

So look the summer's come again

Hello, mein  
name ist Kerstin! Aoife!!!

She's coming over, we'll go out walking, make a call on the phone

Dear Sadie, Alice, Sacha,

Mum was sorting out the roof-space last week and she found the Super-Valu<sup>1</sup> bags full of old letters. She wants to throw them out. Imaginary girls, I need your advice.

It started in second form. Before maths on a Monday morning the boy Lyttle doled out folded squares of paper with names handwritten on them. For weeks I watched and didn't know what they were. Then my friend Ben got one. He explained. If Lyttle likes you he'll tell the girls at his church about you and they'll write you a letter. After that I did all kinds to make Lyttle like me: faked an interest in Christian rock music, played touch rugby, laughed at his toothless jokes.

It paid off. I got one. Her name was Rachel and she ended her letter with three kisses. Lyttle said she was blonde and wore hats. I poured everything I had into my reply, went on for pages in my neatest cursive, crossed four capital letter kisses at the end, added a PS, a PPS and a PPPS. I gave the letter to Lyttle and waited. The next Monday he brought five replies, one from Rachel and one each from four new girls. It was like hitting the jackpot on the chip shop gambling machine we weren't supposed to play. I wrote them all. A week later, more wrote back.

Sometimes I'd get letters written by more than one girl, the handwriting and pen colour changing mid-page to **Hi Grahame, this is Kerstin, I'm sitting next to Aoife in English and she keeps talking about you. You should write to me. Oops, she won't allow that. Sorry Aoife! :p Lots of love, Kerstin xxx** Then I'd write to Kerstin too.

The best were the long letters, the endurance letters, Lyttle handing me fat envelopes stuffed with six, seven pages of A4, the rest of the boys settling for wee notes scrawled on graph paper, their kiss count dropping. It got so I didn't have time to read them all. They soon came with friendship bracelets and drawings, pages

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doused with Chloë, bits of scissor-snipped ties, cut hair, eyelashes.<sup>2,3</sup> **Writing to you is magical somehow, as if every word I put on each sheet of paper is worth its weight in gold.** I thought it would lead to them giving me everything.

Only I wouldn't meet the girls from the letters. Lyttle kept telling me what they looked like, how knockout they were. He kept trying to persuade me to come to the park after school. I told myself that meeting them was cheating, that what they looked like didn't matter, that the letter meant I could speak to them as they really were, with complete honesty. Twenty-two years later and I haven't shaken that last thought. I can't quite trust a relationship that doesn't have an exchange of letters at its heart. That can't be right can it?

Eventually Lyttle refused to deliver the letters. He said I was getting too big for my boots and the girls were getting mad. Everything ended.

So, what do you think? Should I let Mum throw out the letters? What use can I have for them? I've written you all one the last three years and known I'd not get a reply. Send me one or two words, anything.

All my love,

Grahame<sup>4</sup>  
xxxx

You're not going to get me through this are you? X4



<sup>1.</sup> Super-Valu is a chain of convenience stores common in Northern Ireland.

<sup>2.</sup> The original copy of this letter came with a fragment of friendship bracelet, along with a large lock of hair. There were some in the editorial office who found this somewhat unsettling.

<sup>3.</sup> The original copy of this letter also came doused in a perfume later identified as 'Fantasy by Britney Spears', a fragrance both unsubtle and pervasive which soon coated most of the other paperwork in the office along with the clothes and skin of those working there. We would encourage other writers making submissions not to follow Mr Williams' example.

<sup>4.</sup> Grahame Williams was born in County Down, Northern Ireland and now lives and works in London. In 2014 Grahame won a place as a fiction writer on the Jerwood/Arvon mentoring scheme and has been mentored by Jenn Ashworth. He spent the mentorship year completing his first novel, *Samson & Goliath*, as well as working on a series of stories related to the novel. The letter that appears in *The Letters Page* is addressed to the three girls who feature in *Samson & Goliath*, two fictional and stolen from other books, one 'real'.

Dear Sadie, A  
out the roof - if  
found the su,  
old letter.  
out. Imagine  
advice.



So look the summer's come again.

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Lyttle doped  
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He explained. &  
the girls at his  
write you a &  
kinds to make  
interest in Chris  
touch rugby.

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was Rachel and  
kisses. Lyttle &  
bats. I poured  
went on for p  
crossed four cap  
added a PS  
gave the letter  
next Monday  
from Rachel &  
girls. It, w