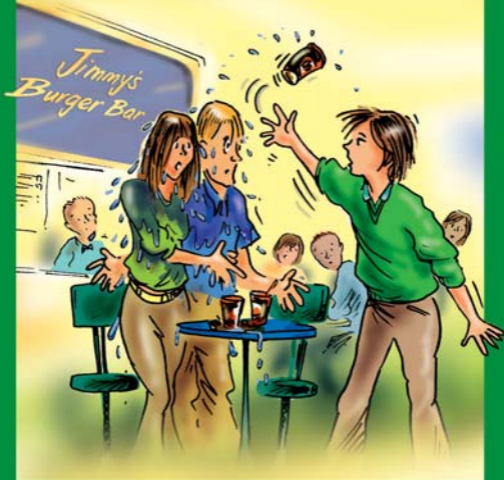


CRUSHES LO!



BY
BETHANY NEVILLE

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Bethany Nevile

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Sitting in maths class, last period of the day. The clock hands were moving at an incredibly slow pace. The tick, tick, tick was driving me insane. I was squirming in my chair, staring straight ahead as Mr Graham wrote out a string of equations involving random letters of the alphabet and tiny numbers, strictly for the purpose of making me squint. Squared numbers. What the hell does that mean? A square is a shape, not a number! They're just trying to confuse the teenage population.

The only thing stopping me screaming and **going full on Ozzy Osbourne** was that He — no, NOT Mr G — He was sitting in front of me, head bent over his book and pretending to pay attention to Mr G.

You know who I mean — there's one of them in every year. The guy with the perfectly chiselled looks, cheeky personality and bunches of admirers. They come in two different specimens — the Go-Getter and the I-Know-I'm-Hot editions. The example before me was of the latter.

My best friend Tasha nudged me and I tore my eyes from Him to glare at her. 'Ow!' I whispered, 'That hurt!'

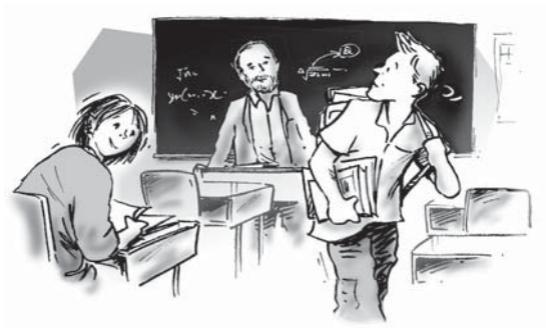
Tasha rolled her eyes and tossed her hair. 'Whatever. You're so obvious.'

I feigned innocence. 'I have no idea what you mean. I'm simply listening to Mr Graham's fascinating lecture so I don't fail mathematics this semester.'

Tasha smiled frustratingly. 'Sure you are, Carlie. Anyone could see you've got the hots for mega-watt-smile over there,' she said, gesturing with her French manicured finger towards Him.

'Shut up!' I hissed.

Tasha turned away, still grinning, and looking too satisfied. Believe me, I never look like that in Mr G's class, especially because, two days a week, Mr G gives me remedial maths. It's a one-on-one hour of algebra. I was not in the mood for Tasha's teasing. So what if I find Him somewhat attractive? He'd never give me a second glance. Not when He can have any girl this side of Year 12.



The bell rang, shattering my thoughts. Tasha packed up her books and gave me a quick wave as she exited the room with the mass of bustling students. Today was one of my horribly boring extra tuition things with Mr G, so I stayed in my seat. To my surprise, Mr G gestured to Him as He was just leaving the room. 'Excuse me, have you forgotten?' Mr G said to Him. Mr G pointed to a seat next to me, and my crush sat down, giving me a subtle checking-out look. I felt tingly.

'I'm glad one of you remembered our lesson. Carlie, this young man will be joining your sessions.'

I nodded mutely. My smile was a kilometre wide. I tried to watch Mr G writing on the blackboard, but actually

I was staring at a point above *His* head, watching *His* every movement in my peripheral vision.

Mr G is the only teacher in the school who hasn't swapped to a whiteboard. I like to think he's a **member of the dark side**. Mr G was working the **poor white stick** down to a stub as he enthusiastically covered the black surface with little drawings and diagrams. Suddenly he noticed the length of his chalk. 'Oh, I appear to have run out. I'll fetch some more.'

