

IS THAT HIM?

By Kristina Rahim

My thighs are stuck to the hot, plastic bench seat. I'm going to look strange if I have to peel myself off when he arrives.

I was too nervous to eat any breakfast. Now my stomach is growling, and my head feels like it might float off my shoulders.

I grab a biscuit from my bag, even though they're not meant for me. I focus on scraping away the thin, top layer of chocolate with my teeth so I can eat the orange, jelly section separately.

Ding ding.

My heart races up my throat, nearly bringing the biscuit back up. Every time the bell over the door jingles, my nerves have a party.

Is that him?

Nope, too old.

Ding ding.

My breathing quickens.

Too short. Mum said he's taller than grandpa.

I scan the diner in case I've missed him. Both my mums are at the corner of the counter, pretending to ignore me.

Why is Mama pointing at her cheek?

I check my reflection in my phone. I've got chocolate smeared across my face. Not a good first impression.

He's ten minutes late.

I'm never late. Maybe we're more different than the same.

Ding ding.

My heart's in my mouth.

He's the right age. Right height.

I rummage through my bag, looking again for the biscuits I bought. The signal my mums and I came up with to tell him it was me.

Did my mums even remember right that these were his favourite ones?

Following where he's looking, I see them smiling. Mum's about to get up, but Mama holds her back, just like we agreed. I need to do this on my own.

He turns around.

All the moisture in my mouth disappears as our eyes lock.

Eyes that are the same as mine.

He glances down and reaches towards the box on the table.

“Charlotte?” he asks, voice deeper than I’d imagined. “Are these for me?”

I nod because no words come out. No one ever calls me Charlotte, I’m Lottie now, but he wouldn’t know that.

My palms sweat, but as he slides into the other side of the plastic booth, a calmness washes over me. Now that my donor is here, the man who helped make me, I realise, nothing has to change.

I’m not doing this because something’s missing from my life. The family I love are sitting at the counter.

But I have wondered about the little things.

Does he walk more on his toes than his heels? Does his handwriting slant to the left? Does he snort when he laughs?

My mums look like they’re on a rollercoaster, unable to decide whether to scream or laugh. But as I smile, they relax.

He follows my gaze and when he turns back, his hand dives into the box on the table.

As he starts to scrape away the thin, top layer of chocolate with his teeth, carefully eating the orange jelly section, I smile. That’s what I do. I know it’s him.

THE END