So do you wanna...*

CARRIE: *I should probably...*

GRAHAM: As our thighs touch.

CARRIE: He tilts my face towards his.

GRAHAM: We're kissing and we fall back on the bed.

CARRIE: His hand slides up my top and but I don't stop him.

GRAHAM: Soft, her skin so soft. I want to feel more.

CARRIE: His weight pressing down...

GRAHAM: She doesn't stop me so...

CARRIE: I let him go further than I should. If the nuns knew they would/

I'm not sure if...

GRAHAM: *It's ok. We're not doing anything wrong.*

Are we?

CARRIE: *I don't think I want to...*

GRAHAM: *It's ok.*

CARRIE: *I've changed my mind...*

GRAHAM: But she doesn't say no

SPARK

Siân Rowland

CARRIE: Too polite to

GRAHAM: so I push my luck

CARRIE: Until he

GRAHAM: Until I

BOTH: Until we

Shocked silence. They can't look at each other until...

CARRIE: Our eyes lock.

GRAHAM: A spark

CARRIE: Pure light. The box unlocked.

END