

# **Glow**

by Tofer Carlson

Alumnus, Class of 2006

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## CAST OF CHARACTERS

JACOB, a college senior; leaving for St. Louis after graduation

KATIE, a college senior; staying near MA after graduation, dating JACOB

WILL, a college senior; friend of JACOB and KATIE

*(Blackout to dim lights, to remain dim throughout. Two actors on stage, looking into the audience as if searching for fireflies in the darkness. KATIE looks in wonder, trying to find the first of the year. JACOB looks bored.)*

JACOB: It's too early.

KATIE: It isn't! I saw one last week.

*(Both go back to searching.)*

JACOB: I say it's too early. *(sits down, leaning against a tree)* I can't believe we're out here. I mean, come on, we're seniors. We're graduating a week from today.

KATIE: Exactly! *(walks towards JACOB)* They're out here. *(looks into the audience again, and starts)* I think I saw one!

JACOB: You didn't.

KATIE: I did!

JACOB: It's too early.

WILL: *(from offstage)* I found one! *(Katie and JACOB turn towards the sound, as WILL comes running onstage, hands loosely cupped).* I got one! I got one!

*(Katie jumps up at his approach).*

JACOB: It's just a mayfly.

*(KATIE and WILL peer intently at whatever is in WILL's hands).*

KATIE: Cool.

WILL: I didn't realize they'd be out this early.

JACOB: They aren't. It's a mayfly. Maybe a mosquito. You realize that fireflies don't suck your blood right?

WILL: There it goes again!

KATIE: It's beautiful.

JACOB: Let me see. *(standing up)*

KATIE: I thought it was a mayfly.

JACOB: It's so tiny.

WILL: I've never actually caught one before.

JACOB: It's so tiny. I didn't know it would be that small. *(sits down again)*

KATIE: I know, I mean we use that stuff in lab.

WILL: What?

KATIE: The chemicals—the glow—we use them to make cells fluoresce.

WILL: Oh.

KATIE: It did it again!

JACOB: Wow. *(not facetiously)*

*(WILL opens hands to let it fly away).*

KATIE: There it goes.

JACOB: There it goes.

WILL: I saw a few more off the path by the beach.

JACOB: *(scoffing)* Beach. Yeah, awesome sunbathing on the jagged rocks.

KATIE: *(hitting JACOB, but smiling)* Could you be more obnoxious?

WILL: I can't believe I actually caught one.

KATIE: *(sitting down next to JACOB).* They have it easy.

JACOB: Fireflies? They live like, seven days.

KATIE: All they need to do is glow. It's like their pheromones or something. They fly around and glow at each other, and if the twinkle's just right, they know they've found love. Or firefly love. Not like us. This whole dance, finding the right words, the right person. Maybe it would be easier if we only lived seven days.

JACOB: And have been dead and buried 22 years at this point? I'll take the long life. Slings and arrows and all.

KATIE: I'm serious! Think about how much more we could live if it was only seven days. Everything would have to be compressed. Your first steps, laughing and learning to talk in a single day. Leaving your parents, losing your virginity—there wouldn't be time for a prom, but I think I'd be OK with that. And finding some better way—more efficient, more magical way—to find love by day three, and then you're in the clear. You have most of your life to spend playing and laughing with your soul mate. Think about it.

I mean the best part is you'd remember everything. All the happiness. I wish I remembered my first steps. I can barely remember four years ago sometimes.

JACOB: And you would have died more than twenty years ago. You'd have been dead before I was even born. I'll still take the seventy years.

KATIE: Whatever.

WILL: Too deep for me. I'm going searching again. (*Exit*)

JACOB: I can't believe we actually found one. I still say it's too early. (*KATIE is staring off into the woods*). Katie?

KATIE: I keep thinking about next week.

JACOB: It's still a week away. We've got seven days before we leave. And come on, senior week! Our last chance to go out with everyone.

KATIE: Seven days before *you* leave. We haven't even talked about it.

JACOB: What's there to talk about? I fly out Sunday morning, you drive home that afternoon. It's not like we're ending anything.

KATIE: Right. One-thousand-one-hundred-thirty-nine miles.

JACOB: What?

KATIE: The shortest distance between Cumberland and St. Louis. I googled it.

JACOB: I'll still see you on long weekends. It's not like it's—

KATIE: You haven't asked me to come with you. You haven't asked me if I think we're worth it.

JACOB: Katie. Come on. We can't talk about this now.

KATIE: Right. We can't talk. What the hell *can* we do? When can we talk?

JACOB: What am I supposed to say? That it won't be hard for me? That I won't think about you when I'm driving to work? Something to make it easier for you to end this? Because it seems like that's what you're trying to do right now. Tell me what you want me to say.

KATIE: You seem to be doing a fair enough job having the conversation for both of us.

