

Just One Second

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Isabella Wijsman

For **Carmen**, who was the inspiration for this book

and

For my amazing friends '**de Harde Kern**' who supported me every day to share this idea with
the world

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1.

‘Won’t you look at her, such a beauty! Hey gorgeous, how you doin’?’

Carola couldn’t remember a time where she didn’t hate this part. To arrive at school on time, while everyone including them, was there. The earlier she arrived, the more likely it was they hadn’t arrived yet. This she figured out a while ago but unfortunately, she wasn’t always early enough. If she made it to the schoolyard, they wouldn’t bother her. Her friends would make sure she was out of sight because they knew she wasn’t into it. Carola knew she wasn’t bad looking but she still didn’t like them commenting on it.

Today she was late so the roads to the schoolyard were packed with students from different schools, there were a few schools cramped together. She knew how to navigate her bike well but even she had to give up at some point because there were just too many students everywhere so she walked the rest of the way with her bike in hand. She felt them before she saw them in the corner of her eyes, she never looked straight at them, the boys from the A.L.C. It’s like they were waiting to play with her because they were always there, no matter if classes had started or not. They seemed cute enough and Carola really didn’t get why she felt so flustered and embarrassed, she just did. She had almost passed them when they saw her in the crowd.

Bastian started right away with a crooked smile to her and his elbow to his neighbor Steve.

‘There she is, our own supermodel. Guys have you met my girlfriend yet?’

‘Oh come on Bastian! You and I both know this beauty and I have been dating for quite some time now, see you later darling!’ Steve said.

Carola just pretended she didn’t hear them and walked away as fast as she could to school. Just a few more steps and she’d be safe. That’s when she felt a hand on her arm holding her back softly. She looked to the side and saw Justin standing beside her. She had not noticed him following her away from his friends because she was so focused on not paying attention to them. He was still looking at her and said,

‘Sorry for that, they just can’t help themselves. Part of me can’t blame them though, you are very beautiful but that doesn’t give them the right to make you feel uncomfortable so again, sorry. Can I make it up to you sometime?’

He hadn’t looked away once and for some reason, Carola couldn’t as well. The look in his eyes was confusing, there was sweetness in it but also something she just couldn’t place. She didn’t know how to feel about it. His hand was still on her arm like a hot poke she didn’t dare move but desperately wanted to

shake off. As if he heard her thoughts, he took his hand from her arm, but he kept looking at her. Carola wanted to leave right now but realized he was waiting for an answer so a little reluctant she said vaguely, 'Yeah alright, gotta get to school now though.'

She turned and walked away, Justin let her without saying anything else only now, he had a little smile on his face. When Carola looked back, he was gone again between all the students

Finally, she made it to the schoolyard and went to put her bike away. Her two best friends, Dice and Sarah, were waiting for her when she got out. Dice was a walking fashion and style queen, no hair was ever out of place and she was always wearing the newest fashion trends and the latest hairdo or color. Sarah was a bit less extravagant but still definitely noticeable to anyone who saw her. For some reason, Carola always felt a bit like the ugly duckling when she was with them, although she knew they'd never let her say that out loud.

Carola knew Dice never missed anything, so she wasn't too surprised when she said,

'Look who's got her flirt on! Did you really think I didn't see you talking to that delicious hottie! What did he say and how? Tell me everything!!'

Carola really didn't feel like reliving that moment, so she answered a bit dismissive,

'He asked me out I think, that's all.'

Both girls looked stunned and surprised but decided against asking more questions. Dice looked like she wanted to but was silenced by a look from Sarah. They knew her for a long time and had figured out early on that Carola just didn't talk about these things often and/or enthusiastically. Sarah knew they had a better chance of getting more information if they waited a bit longer. They walked into the school, ready for another seriously boring day at school.

2.

She was speeding all the way there, but Bella knew she was gonna be late and she just hated to be late on the best hour of the week, her singing lessons. She'd decided to swing by her home at the last minute and change clothes. She really shouldn't have done that because of course she then had to restyle her hair which felt like it took forever so now she was paddling her legs out to be there on time. She had practiced extra, often and long, and she just knew this would be the day the power ballad would come out just right. She had an amazing teacher, Max, who was both very enthusiastic about her but also critical and tried to get the best out of her which made her always wanting to do even better. She had practiced every night and in between whenever she found the time. The problem with the transition between her chest and head voice and the slight panic she got when the difficult notes were coming up, were getting less and less. *Today's the day* she thought, *I'll show you I got this song down*. She threw her bike in the bike-zone, ran into the music school and ran through the entrance.

'Heeeyy' she shouted to the concierge.

She knew the way to her singing room inside and out, she loved this building so much. In the hallway to the room, she ran into Nick, the guy who had his singing lessons before her. She liked him and if she was early and she heard him sing, she loved listening too because he was just, good.

'Hey Bella, what's up?' he said as she ran past him.

'Hey Nick, not much but gotta hurry!' she yelled at him. He smiled, Nick knew she was always a bit late.

'Max is in a short meeting' he said, Bella stopped mid stride and walked the few steps further more slowly. She threw her bag in a chair next to the little bench outside the room and sat down. Nick had come back and sat with her. He was a good-looking sweet guy with light blonde slightly curled hair down to his ears and his clothes were just always spot on. Bella always thought Nick was the embodiment of the word cool. He was the type of boy the whole school wanted to either date or be, without him doing anything for it and without it making him super arrogant. She liked him so she liked that he came back for a quick chat.

