

The Calm Before The Storm

Written By

Brittany Graham

Based on the 2011 Tuscaloosa tornado

Address
Phone Number

EXT. THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA - WALKWAY - DAY

For a few seconds we watch a MAN (20s) and a WOMAN (20s) holding hands, walking through campus. Their names are CARSON and ASHLEY. Ashley looks at Carson, smile on her face.

ASHLEY

I'm really going to miss you while
I'm in class today. What am I going
to do without you for 9 hours?

CARSON smiles at her, squeezing her hand while they walk.

CARSON

Don't you worry Ash, as soon as
practice is over, I'll come
straight to your house and we can
make dinner.

They make their way to the Economics building, stand on the steps and kiss eachother goodbye.

FADE TO BLACK.

NARRATOR

This is a story of the calm before
the storm.

CUT TO:

INT. ECONOMICS CLASS - DAY

ASHLEY sits attentively in class, taking notes and drawing finance charts. She glances out the window, looking at the quad and Denny Chimes. She begins daydreaming about Carson at football practice. She hears someone whispering her name, snapping her out of her trance.

REBECCA

Ashley.... Ash! Ashley! What are
your plans after school today? Do
you want to join me, Carly, and
John and get dinner at Moe's? Bring
Carson!

ASHLEY

Oh.... yes, sorry Bec, yes that's
sounds like a good plan! We haven't

(MORE)

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

had a friend dinner in a while.
I'll have Carson bring his
roommates too.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOOTBALL PRATICE FIELD - AFTERNOON

ASHLEY stands there looking through the fence, watching the strong boys of the Crimson Tide run suicides, while Coach Nick Saban yells at them.

COACH SABAN

You have ten minutes left boys!
Only ten more minutes, unless you
want to keep going! This is what
makes us strong; this builds
character!

ASHLEY couldn't help but laugh. She knew how Coach Saban was; he was the kindest man off the field, but on the field was a whole other story. That man loved his football.

The football players, panting and exhausted, exit the practice field and walk towards the locker room.

ASHLEY sat on the brick rose garden outside, waiting for Carson to walk her home.

CARSON walks out of the locker room and see's Ashley sitting there. He has a smile on his face as he approaches her.

CARSON

Hey pretty girl, how are you? How
was your day?

He hugs her tight and kisses her on the top of her head.

ASHLEY

Oh it was good, I have way too much
Econ homework, but I'll survive.
How are you? Saban worked y'all
hard today!

She takes his hand as they walk towards the quad, their hands swinging back and forth.

CARSON

Gosh, that man is serious about his
football. But I'm feeling good. We
have to be prepared for A Day, it's
right around the corner.

CUT TO:

INT. CARSON'S APARMENT - EVENING

CARSON lays on the couch, talking to his roommates while ASHLEY does her homework. She turns in her chair and looks over at the boys.

ASHLEY

Hey, do y'all wanna go to Moe's with me, Carly, Becca and John? She invited us all to go to dinner tonight! We should go.

All of the roommates agree and talk about how starving they are.

CARSON

Moe's better be prepared for the hungry hungry hippos. Let's head out in about an hour.

CUT TO:

INT. MOE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Everyone is sitting at tables all pushed together, laughing and talking about their days at school and what they did last weekend.

CAMERA ZOOMS ON EVERYONE'S FACES IN SLOW MOTION, SHOWING HOW FUN EACH PERSON HAS WITH ONE ANOTHER. THIS SHOWS HOW CLOSE THEY ALL ARE.

The night goes on and they realize how late it is. Everyone gets up, hugs and says goodbye. They all go their separate ways.

ASHLEY and CARSON walk home together, hand in hand. They glance at the stadium and begin talking about their plans for the future.

ASHLEY

Hey babe... I know we only have a couple more months left of school, and I was thinking... What are we gonna do? I mean, I want to be together of course, but do you think God has our paths connecting at some point?

CARSON

I think so, Ash. I don't think he would've put us together if he didn't think we'd make it. I want you to do what you dream of. You want to be a lawyer... And that's what you need to do.

ASHLEY

But what about you? You're going to get drafted, don't you even pretend you won't! That's your future, Tink!

CARSON

I can be a football player wherever you're a lawyer. That's all I care about. You're also my future, Ash. I mean that.

ASHLEY smiles from ear to ear, looking at Carson as tears fill her eyes. Her heart fills with warmth. They get to Carson's house and walk inside, closing the door behind them.

The two lay in bed together as they watch a new episode of Friday Night Lights.

CARSON

I'm really glad that we hung out with everyone tonight. It's good to see everyone let loose and catch up with each other.

ASHLEY

Right? I totally agree, we need to do that more since all of you boys are going to be so busy with the NFL Draft.

CARSON

I can't believe it's already happening. I feel like I began football here this year. Where has the time gone? I have to be perfect... I can't mess this up.

