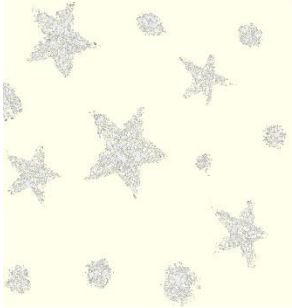
A trilogy of unique fiction stories

WHAT WE DON'T KNOW ABOUT OUR FRIENDS



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WHAT WE DON'T KNOW
ABOUT OUR FRIENDS

By

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*****ADVANCE READER COPY PREPARED JUNE 2023*****

Trigger warnings: These stories contain references to a car accident, bereavement, and coming out.

WHAT WE DON'T KNOW ABOUT OUR FRIENDS

Meet me @

The Dialog Tree

Tia's Inheritance

Meet me @

As Sarah quickly clambered over the stones and reached the edge, she didn't look back at her less than enthusiastic friend who had stumbled and fallen behind her.

"Look, Kieron, look! I'm on top of the world!"

Kieron, out of breath and exasperated at how much he was lagging behind his bestie, sucked some air back in his chest.

"Well…you're on top of Alvany edge, not quite the world is it."

Sarah launched into her best impression of her favourite online fitness guru as she started doing star jumps toward the edge, bouncing and laughing, seemingly without a care in the world.

"I made it to the top! The EDGE, Kieron. Hurry up over here, we can be on top of the world together! Hurry up, before the others get here."

Kieron wasn't having it, he wasn't rushing over the loose stones scattered around the edge. They weren't built for his new trainers.

"I'm trying. I don't know how you stand like that, so close to the edge. It's just so..."

Sarah let out a huge laugh at her friend's reluctance.

"Oh Kieron, I'm sorry for laughing. I just can't help it. It's just watching you struggle up here, it's like you're on your last breath or something."

Kieron had another spill over the stones and swore before replying.

"Thanks, Sarah. That's really supportive of you."

Sarah stopped bouncing about and was suddenly still. Curious even.

"Are you?"

Kieron replied quickly, without thinking.

"Am I what?"

"On your last breath? Or have you got more left??"

Kieron dusted himself off and rubbed his forearm. He suspected it was grazed, probably bleeding into the sleeve of his new fitted cardi. Kieron was starting to think this trip was a bad idea.

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Kieron answered Sarah's video call request on his walk to college, his forearm mildly sore from the fall on the stones the previous day. Sarah spoke first.

"You're alive then!"

"Eh?"

Kieron looked distracted. Sarah continued in her excitable way.

"So you're going to be in drama this morning?"

Sarah seemed unusually interested in Kieron's college attendance that morning. Then he *remembered*.

"Yes, unfortunately. All ready for you to throw whatever prop is nearby at me."

Sarah was parked at some red lights with her mobile fixed in the legally correct position on the dash and set to hands-free mode. With one hand on the wheel, she quickly threw the other up in the air, pretending to throw an invisible object at Kieron who cringed at Sarah's cheeky move. What would she find to lob at him in class today? Should he explain they were getting too old for all that?

No, he wasn't going to have that conversation again. It only encouraged her.

"Hurry up then, I'm nearly there. I'll meet you in the car park or…"

Sarah paused. Kieron noticed she was wearing her bracelet, the one he got for her sixteenth birthday. *Damn*. Even though they had been talking about it for weeks, he had completely forgotten it was Sarah's birthday *today* until about five seconds ago. Kieron briefly thought about how he left a birthday muffin on a desk last year for her seventeenth, candle and everything, as he turned and crossed the road near the supermarket. He had a pen in his backpack, a last-minute card and box of chocolates would have to suffice. He was taking her out on Saturday anyway.

"Sarah, I might be a bit late…"

Sarah impatiently tapped her hands on the steering wheel.

"I knew it! I KNEW you would be late today."

"Yeah, sorry about that. Listen, I got to go, just know I haven't forgotten OK."

Sarah was concentrating on the lights, waiting for the red to turn.

"Hmm…, OK Kieron, whatever."