

**Cambridge English Readers**

.....  
Level 5

Series editor: Philip Prowse

*All I Want*

Margaret Johnson



**CAMBRIDGE**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE  
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK    [www.cup.cam.ac.uk](http://www.cup.cam.ac.uk)  
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA    [www.cup.org](http://www.cup.org)  
10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne 3166, Australia  
Ruiz de Alarcón 13, 28014 Madrid, Spain

© Cambridge University Press 2000

First published 2000

This book is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

Typeset in 12/15pt Adobe Garamond [CE]

ISBN 0 521 79454 4

# Contents

<b>Chapter 1</b>	A bad start to a birthday	5
<b>Chapter 2</b>	A bit about my peculiar family	14
<b>Chapter 3</b>	Life should be like a colourful vase	22
<b>Chapter 4</b>	Talking isn't always easy	29
<b>Chapter 5</b>	The wrong pictures	35
<b>Chapter 6</b>	Hill View House	40
<b>Chapter 7</b>	Alone with Brad	49
<b>Chapter 8</b>	Christopher comes to stay	54
<b>Chapter 9</b>	Wishes don't always come true	63
<b>Chapter 10</b>	Alone without Brad	68
<b>Chapter 11</b>	Alex Faye – children's writer	74
<b>Chapter 12</b>	The two Bs (Barry and Brad)	81
<b>Chapter 13</b>	Coloured white	87
<b>Chapter 14</b>	Happy Christmas	93

# Characters

**Alex Faye:** personal assistant to Brad Courtney, at the Courtney Art Gallery, Brighton.

**Brad Courtney:** owner of the Courtney Art Gallery.

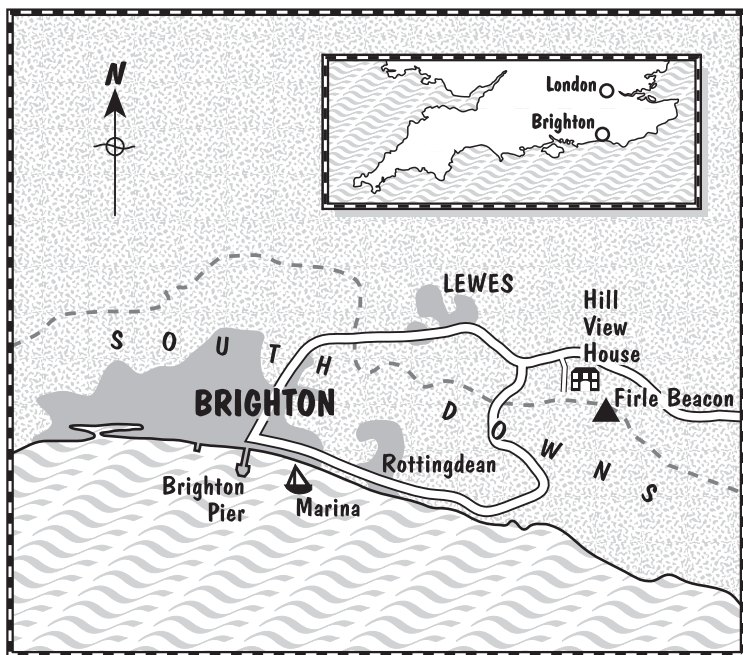
**Barry:** Alex Faye's boyfriend.

**Diana:** Alex Faye's close friend.

**Tania Stevenson:** Brad Courtney's girlfriend.

**Willow (Betty):** Alex Faye's mother.

**Christopher:** Brad Courtney's nephew.



## Chapter 1 *A bad start to a birthday*

I wake up feeling sick. This is partly because I drank so much wine with my friends last night, but mostly because today's my thirtieth birthday.

Thirty years old. I can't believe it. I just can't believe it. How can I be thirty?

OK, OK. I know thirty isn't exactly old, but it's a lot older than twenty-nine, believe me. You see, I had a long list of things I wanted to do before I was thirty. Actually, now I've got two lists, my original list and a new one, because three weeks ago my life changed forever. But I'll tell you about that in a moment. Here are the lists:

### List One

1. Travel around the world.
2. Write a bestselling book.
3. Buy a house or a flat, preferably with a garden and a sea view.
4. Give up smoking.
5. Give up headaches due to drinking too much.
6. Give up problem boyfriends.
7. Go skiing this Christmas instead of visiting my family.

### List Two

1. Have a conversation with Brad Courtney lasting longer than five minutes and without my knees shaking.

2. Get through a whole day at work without annoying Brad Courtney with my careless mistakes.
3. Tell my boyfriend Barry I do not want to go out with him any more.
4. Tell Brad Courtney I love him.
5. Get married to Brad Courtney.
6. Go skiing this Christmas with Brad Courtney.
7. Have Brad Courtney's children, preferably a girl and a boy, both with his beautiful dark eyes.

By now I think you will have guessed that three weeks ago I met Brad Courtney and fell madly in love with him. You might also have guessed that he's not in love with me.

Yet.