ASHLEY knows how hard he is on himself sometimes, so she tries to lighten up the mood and change the subject.

ASHLEY

Can I be your manager? I swear I'll

(MORE)

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

do a good job Mr. Carson Tinker...

CARSON looks over at her and laughs. He starts tickling her, making her giggle. He loves to hear her laugh.

CARSON

If you can handle me for that long,
then you can be my everything.

ASHLEY leans in and kisses CARSON. She cuddles up against him and places her head on his chest.

ASHLEY

I love you babe. Good night.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. ASHLEY'S APARTMENT - MORNING

ASHLEY is getting ready for school and hears her phone 'ding'. She has a new email. ASHLEY has been waiting to hear back from a law firm in Washington D.C. responding about a possible internship over summer. She checks her phone.

ASHLEY

Oh my goodness, are you serious?!
This cannot be real! I got in! I
got the internship! I have to call
my parents!

ASHLEY frantic and excited calls her parents and puts them on speaker. She can't wait to tell them the good news.

ASHLEY'S MOM

Hello?

ASHLEY

Hi Mom! Guess what? You'll never
guess what I just found out! Guess,
guess, guess!

ASHLEY is jumping around her room trying not to scream into the phone.

ASHLEY'S MOM

Baby girl, you better be calling
because you got that internship in
D.C.! Is this what this is about?
Oh lord, let me grab your father!

ASHLEY'S DAD

Is my baby girl going to kick some
ass in Washington D.C this summer?

ASHLEY

Yes! Daddy I got in! Can you
believe it? I'm so excited. God is
so good, let me tell you! I have to
call Carson, he's going to freak!

ASHLEY'S MOM

Ashley, I am so proud of you! We
are both so proud of you. Hard work
pays off and you deserve this. God
is good! Love you.

ASHLEY'S DAD

Love you honey, call us later.

ASHLEY hangs up the phone and starts screaming and crying
tears of joy. Her hard work has finally paid off. But what
about Carson? She has to tell him.

CUT TO:

EXT. CARSON'S APARMENT - FRONT YARD- DAY

ASHLEY sees CARSON playing ladder toss outside his apartment
with his roommates. He sees her running down the street and
waves. ASHLEY comes running up and jumps into his arms.

ASHLEY

BABE! Guess what? Guess what I
found out today?! I got the
internship in D.C.! Can you believe
it?

CARSON

Are you serious?! Ashley Harrison,
I am so proud of you. I told you
that you would get in no problem.

CARSON is swinging her around in his arms, and his roommates
are all clapping for her telling her congratulations. He
puts her down.

CARSON

God's got plans for you, Miss
Harrison. You're going to be a
(MORE)

CARSON (CONT'D)

star.

The two just look at each other and smile. Ashley kisses him and gives him a big hug.

ASHLEY

Thank you, Carson. I don't know what I would do without you. I have so much energy now, let me play this game with y'all!

Everyone laughs and squares up with the ladders, preparing to toss the rope ball. They play this for a while, switching teams and cracking jokes about each other.

CUT TO:

INT. UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA BANQUET HALL - EVENING

After a fun day filled with games and exciting news, CARSON, ASHLEY, their friends and the football team head to a banquet dinner to talk about the upcoming A Day.

Alabama Day is one the biggest events during off-season in the history of Alabama. Thousands of people from the state as well as around the country gather together on University Drive to tailgate, socialize, and celebrate the introduction of the football team for the upcoming season.

The room of people light up and begin cheering while Coach Nick Saban starts talking about the exciting day to come in two weeks.

COACH SABAN

A Day is almost here my friends! What an incredible tradition we have here at the University. I am honored to be surrounded by such caring, enthusiastic people like all of you. Let's make this year's A Day one to remember, forever.

Everyone in the room stands, clapping, whistling, and cheering as Coach Saban stands behind the podium, holding up the University's Crimson Tide flag.

COACH SABAN

There is plenty of food and dessert here tonight, so make sure to eat enough. Enjoy your time here, say hello to old friends and make new friends while you're at it. Have a

(MORE)

COACH SABAN (CONT'D)

wonderful night. Roll Tide, Roll!

Everyone yells Roll Tide back to him as he exits the stage.

ASHLEY and CARSON sit at the table with some of the football players and their dates. They begin talking about what kind of parties they should throw after A Day. Loud voices carry through the banquet hall as the night carries on.

People are dancing on one side of the room, while others are eating dessert, chatting, and looking at the football Hall of Fame slideshow that is projecting on the wall.

ASHLEY looks at CARSON, grabs his hand and smiles.

ASHLEY

You're a part of this legacy, Tink. You are an amazing man, I hope you know that. I can't wait to see you play.

CARSON

Thank you, Ash. That really means a lot. Nights like tonight remind me how lucky I am, and that I need to relax and enjoy my time here.

ASHLEY and CARSON kiss and he gives her a side hug, holding onto her as they glance across the room watching everyone enjoy their night.

