**“CHARLIE”**

**From the play “The Hideaway” by Alfie James**

**CHARLIE:**

This girl asked me to kiss her today.

*(Short pause)*

I didn’t though. I mean – what a complete loser! She was just lying there stroking my face and wanting me to kiss her and I just said “Nah, you’re alright!” I mean: what a penis! She’s the first person to ever want to kiss me and I said no. Why couldn’t I just had said yes and done it? I wanted to. I wanted to snog her face off. Just like they do in the movies and run my hands down her…and make her moan out my name. That’s what a real man would do. That’s what he would have done.

*(Short pause)*

Other boys don’t have problems. They just do it and that’s it. Knowing my luck, I’ll be crap anyway. I’m crap at everything else. I mean – look at me. Even she said that my face looked like a smacked monkeys arse. Why do I have to be me? Why can’t I be normal? Why do I have to feel like this? I just turn into a gutless wimp every time she’s around. And I always say the wrong thing. I just want to be a kid. I don’t want these problems. It’s like everything inside me has suddenly got a mind of its own…

It wasn’t like that for him. He was perfect. He was everything that I wasn’t. He had that floppy blond hair and dimples that everyone thought was cute. Even when you were mad at him, you still loved him.

He was the best fly half in the town. He made my dad so proud. Every day he was out there with him training. He had so much going for him – the girls, being Captain of the team, he was so popular – he had it all. But no one realized how unhappy he was. No one realized how much he hated the attention. They just saw the picture of this great guy. But he wasn’t great. They didn’t see the temper. The mood swings or the times that he’d scream and lash out. How he’d hold the pillow over my face and how hard he’d punch me in the stomach. They didn’t see how he’d smash his fist in the wall and cry and beg me not to tell anyone. He used to make me feel so mad. I used to think that he was just being ungrateful, a bully and selfish. But I could never stay angry for long cos’ he was my brother. He was my hero. All I wanted to be was him. He wouldn’t have these problems with the girls. He wouldn’t hesitate and overthink everything. He wasn’t like that. He was perfect.

I never realized how tough dad was. I didn’t realise that he couldn’t breathe. Dad was always there in his face…watching him, telling him what to eat, what to drink, when to train. I hated my brother. Whilst he was suffocating, all I wanted was not to feel so invisible. I didn’t understand. I didn’t really see it. I just … I just you know…

One day he came home and asked me to play Robin Hood with him. He said that I had could be Robin Hood and he was going to be the Sheriff. I couldn’t believe it. He never let me be Robin. He said that he had been caught and I had to punish him. He took out a stall and stood on it. Then he put a rope around his neck … I thought it was just a game. I didn’t think that…that’s when he said it. He told me to kick the stall away. I just sat there and watched. I watched my own brother die in front of me and I did nothing. I was so happy because my brother wanted to play with me and he let me be the hero for once. I just thought it was a game. I was only seven. I didn’t think…I didn’t know…