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I reading

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opening extract from

Threads

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It’s late afternoon, and Edie and I are standing in Leicester Square, praying that the unsummery dark grey clouds that have suddenly appeared don’t actually spill their contents onto us until all the people in silk and stilettos have been safely shooed off the red carpet and into the cinema.

Leicester Square is THE place to go for movie premieres. It’s got three cinemas and enough places to buy ice cream and hamburgers to keep you going for a year. Normally it’s full of pigeons and tourists, but today it’s full of red ropes, red carpets, people with walkie-talkies, photographers and us. It’s very buzzy and everyone seems to have their mobiles out, hoping to get a picture of a celebrity.

Most of the *Kid Code* stars have arrived and are milling about, posing for photographers and TV cameras. Other famous people and their children keep popping up too, posing quickly and disappearing into the dark of the cinema. They know it would be pointless to try and upstage Hollywood’s Hottest Couple, who are happily chatting to people near the ropes and pausing for TV interviews. So is Joe Yule. Briefly, I get a flash from those laser green eyes. I actually go fluttery. Whatever he’s got, they should bottle it. I suppose that’s sort of what they’re doing.

Edie might as well be in double maths, or chess club. She’s immune to HHC and even, it appears, to Joe Drool.

‘I suspected she was being bullied at school,’ she says, ‘but now it’s obvious. No wonder she hates it so much. This is her fourth school already, you know.’

I can’t believe I’m standing in the heart of London’s West End, within camera-phone distance of THE TWO MOST FAMOUS PEOPLE IN THE WORLD, and Edie is talking about school bullies. Only Edie.

‘What d’you think of my outfit, by the way?’ I ask.

She looks at me appraisingly. ‘Bizarre, obviously. But not bad. It suits you.’

‘It’s Crow’s stuff.’

‘No!’

It turns out that the strange nylon things were skirts. They look like nothing at all when they’re folded up, but as soon as you put them on they puff and billow into beautiful shapes. Each one is different. I’ve tried all six of them on, and tonight I’ve gone for the violet one with points shaped like inverted tulip petals. I’m also wearing the knitted thing I bought, which looked like a lump in the bag but morphed into the warmest, lightest jumper. It’s like wearing a cobweb crossed with an Arctic jacket. Perfect for this cloudy weather. And it’s somehow managed to give me hips, which (like cheekbones) I absolutely don’t possess in real life.

More famous people troop across the red carpet. Edie spots a junior Cabinet Minister. I spot two Sugababes. Then, finally, yet another car with darkened windows pulls up and a familiar pair of knees emerges from the back door.

‘Here she is!’ I squeal. Even Edie has the decency to squeal too.

Gradually the knees give way to a glimpse of THIGH and the bottom of the cherry tomato. Cameras flash. Holding firmly to the hem of her dress, Jenny inches nervously along the rest of the seat and manoeuvres herself out of the car. I can see why finishing schools have classes in this sort of thing.

She stands beside the car, waiting, while a fat old man in a dinner jacket squeezes out beside her. We scream to grab her attention, but everyone else is screaming too, so she doesn’t hear us. Her hair has been curled into tight ringlets. Someone has decided it

would be a good idea to give her lots of shiny green eye-makeup. And whoever did the fake tan got more than slightly carried away. She is orange from the hemline down. Not so much a cherry tomato any more. More of a traffic light.

Jenny smiles nervously into the bank of flashing cameras. Fat bloke beside her (her father) takes her by the elbow and some men in black suits with walkie-talkies guide them both towards the red carpet. From the look on her face, it might as well be the guillotine. Once she's there, Hollywood's Hottest Female gives her a brief wave of acknowledgement. Her husband flashes a smile. Joe Yule, on the other hand, is suddenly busy signing things for a group of fans and talking into their phones.

Jenny's dad works hard, on the lookout for TV presenters to talk to and grinning madly at anyone with a camera, including the crowd. For a while, Jenny wafts around vaguely in his wake. Finally, she spots our frantic waving and gives us a bit of a smile. It's hard to tell from this distance, but I would swear she looks almost tearful.

Then suddenly the men with walkie-talkies are closing in and she's ushered through the doors and into the cinema. It's all over.

'How d'you think she looked?' Edie asks. This is, after all, my area of expertise.

I try for a few seconds, screwing up my face with the effort, but nothing will come. When your best friend has just been standing outside the biggest cinema in Leicester Square, near one of the sexiest women in the world who happens to be dressed in form-fitting Armani Privé, sky-high Manolos and matching husband, and your friend looks like a traffic light, standing next to a fat, baggy guy with fake hair, there is no fashion vocabulary that can adequately capture the moment.