I work for Brad, or at least I do while his assistant, June Weatherby, is in hospital. June broke her leg when she fell off a horse. I wouldn't want you to think I'm happy that she's lying in pain in her bed at the hospital, because I'm not, of course. However, I am very happy that her accident has given me the chance to work for Brad. If June's horse had been a calm sort of horse instead of a wild one called Flame, then I'd never have met Brad and I'd never have fallen in love with him.

I work for a temp agency, you see. They find temporary staff for people like Brad. I've never had a job for longer than two months, and most of them are only for two or three weeks, sometimes even one week. I like the variety, the different people and the different work. Or at least I used to. Now I think I'd be happy to stay at the Courtney Art Gallery forever.

Brad, oh Brad. I know it must be almost time to get up,

but as it's my birthday I'm allowing myself to stay in bed for a little longer to dream about him. Brad's so handsome, so clever, so important. He's also so attached to his perfect girlfriend, Tania. Life just isn't fair.

After a while I carefully open my eyes and look at the clock. Five past ten. *Five past ten!* I'm an hour late!

I jump out of bed and quickly get dressed. Brad Courtney might be handsome, clever and important, but he also has a habit of being cross. I'm in serious trouble.

Again.

In the three weeks I've been working at the art gallery, I've already been late four times. And how will I ever marry Brad and have his children if he asks me to leave my job and I never see him again?

'Shoes, shoes!' I cry as I run from the bedroom, trying to brush my hair and button up my blouse at the same time, almost tripping over as I go. The living room's untidy with the remains of the small party I held last night. There are wine glasses, wine bottles, chocolate papers . . . but no shoes.

'Think, Alex, think!' I tell myself, holding my head. Then I see one shoe underneath the sofa. *One* shoe. Where's the other one?

'Oh hell!' I go back into the bedroom with one shoe on and eventually find the other one hiding under the bed. I quickly put it on and run to the front door. There's a pile of birthday cards on the doormat and I pick them up and run to catch the bus.

I often walk to work. It takes about twenty minutes or so, but it's a nice walk through the park and then along the seafront into the centre of Brighton. I like it at all times of

the year. Last winter there was even snow on the beach! But this morning there's no time for a pleasant walk, and luckily for me there's a bus coming down the hill. I put my hand out to stop it.

'Where are you going, love?' The bus driver smiles at me. So do the other passengers. Either everyone's being very friendly, or . . . I look down at my clothes and realise my coat's buttoned up wrongly: on one side it's dragging on the floor and on the other side it's lifted up to my knees. I smile at everybody, pretending to be perfectly happy to wear my coat like that, and take a seat right at the back of the bus. Then I sigh and close my eyes. What a way to start a birthday: tired, ill, embarrassed and late for work. Still, at least I've been sent plenty of birthday cards. Unless they're all Christmas cards and everybody's forgotten my birthday!

The first one I open is a birthday card from my brother, Rob. 'I can't think of you as being thirty,' it says on the front. And inside is, 'without dying of laughter.' There's a badge attached to the front. 'Thirty today!' it says. Well, I won't be wearing that.

The card from Mum and Dad isn't much better. There's a note inside written in Mum's untidy handwriting. 'Thirty years old! I can't believe so much time has passed. It almost makes me feel old.' Fantastic.

I search the pile of envelopes to find a card that might be a bit more cheerful and recognise the handwriting of my friend Susan. 'Beauty Queen,' it says on the front of the card. That's better, even if it isn't true. I suppose I'm almost pretty, but I'm certainly not beautiful. Especially when I've got a headache and I haven't had time to put any make-up on.



I open the card. 'Wishing you all you wish for yourself in the year ahead,' Susan has written.

Frowning, I put the cards back into my bag. My friends have very clear ideas about what they want from life. Susan wants to be an office manager, Diana wants to save the world and Kerry wants to be a famous dancer. They all care about their work a lot. Whereas I just do a little of this and a little of that without ever getting very far.

Perhaps it's time to change all that. Perhaps I should make up my mind to do the things on both my lists in the year ahead. Yes, why not? After all, I might not be interested in being an office manager or a dancer, but I *am* interested in Brad Courtney. Very interested. OK, so I've only known him for three weeks, but what difference does that make? I fell in love with him at first sight, at the job interview.

Yes. This time next year I'll be married. To Brad. I'll also be finishing off my bestselling book before going on a skiing holiday over Christmas. With Brad. And while we're on holiday, we'll try to make a baby. No, two babies: twins. A son and daughter. A little Brad and a little Bradette.

'Weren't you getting off here, love?' the bus driver calls out to me kindly, and I get quickly to my feet.

'Oh, yes! Yes, thank you.' How can I have been so busy with my daydreams that I almost travelled past my bus stop? Aren't I late enough already?

'Have a good day, love,' the driver says just before the bus doors close, and looking back I see he's laughing.

The Courtney Art Gallery is in Ship Street, just off the seafront. When I get there it's almost half past ten. I stop a few metres away and take a few deep breaths, then I walk

up to the door. But the door won't open. The gallery's locked. Amazed, I stand there and look through the window. The gallery is never closed on Monday mornings. Where's Brad?

I stand there worrying for a while, and then suddenly I see a familiar face next to mine in the glass.

