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You're the One That I Want

Written by Giovanna Fletcher

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You're The One That I Want

GIOVANNA FLETCHER



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To Giorgina and Mario, for making my childhood so much fun. Whether we were making up radio shows on our brown Fisher-Price recorder, counting out a bag of marshmallows to share (Giorgie, I know you always cheated and had more), or jumping on the sofa as we sang along to *Grease* – life was always great with you two by my side. Love you.

If this is love then love is easy,
It's the easiest thing to do.
If this is love then love completes me,
Because it feels like I've been missing you.
A simple equation,
With no complications to leave you confused.
If this is love, love, love,
Oh, it's the easiest thing to do.

McFLY

Acknowledgements

Writing book one was easy – I didn't really have a deadline and was simply writing it for fun. Book two, however, was a whole other story thanks to the expectations I placed upon myself and the fact that life has gone a little bit crazy.

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To all my wonderful friends – you rock my socks off!

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Crumb, you are our everything. I hope you grow to love with all your heart, to follow your dreams and to laugh daily. Thanks for all the kicks along the way – they weren't distracting at all.

Firstly, on behalf of my wife and I, I'd like to thank you all for being here. It means so much to be surrounded by our family and friends on what can only be described as the most important day of our lives.

Maddy

Twenty-six years old . . .

Only fifty-two feet stood between me and my husband-to-be. All that was left for me to complete the transformation from Miss Maddy Hurst to Mrs Maddy Miles was to walk that fifty-two feet and say my vows. Then I'd be able to leave the past behind and look to the future with security, dignity and the love of a good man, knowing that I deserved to be receiving it.

But even though I knew it was what I wanted, it was still the most difficult fifty-two feet I'd ever had to walk. I knew I was walking away from someone who had the potential to take me to new dizzying heights with his love – a love that was mine for the taking, but never truly within my reach. Perhaps if the circumstances were different we'd have had something magical. It pained me to be walking away from those feelings, from him, but I'd said all I needed to say. He knew I loved him and that my love for him was unconditional, as it had always been.

Give me Joy in my Heart started playing inside the church, tearing me away from my wandering thoughts, and letting me know it was time for my entrance. One by one the bridesmaids calmly walked through the giant wooden archway. Pearl, the last of the bunch, turned to give me a

big wink before following suit, the little train of her mint chiffon dress floating behind her.

'You ready?' asked my dad, who looked incredibly cute in his light grey suit, and emerald-green tie – which I noticed was slightly wonky. His salt-and-pepper-coloured hair was mostly covered up by a big top hat, which bizarrely made him appear shorter than usual, even though it gave him extra height. He looked as nervous as I did – something I wasn't prepared for!

I straightened his tie and gave him a little nod.

He checked over my veil in the way Mum had clearly instructed him to – so that it creased at the sides and not in front of my face. Then he stood beside me and lifted my arm before hooking it through his.

'You look beautiful, Maddy,' he whispered.

'Thanks, Dad,' I managed to say, the nerves seeming to have taken hold of me.

'Feeling nervous?'

Another nod.

'You'll feel better when you see him. Come on, grip hold of your old man. It's time for your groom to see his bride,' he said, firmly squeezing my arm into his side.

At our cue, we started to walk at the steady pace we had agreed on – not so fast that we were almost running to the altar, but not so slow that people started yawning with boredom either. We'd practised it that morning to ensure it wasn't a complete disaster.

I found myself clutching tightly on to Dad's arm as we turned into the church and walked through its doors. A sea of faces welcomed us – all of the congregation were on their feet, looking at me with the broadest smiles I'd

ever seen. And there were so many of them! It was a wonder to think we even knew that many people.

During my wedding dress fittings I was told numerous times to enjoy that particular moment, to look at those faces, the ones of the people we both loved and admired, and bask in their warmth. Their love that day was for us. I'd been told to embrace it. But as I took in their faces, their happy smiles, filled with joy, they made the feeling that had been mounting in my chest for weeks tighten further.

That was it.

There was no going back.

