

Spoilt

ONE

A girl called Fatma was told to look after me for the day. She was short, really short. There was a silver stud through the bit above her top lip. Her hair was slicked into a stumpy side ponytail.

'What do you want to come *here* for?' was the first thing she said. 'This school's shit.'

She moved off ahead with short fast steps, like she didn't care if I followed or not.

We walked through the playground. It was empty. We went past some toilets and a girl stepped out from behind the door.

'Oi, Fatma. Want some?'

The girl held out a cigarette between her finger and thumb. She had the same side ponytail, but longer, and fake nails, painted with a blue and silver pattern. Fatma walked over and beckoned me right into the toilets, so we couldn't be seen from the playground. She took a long pull from the cigarette.

'Who's this?' The girl with the nails nodded towards me.

'She's new. I'm looking after her.' said Fatma. Then she turned to me. 'What's your name again?'

'Natasha.'

'What do you want to come *here* for?' the girl with the nails said. 'This school's shit.'

I shrugged.

'Where are you from?' asked Fatma.

'Hitchworth,' I said. I pronounced it Hitch *worf*. I didn't want them to think I was posh. I wasn't posh. Not at all. My mum was a secretary and we were skint. But I felt posh compared to them.

'Where's that?' asked the girl with the nails. Her face was permanently screwed up, but it screwed up even more when she said that.

'It's in Hertfordshire,' said Fatma. 'My aunt moved up near there.' She stubbed the cigarette out on the wall and threw it in the corner. 'She's pretty, ain't she?'

'Mmm,' said the girl with the nails. '*Quite* pretty.'

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I thought they were talking about Fatma's aunt at first, but then I realised they were looking at me.

'We'd better go,' said Fatma. She marched off again and I hurried behind her.

There was a boy sprawled on a chair outside a room, playing with a navy baseball cap. The sign on the door said: *Mr H Currie*. And then underneath: *Assistant Principal*. The boy grinned.

'Alright, Fatma?'

'What have you done now, Kevin?'

'Chucked a chair at Mr Wilson yesterday.' Kevin grinned even more and tipped back on the chair. His leg jiggled up and down. He had stubble and looked too old to be in school uniform

'You're a crackhead,' said Fatma.

Kevin didn't look like he was really on crack to me. It was probably just a saying they used at this school. He looked me up and down.

'You new?'

'Yeah.' I felt my face get hot.

'What's your name?'

'Natasha.'

'Nice to meet you. I'm Kevin.'

'He ain't normally that polite,' Fatma snorted. 'Come on.'