

## I Spy

"I spy with my little eye ..."

"Really?" I rolled over to lean on my elbow, and looked deep into her eyes.

"Really." Her gaze fixed on mine, uncompromising. "I mean, what else are we going to do up here? Not that!" No chance to draw even half a breath to speak before she added the caveat.

"I wasn't thinking of that!" I protested, in truth. I stroked her forearm.

"My dad's warned me about boys like you." A coy smile creased across her sun-reddened face.

"My mum's warned me about girls like you," I countered. "Go on then; I can't believe I'm still playing this game. 'I Spy with my little eye ...'"

"Something beginning with 'S'."

I sat up, chin resting on arms folded across knees bent. The rising of the Flower Moon on this balmy evening helped keep darkness at arms length. I considered available options. Earlier I may have suggested Snowdon, its shadow just visible from the hill on a clear day. Maybe the sea, which glistened and shimmered on the horizon. Perhaps school, which stood proud alongside the railway; or Salford, being swallowed up by Manchester's high rises. The sun! That would have been too obvious. I scanned the shimmering constellations emerging in front of me.

"Streetlamps," I said.

"No."

I contemplated the nearer distance. Stile, stadium, supermarket, satchel, Salt'n'Shake... all provoked guttural noises of failure. "You watch too much *Family Fortunes*."

She laughed. "You don't pay enough attention to what I look at."

I looked upwards, craving Divine inspiration. "Star?"

"No."

"Satellite?" A shake of the head.

"Saturn."

"No. Can you really see Saturn?"

"Yes," I lied.

"Liar," she recovered.

A pause.

"What's a light year?"

"It's like a normal year, but made out of feathers," I said.

"Idiot!"

Another pause.

"Space Station, International?"

"Now you're definitely lying."

"I'm not! It passes overhead once every hour and a half or so."

"But you can't see it."

"You can see the sun reflecting off it."

"Doesn't count... anyway; five more minutes, then my dad'll be waiting in the car park." She paused. "We'll still be able to see the path, right?"

"Yeah. Your eyes adjust to the light as it fades."

"So we'll be able to carry on I-Spy! Brilliant." She had now joined me in sitting upright, linking her folded arm through mine as she mirrored my pose. Her face glowed, rosiness illuminated in snatches of strengthening moonlight.

"Sunburn!" I declared, triumphant.

"I can feel it, definitely, but I can't see it."

"I can. It'll be sore in the morning."

"It's a fair price to pay for spending the day with you, dear," she sighed. "Give up?"

I looked around, scratching at my bum-fluffed chin, desperate for final inspiration. None came. "Yes, Stella, I give up. What is it?"

She stood, took my hand and pulled me to my feet, then kissed my cheek. "I Spy," she said, "with my little eye ... Someone Stupid. Just how I like you!"