

GIRL FRIEND

A dramatic monologue by
Steve Lambert

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

FIONA, 17.

SETTING

A graveyard near Manchester, UK.

TIME

Early on a winter's evening, 1979.

(FIONA, 17, stands before a grave at night. She wears casual clothes but has made an effort to look her best. She is underdressed for the weather and is visibly cold.)

FIONA: Hiya.

How's it going?

Locks the gates like clockwork, doesn't he?

Sorry about the get-up. It's just, last time I climbed over't railings, I tore me best coat.

Should be having my tea now. Do you miss 'avin' tea?

I know I said I'd bring flowers this time, but I thought it might upset Louise or your mam. Especially your mam. I followed her here last Sunday—she looked a right state. Still, she's lost loads of weight since you died, so, swings and roundabouts, eh?

She just needs to tidy herself up. Your Louise could help her with that.

Remember how windy it was at your funeral? Well, obviously, you don't, cos you weren't there. Well, you were there, but you know what I mean.

But this gale comes out of nowhere. And your mam, who wasn't lookin' so hot to start with, ends up looking like a bleedin' scarecrow.

But your Louise, not a hair out of place. I know she used enough lacquer to destroy the ozone layer, but even so.

She really looked the part. In that lovely black coat. Dabbing her eye with that hanky, all dainty like.

Not like your mother, blubbin' all over the shop. I know you were her only son, but she could have reined it in a bit.

I'm not saying Louise wasn't upset an' that. But she was the Grieving Girlfriend and made sure everyone knew it.

You never told her about me, did you? Not that there was much to tell, from your point of view. But there was from mine. And you knew it. And you liked that, didn't you?

Remember when I found your address book?

I'm on checkout, never seen you before, and you're asking if there's a box you can put your shopping in. And I'm saying, sorry, you can't have one. Because Barry, the new manager, reckons they're a fire hazard.

So you looks at me, with them big dark eyes, and you say:

Well, Barry's quite right. So many fires do start that way. You can scarcely open a paper without reading about some supermarket incinerated in a cardboard box-related fire tragedy. In fact, you can hardly walk through a shopping precinct without encountering some human torch that's staggered out of Tesco's.

And then you dropped it. Your address book. When you took out your wallet. You didn't notice and I didn't say anything.

All them girls' names. Which made me think, with you being so pale and interesting, that you might be a poof. But I knew you weren't by the way you looked at me. Not that you fancied me. But when boys look at girls to see if there's any bit of her worth looking at.

Your address book had your address in it. So did mine, but only to make up the numbers. I phoned you up. Remember? So I could give it back.

*Meet me under the town hall clock tomorrow at six, you say.
Bloody cheek.*

"I'll be having my tea then."

How many courses?

"Yer what?"

Your tea. How many courses?

"One."

No tinned peaches?

"No tinned peaches."

But it'll be Sunday.

"I prefer pears, less syrupy. But no."

*All right. Meet me under the clock, at seven. And write your name
and address in my address book. Oh, and, er, and bring my address
book.*

You're late. You take your address book from my hand, smile
and walk off without a word.

"There's a fine line," I says, "there's a fine line between being a
bit different and being a twat." (*"Jackass" or "jerk" may be
substituted.*)

I don't say that at the time, just think it. I say virtually nothing
at the time, at any time, I'm all "well, yeah, and, but, um, yes,
uh, but, in a minute, yes mam, what? Late, dunno, dunno, I
dunno," as if each word would tear a bigger and bigger hole in
me and let the world in.

We were the same age, weren't we? Though I didn't look it.

Can I pretend you're 14? you say.

"Why?"

Because it would be really really wrong.

Which is the closest you get to that kind of talk. Because within five minutes I know you've got a girlfriend. Clever the way you do that, without actually telling me. Practice, I suppose. With all them girl friends in your address book who aren't girlfriends.

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