I rolled my eyes — it was boring whether Mr G was here or not. Then, a note landed on my desk. It was written on lined stationery and had about 10 words scrawled in blue ink. Okay nine. *Whatever*.

'Hi Carlie. Are you as sleepy as I am?' (Well, actually, it was more like 'Hoi Karlee. R U as slepy as mi?', but I didn't care. He could abbreviate as much as he wanted.)

My heart leapt as I quickly sketched out a reply. 'Of course.'

He skimmed over my answer; it seemed to take Him longer than it should to read two words. Maybe he's in remedial reading too.

He passed the sheet back, and eagerly I read his response. 'Can u help mi make a run 4 it?' I felt a rush of excitement as I nodded.



He looked up and smiled. I was floating. I waited a second before whispering my idea. He grinned. I opened the window and climbed ungracefully out, with Him at my heels. I did leave a note for Mr G, though. It was something about being sick, blah, blah, blah. But I'd killed two birds with one stone: I was out of maths and I was with Him!

Once we were outside, I followed Him to **the mall**. We were headed straight for Jimmy's, the trendy burger bar where He hangs out with his friends. He pulled me into a booth. We ordered drinks and He leaned conspiratorially over the counter. 'So. Carlie. You were so wonderful to help me out like that.' His voice was sincere.

'It's nothing,' I replied with a wave of my hand. Our relationship was up to multiple sentences!

'Rachel said we could count on you.'

'W-what?' I said, my head spinning. The only Rachel I knew was my older cousin. 'I-I don't know w-what you mean.'

Then a curvy senior appeared from the Ladies' room, and beamed at us. My cousin. She slipped her arm around His waist.

'Thank you ever so much, Carlie. I couldn't figure out a way for my boy here to get out of class. Then I thought you might be able to help. And you did.'

The tears in my eyes threatened to spill over. 'So you used me to get out of maths.' It wasn't a question.

They nodded, not seeming to understand that this was way uncool. 'Yeah. We figured you wouldn't



mind. It's for family, right? You got out of maths too, no harm done.' Rachel looked puzzled.

I picked up my Coke. 'I don't like being used,' I said, and doused them with the cola.

Then with my head held high I smiled and walked away.

'Hey, wait!' It was a waiter at the counter calling out to me.

I turned around.

He pointed to a stool and I sat down.

'He never pays for a girl's food on a date. You don't want him.'

I gave the guy a weak smile.

He **laughed goofily**. 'Tell you what. Since you didn't get any of that Coke you dumped on those two, how about **I spring you one**? What do you say?'

How could I say no?

'As long as I don't have to add up the bill,' I laughed. 'I'm not very good at maths.'

VOCAB

'Going full on Ozzy Osborne' — Ozzy Osborne is a rock star famous for his crazy outbursts of swearing and yelling

'A member of the dark side' — someone who is strange or different in a creepy way

'Poor white stick' — chalk stick

The mall — shopping centre

Way uncool — very bad thing to do or say

To laugh goofily — to laugh stupidly or with your teeth sticking out

To spring someone something — to pay for a treat e.g. "I'll spring you a coke"

QUESTIONS

1. Why does the writer write He and Him starting with a capital letter?
2. What do you think the writer means by 'they come in two different types – the Go-Getter and the I-Know-I'm-Hot editions'?
3. How does the writer feel about maths? What lines in the story tell you this?
4. How did they get out of the extra maths class?
5. What did the writer think when He asked her to go and have coke with him?
6. What was the real reason He asked her to have a coke with him?
7. What did she do to get her own back on Him and her cousin Rachel?
8. Does the story have a happy ending?
9. Do you think that what He and Rachel did was OK?
10. Have you ever had a crush on someone?

Crushes 101 is another in the series of youth readers specifically written by young people for beginning or intermediate level readers.

These readers are written with wry humour and a keen eye for observation. They provide easy and engaging reading on youth related topics. Each of the books stimulates discussion and broader investigations of topics from the reader's perspective as well as through questions listed at the end.

They also include amusing illustrations that support the text and a glossary of terms (essential for the older reader!).

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