A surge of happiness bolted through me as I spotted him, staring back at me from the altar, looking simply divine. My wonderful man Robert Miles – strong, reliable and loving. My best friend. I pursed my lips as my cheeks rose and tears sprang to my eyes at the very sight of him, looking more handsome than ever in his grey suit. His tall muscular frame visibly relaxed as his dazzling green eyes found mine, his luscious lips breaking into a smile that I couldn't help but respond to.

And then I stole a glance to the right of Robert, to see my other love, Ben Gilbert – kind, generous and able to make my heart melt with just one look. But he wasn't looking back at me. Instead, he had his head bowed and was concentrating on the floor in front of him; all I could see was the back of his waxed brown hair – the smooth olive skin of his face and his chocolate-dipped eyes were turned away.

His hesitance to look up struck a chord within me, momentarily making me wobble on my decision.

Suddenly, something within me urged him to look at me. Part of me wanted him to stop the wedding, to show me exactly how much he cared. Wanted him to stop me from making a terrible mistake . . . but is that what I thought I was actually making? A terrible mistake?

I loved Robert, but I loved Ben too. Both men had known me for seventeen years – each of them had seen me at my worst, picked me up when I'd been caught in despair, been my shoulders to cry on when I'd needed to sob. They were my rocks. Plural. Not singular.

Yes, I'd made my decision. I'd accepted Robert's proposal, I'd worn the big white dress and walked up the aisle – however, if Ben had spoken up, if he'd even coughed suggestively, then there's a possibility I'd have stopped the wedding.

Even at that point.

But, as the service got underway, as the congregation was asked for any reasons why we should not have been joined in matrimony without a peep from Ben, it started to sink in that he was not about to start fighting.

He was letting me go . . .

Maddy caught my attention on the very first day I clapped eyes on her. She looked adorable with her scruffily wild bob and red cheeks. She also looked as though she was going to burst into tears at any minute. I'm not sure what she made of me and my wingman, with our chubby faces and overly keen ways – well, actually, I think she was pretty terrified. But we won her over eventually. We're still not sure how we managed to pull that one off . . .

Ben

Nine years old . . .

It was during the arduous task of deciding whether a red or green felt tip pen was best for the snake hair of my Medusa drawing (a very important decision and not one to have been made lightly) that I noticed her – looking around the class with her big blue eyes. Her cheeks and nose were rosy from her walk to school in the frosty February air and the ends of her not-so-perfect auburn bob flicked in and out uncontrollably in a careless fashion. Her school uniform, the same as every other girl in the class (which was the same as us boys, but we wore trousers) – grey pleated skirt, white t-shirt and green jumper with our school logo of the local church – was far too big for her. The skirt hung way past her knees and the sleeves of the jumper were gathered at her elbows to stop them from covering her hands, both of which were clutching hold of her green book bag so tightly that her knuckles appeared to whiten with the strain. Her lips were clasped together as though she was trying to stop herself from crying. She was visibly squirming in her new surroundings – which wasn't too surprising seeing as the majority of us had stopped what we were doing and were gawping at her.

Our form teacher Mr Watson, who always looked like he was in a foul mood as he glared at us through his

wire-rimmed spectacles, took her to her new desk. It was the spot none of us had wanted – facing the wall and the class toilet – a double whammy of depressiveness. Not only did you have to sit looking at the sick-coloured wall that was thirty centimetres away from your face, but every now and then, if someone decided to go for a number two in the loo, you'd get a whiff of it – occasionally the smell lingered for a couple of hours too. It was pretty gross.

I'd wanted to go to her then. I wanted to make her feel welcome so that she didn't feel so alone. But nine-year-old boys didn't do things like that. So I resisted the urge. I just continued to sit and stare like everyone else who'd spotted her.

'Have you got the green pen?' asked Robert, my best friend who sat to my right every day. We were inseparable. Had been since our mums met in the local park when we were still in our prams and sucking on dummies – prompting them to meet up daily for tea, biscuits and some light relief from baby chatter. They'd revelled in having another adult to talk to after months of just Robert or me for company while our dads were out at work. According to my mum, Robert handed me a single raisin from his Sun-Maid box on that first day, and that was it – firm buddies for life. Well, they say it's the simple things . . .

