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What sort of girl was Chloe Dow? Not the sort of girl who disappears without trace.

Five feet six in her stockinged feet. Shoulder-length blonde hair, very straight and fine. Violet eyes. Beauty spot on the side of her pert little nose. Famous frontal development. She was far and away the most noticeable girl at the Academy. People noticed what she wore. She took care they did; at school she only needed to hitch up her regulation knee-length pleated skirt half an inch to turn everyone's head, including the teachers'. Outside school everything she put on made the maximum impact, as if her body instinctively knew how to make it all match and hang and fit together. People noticed the way she stood too, like an artist's model striking a pose. They noticed how she moved, weighty and floating, supple and taut, as if she walked everywhere in a sort of hush – the tense hush of boys watching her; the hush of mesmerized imaginations as they saw her crossing her legs in the dining hall, or stretching in provocative silhouette against the classroom window, or appearing round the corner of C Block and walking in that way of hers across the yard to the hall. She was an athlete and kept herself trim and firm. At lunch times and

after school boys found themselves loitering by the track, where they might notice her glide round the corner of the bend towards them, all silk and shifting weight and blonde hair flying.

Garvie knew all this. He had briefly gone out with Chloe a year earlier. But that was something he didn't want to remember, with that famous memory of his; not something he found easy to remember, least of all now.

He frowned. City Squad's chief constable had come on the radio, appealing like Inspector Singh for anyone who might have seen Chloe on Friday evening to come forward, and despite himself Garvie thought of her again.

Chloe Dow had gone jogging and hadn't come back. It was shocking. But it wasn't interesting. No. The interesting thing was that no one had seen her. The most noticeable girl in the whole of Five Mile had gone running, and no one had noticed.

'Garvie?'

He turned to his mother at last and said angrily, 'How many times do I have to tell you? I was *not* her boyfriend. I went out with her, like, *twice*. There's a *difference*.'

His mother watched him go, not idly but quickly, into his room, and after a moment she turned again to the steamed-up kitchen window, peering through it at the rainy sky beyond.

'Please God they find her,' she said again to herself. 'Please God they find her soon.'