(*KATIE and JACOB turn towards a splash offstage in the direction that WILL ran off*).

JACOB: Shit. Was that a splash? Katie. I—I can't have this argument right now.

KATIE: Right.

JACOB: Damn it, Katie. I've got to check on him.

KATIE: Fine.

JACOB: Katie—*(she turns away; JACOB walks quickly towards WILL's exit)* Damn it.

*(KATIE walks slowly to the dock, sits down, takes off her shoes and socks, and starts playing with her toes in the water below).*

KATIE: Shit that's cold. *(laughs bitterly)* *(to audience)* It wasn't always like this, you know. When I met him, he was so bright, mad for everything. He had this energy, like he couldn't sit still, or do anything that wasn't exciting. But that was it—he made everything exciting. And we laughed. About everything. It didn't matter if it wasn't even funny. He always talked about running away. Escape the ordinary. I knew it was all talk, but I liked it. I loved it. *(looks up and points out into the audience)* Two of them. They must have found a match. Look at them dance. *(She pauses, watching the fireflies).* Four years ago, this would have been his idea. Coming out here to hunt for magic that shouldn't exist for another few weeks. Now it's a chore. This childish game. Seven days. In seven days we'll be gone, and those fireflies—God they're beautiful out there—those fireflies will be dead.

*(WILL walks back on stage near the end of KATIE's soliloquy carrying his shoes; he is soaked to some degree from falling in the water by the beach)*

WILL: Jesus. Katie, you're glowing.

KATIE: What?

WILL: It was awesome by the beach. They were everywhere. I couldn't bear to catch them, so I sat down and watched them in the trees. It looked like they were searching.

KATIE: They were.

WILL: Check those two out *(points to the two KATIE saw earlier)*. It looks like they're dancing!

KATIE: I know. *(looks at WILL, pausing before speaking)* How much did you hear?

WILL: Of what?

KATIE: The beach isn't that far away. Jacob and I had a pretty good row.

WILL: Whatever—it's near graduation. You guys are going to be far apart. I was looking at the fireflies anyway. Not for nothing, but they were more interesting than your spat. Forget it happened. And besides, you're still glowing.

*(Katie laughs)*

KATIE: What are you talking about?

WILL: Look down.

KATIE: My god!

WILL: You're glowing.

KATIE: I'm glowing! *(moves her feet in circles, laughing)* I'm glowing!

WILL: I knew it happened sometimes, but I've never seen it this early in the year before.

KATIE: What is it?

WILL: Some microbes. When they move too much, they get excited and shine.

KATIE: Like fireflies. I'm glowing!

WILL: Like magic. *(moves his feet around in the water)* Now I'm glowing too.

*(both laugh)*

KATIE: Thank you.

*(Both sit quietly before continuing).*

WILL: What are you going to do?

KATIE: About what?

WILL: The argument. Jake.

KATIE: I thought you were too caught up in the fireflies.

WILL: I lied.

KATIE: I don't even know.

WILL: You've got time.

KATIE: Yeah. Seven days. *(pause, looking at fireflies in audience again)*. I don't even know. It never used to be like this.

WILL: What do you mean?

KATIE: Like the 'I'm too mature for everything'. Our resident dose of cynicism. He wasn't like that.

WILL: Oh.

KATIE: Something changed. The energy went out and he got dark. He lost it, and I didn't even notice.

WILL: I'm sorry.

KATIE: We moved worlds—if something wasn't perfect, we changed it. Now it's like he's paralyzed, while the world moves around him, and I can't do it anymore. I need to feel alive.

WILL: I don't know that it's something we really have control over.

KATIE: What?

WILL: Burning out. Some people just wake up one day and they're gone. Like they left something behind while they were sleeping. And I want to shout at them. Wake up! Breathe! Come back! Please, please come back.

KATIE: Am I like that?

WILL: Not yet.

*(KATIE and WILL and watch the fireflies)*

KATIE: Look. Two pairs are out there dancing now.

WILL: Maybe you were right. Maybe they do have it easier. With their glowing.

KATIE: We're glowing too, remember.

WILL: *(laughs)* I guess we are. *(WILL stands up)* It's getting late.

KATIE: I don't really want to go back. I don't think I'm ready to go back there again.

WILL: I know what you mean. The magic goes away again.

KATIE: It's all magic.

WILL: We just can't always see it. *(pause)* What about Jake?

KATIE: I'm done. He can find his car well enough on his own. Want to walk back?  
*(Stands up)*

WILL: Why not? No hurry.

KATIE: What's going to happen next week?

WILL: Who knows?

KATIE: Who knows. Know what? I don't think I really care right now.

WILL: Good place to be.

KATIE: Seven days.

WILL: Seven days.

KATIE: The life of a firefly.

WILL: Is it long enough?

KATIE: I think so. *(pause)* I hope so.

*Exeunt*