Sat at our desk, I flustered at his question – I hadn't decided which colour to use for the snakes yet, but ended up handing him the green pen anyway. It no longer mattered – I was more focused on the new arrival. Medusa could wait.

'What you staring at?' Robert asked, brushing his blonde hair out of his eyes.

I said nothing but his beady green eyes followed the direction of my gaze.

'Oooooh . . . nice,' he giggled.

Robert lowered the newly acquired felt tip pen back onto our desk and joined me in staring at the newbie. We didn't say a word. We just sat and watched. She really did look quite nice, I decided, agreeing with Robert.

'Okay everyone,' boomed Mr Watson, scratching the side of his rounded tummy that threatened to spill out from beneath his white shirt, as he demanded our attention. 'I'd like you to say a warm good morning to your new classmate Maddy. She has just moved to the area from London.'

'Good morning, Maddy. Good morning, everyone,' we all chorused together in unison – a trick we'd been trained to do since our first day there at Peaswood Primary School. I wonder when, as a society, we grow out of things like that – you don't get grown-ups barking at you in the same manner when you start new jobs. If I walked into a new place of work and had everyone turn to me and shout, 'Good morning, Ben Gilbert,' with sickly sweet smiles, I think I'd run a mile. It's quite cult-like. But, I have to say, I thoroughly enjoyed saying good morning to Maddy Hurst on her first day.

I watched as she looked up while we chorused in her direction, and was left stunned when her eyes found mine for a tiny second. My cheeks suddenly sprang to life and I felt them lift into a huge goofy grin. She smiled briefly before her gaze fell next to me for a second and then back down to the ground – her cheeks pinking further. I turned to Robert to see that he was wearing the same silly

grin as I was. He looked up at me and let out a second giggle.

Robert never giggled. He laughed, but never giggled. The new girlish squeal he'd been unable to hold in was quite amusing.

At lunchtime Robert and I wasted no time in going over to Maddy and saying hello. We took her to the dinner hall (where we tucked into potato croquettes, dinosaur-shaped breaded turkey and baked beans – food back then was awesome) and gathered as much information as we could about the girl we'd decided would be our new friend.

Our hearts almost exploded when she revealed she lived around the corner from our homes – we both looked at her with open-mouthed grins, not believing our luck, as we wondered how soon we'd be able to knock for her to play out with us.

It would be fair to say we became instantly aware that Maddy possessed something different to any other girl we'd ever met – something that had us spellbound from our first glimpse of her nervous frame as the class's new girl. She just had this air about her, this inexplicable quality that drew us in like two obedient puppy dogs.

Not a single part of me wanted to fight against that attraction.

I was happily won over.

Immediately smitten.

Maddy

Nine years old . . .

I wasn't very happy when Mum and Dad announced we were moving 'to the sticks' – even if they said it was for a 'better way of life'. In my head I imagined we were going to be living in a wooden shack with no-one else around us for miles and miles, surrounded by fields of hay and smelly chickens – like something from *Little House on a Prairie*. But actually, it wasn't so bad in Peaswood – our house was made of brick for a start, we had neighbours, and there wasn't a chicken in sight. There was a bustling High Street, which was within walking distance no matter where you lived in the village, filled with shops and pubs (there were four pubs – a tad excessive for such a small place), and a big community centre at one end. The local C of E church stood in the middle of the busy street, flagged by the florist and the baker – the smell of freshly baked bread and cakes making tummies rumble as people knelt and prayed.

I had been nervous about starting a new school and making new friends. It wasn't like I was the popular kid in my previous class, but I had a nice bunch of mates who I was sad to say goodbye to when we moved. Like any girl at that age, all I'd wanted was for my new classmates to like me.

On my first day I was feeling extremely nervous and flustered as Mr Watson brought me to everyone's attention in his brisk manner. It's mind-boggling that teachers don't realize how stressful and awkward that moment is for a kid – knowing that everyone's sizing you up and deciding whether they're interested in making you their new BFF or whether you'll be doomed to be the class loser forever more. It's excruciating. I felt my face redden and my bladder weaken in seconds – it took every ounce of self-control to stop myself peeing on the spot. That would have been a great start.

