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opening extract from

Zelah Green, Queen of Clean

written by

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***Zelah Green Queen of Clean* by Vanessa Curtis TRY IT!**

There's a new face at the supper table. A boy is sitting opposite me, shovelling up spaghetti and gulping it down without lifting his head.

The Doc is eating with her elbows propped up on the table and her gold bangles slithering down her arm. She has her beady eyes fixed upon the boy.

'Sol,' she says. 'This is Zelah. Say hello.'

Lib sniggers at this and becomes the victim of one of the Doc's frowns.

'Sorry,' she says. 'It's just, well, you know.'

I concentrate on winding strings of pasta around my fork. I wish that Caro was here but she's still confined to her room.

Sol lifts his head and gives me a brief glance and a nod. His eyes are unsmiling, dark brown with huge pupils. His head is shaved to a black shadow and his skin is about fifteen shades darker than my own pasty variety.

'Sol doesn't always feel like talking,' the Doc says. 'But that's fine.'

'And Lib more than makes up for it,' says Alice, who is huddled over a small portion of food with her thin wings of hair dipping on to the table.

I'm still looking at Sol. He has the most beautiful face I've ever seen.

'Omigod,' says Lib. 'I think our Princess has got a crush.'

I flush and become very interested in my empty plate.

'Don't tease,' says The Doc. She passes a small pot of yoghurt to Alice. Alice scrapes her chair back and glides out of the kitchen. She slips the pot into the swing-bin on the way out.

Lib rolls her eyes and shakes her head.

Sol works his way through a bowl of ice cream without once looking up.

'Do you want this on your own plate?' The Doc asks me, dipping an ice-cream scoop into hot water and plunging it into the tub.

I nod. My eyes have filled up with tears.

I'm stuck here with all these weirdos but I just want to go home.

If only I knew where 'home' actually was.