CARSON

You ready to go home? My roommates are walking back, I figured we could all walk together.

ASHLEY nods her head in agreement and holds out her hand. Carson grabs her hand, raises it up to his mouth and kisses the top of her hand. They follow all of the roommates out of the banquet hall and walk home.

CUT TO:

EXT. ASHLEY'S APARTMENT- DOOR STEP - NIGHT

CARSON and ASHLEY are standing outside her door, swingin their hands back and forth, talking about how amazing their night was.

ASHLEY

You know what's crazy? I have a
(MORE)

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

feeling that A Day is going to bring something really good for you. I mean, I know you have the Draft, but I really think someone will be there who wants to speak to you. I can feel it in my gut. My parents said that they've been praying for you.

CARSON

I don't know how I got so lucky with such a positive person... seriously. You always know what to say. These last few months are going to be great. And they're going to take us to something greater.

ASHLEY

You got that right, stud.

ASHLEY smiles and takes a quick glance at her watch.

ASHLEY

Ugh, I really don't want to go to school tomorrow. But at 4 o'clock, it'll be our weekend! Our weekend to finally relax.

CARSON

Movies all weekend sounds like a good weekend to me.

ASHLEY

I love you Carson Tinker.

She leans in to kiss him.

CARSON

I love you more. Goodnight honey. See you tomorrow.

He smiles and walks away as ASHLEY heads inside, stands at the doorway, and watches him leave. She was so in love.

CUT TO:

INT. CARSON'S APARMENT - DAY

It's finally the weekend. ASHLEY and CARSON are done with classes and they are relaxing on the couch watching TV with

CARSON'S roommates. After a couple of hours, a tornado warning pops up on the TV, exclaiming that Tuscaloosa needs to get prepared.

NEWS ANCHOR

THE CITY OF TUSCALOOSA WASN'T EXPECTING THE TORNADO TO PASS THROUGH, UNTIL NOW. LADIES AND GENTLEMAN, SIRENS SHOULD BE GOING OFF NOW. PLEASE TAKE THIS WARNING SERIOUSLY, WE DON'T KNOW HOW BIG THIS TORNADO HAS GOTTEN, BUT IT'S EXPECTED TO DO DAMAGE. NOTIFY EVERYONE YOU CAN, AND STAY OFF THE ROADS. FIND SHELTER IMMEDIATELY.

CARSON and his roommates look at each other and their faces go white. ASHLEY gets up and starts to panic. She tells CARSON to flip through every news channel to see what is happening, and every one says the same thing. The room gets hot, and every one begins to panic.

CADE

CARSON, MAN, WHAT THE HELL DO WE DO?! I can't believe they're just now telling us... When is it supposed to come through!?

ASHLEY

CARSON! Oh my gosh, Carson... I'm so scared. Why wouldn't they tell us sooner?!

The sirens begin to go off, screeching loudly throughout the town. The sky goes from light to black, the clouds thick and heavy.

The roommates along with CARSON and ASHLEY begin packing snacks, water, and clothes in bags and stuff them in the bathrooms and closets where they plan on hiding. They are all screaming and crying, tears streaming down their face as they rush to take shelter.

CARSON

Y'all need to take shelter, NOW!! We don't know when this is coming, hurry! Say a prayer... God will hear us.

CADE

I LOVE ALL OF YOU, DO YOU HEAR ME?!
Whatever happens, we lived the best
lives! God's in control!

ASHLEY is sobbing uncontrollably, clutching onto CARSON as he makes them both situated in the closet.

ASHLEY

I love you guys too! I mean it!
I'll see you when this is over!

CARSON pulls ASHLEY in and shuts the door. He really hopes all of his roommates will find proper shelter and be okay. He wonders to himself, how the hell did this happen all so quickly? Why was there little to no warning? He hovers over ASHLEY, grabbing onto her, tears streaming down his face.

CARSON

I love you Ashley, I love you so
much. We're going to be okay. I
promise. I won't let anything
happen to you. I love you.

ASHLEY

I love you Carson, I'll never let
go.

CARSON begins to say a prayer, trying to yell louder than the sirens so that him and ASHLEY could try and block out the surrounding chaos.

CARSON

LORD... LORD JESUS, PLEASE PROTECT
US FROM THIS STORM! GIVE US
STRENGTH TO CONQUER THIS. PROVIDE
US WITH YOUR SHELTER, LORD! WE LOVE
YOU SO MUCH, YOU HOLD US IN YOUR
MIGHTY ARMS! IN JESUS NAME, AMEN!

ASHLEY

AMEN, FATHER, AMEN.

They can hear the tornado ripping through the town, lifting up cars and spitting them out across the streets. Alarms are going off, people are screaming, and buildings are crumbling from left to right. They can hear it coming closer and closer, so they both close their eyes, tightening their grip to one another. And that's when it struck.

FADE TO BLACK.