Spotting Robert and Ben, once I'd finally plucked up enough courage to look up from the thinning brown carpet at my feet, both sending the cheesiest smiles in my direction, had made me feel much more relaxed. My inner turmoil momentarily gave way, enabling me to flash them a smile before, once again, looking down at the brown below.

Even though we'd exchanged smiles, I was still surprised they were the first to come over to talk to me. I thought the girls of the class would be. I assumed one of them would be happy to have someone new to hang out with, but it appeared not. None of them bothered with me at all on my first day. Instead, it was the two boys who took an interest.

I can remember thinking they were a funny pair, Robert and Ben. Robert, who I noticed was clearly the more confident of the two, wore his straw-like blonde hair in straight silky curtains that ran either side of his face, down to his cheekbones. His sparkly green eyes, splattered with flecks of gold, never seemed too alert – it

was like he was half asleep with two little slits on his lightly freckled face. Ben was painfully shy, but reminded me of Bambi – his chestnut hair was gelled into perfect spikes and he had these humungous brown eyes, which appeared all the richer due to his olive skin.

Thanks to their ridiculously big smiles and kind manners when taking me to lunch, I quickly felt my worry at being in a new school melt away. I was also thankful not to have been completely rejected by my new classmates.

Although, saying that, I was more than surprised when the pair turned up at my door that night, asking if I could go out to play as they both sat on their matching blue BMX bikes, using the tips of their trainers to rock forwards and backwards on their wheels. I couldn't help but smile back excitedly at them. It was the first time anybody had ever stood at my door asking after me.

Unfortunately, Mum decided it was too soon for me to be wandering the streets of Peaswood with two boys she didn't know. So as a compromise she invited them inside to play instead – once they'd called their mums and told them of their whereabouts, of course. The boys gleefully accepted the offer and discarded their bikes in our front garden without a moment's hesitation. I can remember looking down at their bikes and smiling to myself at the thought of how safe our new neighbourhood must be, before shutting the door and joining my new friends inside. I'd felt wanted and included.

My relationship with the boys kickstarted with great gusto and enthusiasm, whereas trying to strike up a friendship with the girls in my class was much more problematic. They were a tight bunch, made all the cosier by the fact

that they (Laura the ringleader, Michelle, Becky and Nicola) had a special name for themselves – The Pink Dreamers. A name that was also used for the girl band they were in. I can't express how much I wanted to be included when I heard that, but it seemed the friendships I'd already sparked up with the boys were going to put my chances of primary-school popstardom and any friendship with the girls in jeopardy. Yes, even at nine years old, social politics were rife.

They hated the fact that I hung around with the boys and would tell me so while asking if I fancied one of them or had kissed them. It was horrible to feel so interrogated and like such an outsider. Unfortunately, when my brain was taken over by some crazy acceptance-needing twerp, I decided the best thing for me to do would be to cut all ties with Robert and Ben. I'm ashamed to say I ignored them, sat away from them at lunchtimes, ran away from them at breaktimes – I figured it was the only way to make The Pink Dreamers (I can't believe I cared so much for a bunch of girls who called themselves that) want me to be a part of their group.

And I thought I'd succeeded at one point.

One day at lunch I was called over by Laura to join the girls. At last, I thought, I'm in.

Oh what a foolish girl I was.

The whole thing was a set up.

I sat on the spare plastic orange chair, ready to enjoy my first lunch with my new BFFs, only to feel the chair give way beneath me. I flew backwards through the air with an almighty screech and landed on my back with my legs in the air – white cotton knickers on display, my

dignity splattered alongside me on the floor. I'd never felt so humiliated.

Off I ran to the toilets, riddled with humiliation, only to be followed by Robert and Ben. Bless them, they even came *into* the girl's loos to see if I was okay. Not many little boys would venture into such formidable territory, without caring whether they were caught by our peers or not.

In that little loo our friendship was restored. We pinkie promised that I'd never be such a loser again and that the three of us would stick together as a threesome until the end of time. It was a deliciously cute moment and one that firmly cemented us as a united force.

I had my boys, I needed nothing more.