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Opening extract from
Dumb Chocolate Eyes

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CHAPTER 1

ONE OF THOSE THINGS

I never really liked Pete Cassidy.

I spent a lot of time with him, and I suppose you could say we were friends. But I don't think we ever meant that much to each other. It was a friendship based on convenience more than anything else. We lived in the same village, we went to the same school, we both turned 15 at the start of last summer ...

DUMB CHOCOLATE EYES

But that was about as far as it went.

I mean, we did stuff together, and sometimes we talked about things, but there was never anything more to it than that. In fact, when I look back on it now, I don't think we ever really *knew* each other at all. It was just one of those things, you know?

Pete would say to me, "You wanna come round my place?"

KEVIN BROOKS

And I'd say, "Yeah ..."

It wasn't supposed to mean anything.



CHAPTER 2

A PERFECT MIXTURE

It's hard to describe Cassidy as anything more than average. He was average height, average size, with an average-looking face. His eyes were a bit on the weird side – kind of loose and lazy and chocolate brown. But apart from that, there wasn't anything out of the ordinary about him.

His home, on the other hand, was out of this world.

DUMB CHOCOLATE EYES

It was a bungalow, for one thing. I could never understand that. I mean, what's the point of a house with only one floor? What's *that* all about? And, for another thing, all the rooms were low and dark, and they were all connected, like a maze of tunnels ... and there were *loads* of them. It was ridiculous. It must have been like living in a rabbit warren.

Whenever I went there, I could never work out where anything was. In fact, I got lost once or twice ... coming back from

KEVIN BROOKS

the bathroom usually. That was kind of embarrassing.

“Just off to the toilet,” I’d say. “Back in a minute.”

Only I wouldn’t be back in a minute, I’d be back in about half an hour. And then Cassidy would give me a funny look. Like, ‘What the hell have you been doing?’ And I wouldn’t know what to say, so I’d just grin like a fool and pretend that everything was OK.

DUMB CHOCOLATE EYES

I don't suppose it would have mattered so much if we'd been better friends. I would have just told him that I'd got lost. Then he would have laughed and called me an idiot, and I would have said it was his fault for having such a stupid house ... and everything would have been OK.

The good thing was, whenever I went round to Cassidy's place we spent most of our time in the garden, so I didn't have to worry too much about getting lost in his house. All I had to worry about was getting lost in his garden.

KEVIN BROOKS

His garden was *huge*.

I mean, the first time I saw it, I couldn't believe it. Up until then, the only gardens I'd ever seen were all pretty much the same. They all had a patch of lawn at the back of the house, a few flower beds, maybe a couple of bushes. But Cassidy's garden was something else.

Cassidy's garden was a rambling wilderness that seemed to go on for ever. It had acres of land, dozens of sheds and outbuildings, fields of wild grass and weeds,

DUMB CHOCOLATE EYES

trees, broken walls, bits of old statues,
ponds, greenhouses ... there was even an
empty swimming pool, hidden away at the
bottom of the garden. It was all cracked
and flaky and dead-eyed blue.



KEVIN BROOKS

It was that kind of place.

A perfect mixture of paradise and hell.