'Brad!' I turn, my face going red as it often does when I'm near him. Oh, how I wish it didn't! But he's so attractive and I like him so much it makes me feel nervous. And when I feel nervous I either can't think of anything to say or I say the wrong thing and end up looking stupid. Today though, I'm too worried about Brad to think about myself. He looks tired and ill, and his face is very pale.

'I'm so sorry, Alex,' he is saying. 'You've been here since nine o'clock.'

'Er . . .' I say, wondering whether I should explain about being late myself.

'It was very good of you to wait,' he continues, and I shut up. Well, it won't harm anyone if he thinks I've been waiting outside the gallery for one and a half hours, will it? And he'll never know I was late.

'Come on,' he says, 'I'll buy you a coffee to apologise.'

'Er, thanks,' I say, but he's already walking quickly away.

I run after him, wondering whether I should ask what has happened, or whether I should just wait until he tells me. But what if he doesn't tell me? I'll die of curiosity.

'Er . . .' I say, running after him along the street, 'is . . . everything all right?'

'No,' he answers, walking quickly on.

'Oh,' I say, and because I can't think of anything else to

say after that, I remain quiet until we're seated at a table in the Sea View Café at the end of the street.

We order coffee and, when it arrives, Brad drinks his silently for a while before looking at me across the table.

'Alex,' he says seriously, 'I have a very important question to ask you.'

I swallow, feeling nervous again. He's going to ask me out to dinner. He is. Brad Courtney's going to ask me out on a date! Perhaps he knows it's my birthday!

'Y-yes?' I say in a shaking voice, and he looks at me with his beautiful dark eyes.

'Why are you wearing one black shoe and one white shoe?' he asks.

'What?' I say. For a long moment I don't understand him, and then he begins to laugh. Loudly. I look nervously down at my feet and see that it's true. On my left foot I'm wearing a black shoe, and on my right foot I'm wearing a white shoe. I remember the laughter of the bus driver and the smiles of the other passengers and I understand suddenly why they were so amused.

'Oh, no,' I groan, putting down my coffee cup. I close my eyes, covering my face with my hands. Brad's still laughing, and for a horrible moment I imagine myself at our wedding. There I am at the church in a white wedding dress. I'm walking with my father towards Brad, and all the guests are turning to look at me. Brad turns to look at me too, smiling. Then suddenly he starts to laugh, exactly as he's laughing now. I look down at my feet. There they are, at the bottom of my beautiful wedding dress, one in a white shoe and the other in a black shoe. And suddenly all

the guests are laughing – even the priest’s laughing – and my face is turning bright red.

‘Oh, that’s so funny,’ Brad’s saying now. ‘Thank you, Alex, you’ve quite cheered me up.’

‘All right,’ I say, my face really red now.

‘Is it the latest fashion?’ he asks. ‘If I go back outside will I see other people wearing different coloured shoes? One red shoe and one brown shoe perhaps? Or what about one green and one blue?’ He begins to laugh again and I sit and look at him. I try to make myself hate him, but I can’t do it.

‘Why were you late this morning?’ I ask, and immediately he stops laughing and drinks some more of his coffee.

Before he can answer, the café door opens, bringing in both a man and the wind straight from the sea. I recognise the man. It’s Arthur Grant, one of the gallery artists. He paints landscapes and is one of Brad’s most successful clients. This is probably one of the reasons why Brad’s always so friendly towards him.

‘Arthur!’ Brad’s calling out to him, ‘Good to see you! Let me buy you a coffee!’

Arthur Grant is never a happy man, but today he looks angry as well as unhappy. ‘Where have you been?’ he demands. ‘I’ve been trying to get into the gallery ever since nine o’clock this morning! There was nobody there!’

Brad looks at me across the table. My face goes red again.

‘I’m so sorry, Arthur,’ Brad says. ‘Staff problems. Quite unavoidable. Please, sit down and have a coffee.’

‘No, thank you,’ Arthur says coldly. ‘I only came to tell

you I won't be showing my paintings next month after all.'

'What?' Brad gasps.

'I won't be showing my paintings at the Courtney Art Gallery next month. Or any other month. There you are, I've told you. Good day.' Arthur turns away.

'But, Arthur,' Brad calls after him. 'Arthur!' But Arthur Grant has already gone.

Now it's Brad's turn to cover his face with his hands. 'I don't believe this,' he groans. 'How bad can a day get?'

There's silence for a while, and then, stupidly, I decide to speak. 'I wonder why he's decided to cancel the exhibition.'

Brad looks at me, and immediately I wish I had remained silent. 'Exactly what time did you arrive at work today, Alex?' he asks.

I look down at the table. 'Oh, er . . . more or less . . .'

'Just before I arrived myself?' Brad helps me out, and I nod my head, miserably.

There's silence for a while, then finally Brad speaks. 'Come back June Weatherby,' he says cruelly. '*Please.*' He finishes his coffee and walks to the door. 'Take the rest of the day off,' he says. 'And, Alex, make sure you get an early night tonight, won't you?' Then he turns and walks from the café, leaving me to pay the bill.