'What did you sing today?'

'Oh we worked on a song from Kane, but I think it still needs some practicing on my part' he smiled.

One of the other things Bella liked about Nick, he didn't know how good he really was. She had listened at the door when she was early and she really liked his voice and the way he sang but whenever she told him that, he would simply say "Ah thanks that's nice to hear but I think it needs some more practicing!"

'Hey Bella, the school party is next Friday, the day after our big night. Are you tagging along with your brother again?' Nick suddenly asked.

'Oh right, yeah, I guess so, usually a good time. Better hope they have a decent DJ this time though, last school party the music was horrible do you remember?!'

'Wow I had just repressed that memory thank you very much, don't get me started!' Nick laughed,

'but looking forward to seeing you there!'

The door opened suddenly, and the Director of the Music school came out, 'Afternoon miss, mister' he said.

'Good afternoon, sir' Bella and Nick said together.

'Alright here I go, see you soon!' Bella shouted while she ran into the room.

'Sure thing but if we don't, save a dance for me will ya!' Nick said with a wink before he walked away. Bella walked in laughing.

'There she is, my singing queen, feel like singing today?!' Max greeted her with enthusiasm.

Here we go, Bella thought. Time to work on her biggest love, her voice. Everything else would have to wait.

3.

She had almost made it through the day without having to answer the staring glares and questions Dice and Sarah were throwing her way. She'd gone to the toilet to be alone and touch up on her makeup. When she was done, she just looked at her reflection for a second. Carola knew people loved her beautiful face and long slightly curled hair and she was happy with that herself. She just sometimes felt people didn't really see the real her. For instance, she thought her eyes were anything but straightly aligned, she felt her right eye was slightly elevated and her lips were uneven, thick in one place, thin in another. It was these little things people didn't seem to notice, didn't seem to care for, they just saw her beauty. Her thoughts were rudely interrupted by the door opening,

'Damn you're so slow, haven't you looked at yourself enough already?!'

Dice, never the subtle one. Carola muttered she wasn't while walking towards her. The moment had come, they walked to the schoolyard, Sarah joined them and without a second jumped in,

'Alright Car, what's the story with you and hunkyboy?'

'And don't say "it's nothing" because all three of us know it wasn't "nothing" okay!' Dice added before Carola could answer with her usual vague answer.

'Alright alright, it really wasn't that special, but those guys were calling things again, so I walked on. He then came to apologize for them and asked if he could make up for them, that's all.'

'That's all? That's ALL?!?!' Dice just didn't know what to say for a moment, a thing Carola really didn't mind but then, Sarah found her voice again and said, 'Okay Car, that's not even worth close to a "that's all" and you know it. He's a hunk who wants to spend time with you. Why aren't you deliriously happy right now?!'

'I don't know! He seems nice enough, but I guess I'm just not really into it right now or something', Carola said, trying very hard not to make it sound like a defense.

'Not into it right now!?!?!' Dice shouted.

'If that piece of cuteness is thrown your way! You get into it, into him, right away! "That's all" oh my, you're mental you know that right' she said while walking to her bus.

'We'll talk later alright, I'll call you' Sarah said while walking towards Dice and the bus.

‘Yeah okay!’ Carola shouted, not really knowing what to think or feel. Right now, she really didn’t care, got her bike and went towards her favorite place in the park.

Bella was ecstatic, she’d had an amazing singing lesson and Max gave her some great tips to work with this week. Coming up was a student singing night for friends and family and Bella just wanted to blow everyone away which was gonna be no problem according to Max. This made her even more happy, so much so she was singing to herself on the bike and not paying much attention to the road. Normally nobody came out of the park around this time, but someone almost drove right into her. The only thing that prevented that, was the fact this person threw their bike the other way at the last second which made them land in the grass on the side. Bella saw the look on her face, she looked dazed and confused so she jumped off her bike and leaned towards her.

‘Are you okay?’

‘Uh, yeah I think so’ the girl said confused still, ‘I’m sorry, I almost ran into you didn’t I?’

‘Well yes but fortunately you decided to drive yourself into the grass instead’ Bella said with a wink and a smile, ‘I’m Bella, and you are?’

‘Carola, sorry again.’

Bella smiled again at her and all of a sudden, Carola smiled too.

‘Well, let’s get you up. You seem to have forgotten how to do that’, Bella said, still smiling.

Carola didn’t really know what was happening, *I’m a bit confused by the fall I think.*

Bella helped her up but didn’t let go of her arm yet, just to make sure she wasn’t gonna fall over again.

‘Alright, I think you’re okay now, what do you think?’

‘Thanks, yes I think so. You just surprised me, I think I was deeper in thought than I thought I was’

Bella burst into laughter, ‘Wow okay that was deep! How ‘bout next time I’ll shout out before I go past the park entrance to avoid more brain damage?’

Bella kept on laughing at Carola and sure enough, Carola just felt the need to laugh with her, *she’s right that was a bit weird.*

‘Thanks, that would be great! Just to be sure, when will that be?’ she asked her.

'Well I suppose next Tuesday, my singing lessons end around that time' Bella said, 'alright, why don't I continue on my way now.'

'Yes, do that and be careful!' Carola shouted after her.

'Me be careful? Funny! You be careful!'

She's funny, Bella thought, better pay some more attention next Tuesday.

Wouldn't want to almost slam into her again and hurt her. And with that she drove home.