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My life as a bitch



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ONE

It was me and Wayne heading down Copson Street. Michelle and Dobby were there too, trailing behind. They were jealous, both of them. She fancied Wayne and Dobby fancied me, but it was me and Wayne, me and Wayne, me and Wayne all morning. He was leaning over and smiling, tickling me and touching me. I wasn't going to say no, was I?

We'd been trying to lose them for the past hour, but we hadn't really got off with each other yet, so we couldn't just push off. I knew what was going on between us right from the first but I think it had just been occurring to him as we went along. We were outside Somerfield's and Michelle and Dobby had dropped back outside the baker's when he reached forward and tickled the palm of my hand. It sent little shivers up my arm. My hand closed around his and we gave one another a little squeeze, and that was it. We were holding hands. We turned and looked into each other's faces and...

I was just thrilled. You know? That moment. I just love that moment. I could do it over and over again until the end of my life. I mean, all right, he wasn't the

first boy ever, or even the first boy that month. In fact, the way I was then he'd have been pretty lucky if he was the first one that week. But still – it just made me shine. There was the sunshine sparkling on the wet pavements. There were the people and the shops, there was Dobbs fancying me and Michelle all jealous because she wanted what I had, and there was Wayne smiling down at me, all pleased and happy because I was holding his hand. He was gorgeous. I was gorgeous. Isn't that just about the nicest thing you can think of?

He leaned down to my ear and whispered, 'Let's go.'

'Where do you want to go?' I asked. I glanced back. Michelle had walked up near to us and she was standing there looking daggers.

'In your knickers,' said Wayne and I said,

'Ooh, yeah.' He looked surprised. He bent close to me and whispered in my ear,

'You're making my head go.'

I grinned. He was lovely, he was mine. He put his arms round me and he sort of snuffled in my ear. I giggled. It made me tingle all over, but I was bothered about Michelle. I looked over his shoulder at her. 'I'll talk to you later,' I mouthed, but she pulled a face and looked away. I suppose I should've said something to her before. I was making a mess of things, really. It was a pity in some ways because I thought we might all be friends, and I mean, you can get on and off with the boys in a crowd, but if you fall out with the girls, you're out. It made me angry with myself, because I'd been

through enough friends recently. But I knew I wasn't going to stop myself.

I'd been off my head lately. And it'd been great, you know? Really, really great. The best time I'd ever had. Only, I was getting fed up. Well, not fed up – tired. It'd been going on a long time. It'd been a lot of boys and a lot of late nights and a lot of voddies and a lot of Red Bulls and a lot of e. That crowd, Michelle and Dobby, even Wayne – they weren't me. I'd even been thinking, maybe I'd give my old friends a ring. Annie. That crowd. They'd still be there.

But Wayne made me forget all that. I wanted him. And I was going to have him.

We ran off round behind Somerfield's into the car park. I was giggling. I was thinking, Here I go again! Michelle and Dobby stared after us but they didn't try to follow. We ran through the car park and onto the road behind it. We got round behind the wall and Wayne stopped and turned to face me and we put our arms round each other and we kissed. It was a funny kiss because we were both out of breath as well as being turned on, but after it was done we both let out a long sigh and pulled each other close. What a relief!

'I've been wanting to do that all morning,' groaned Wayne. I glanced round, but the others were well gone. I relaxed. He reached for my mouth again and this time the kiss went right through me. I made a little 'oh, oh,' noise, and that turned him on even more. I hung onto his neck and held up my face and ground myself right into him.

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'Jesus,' said Wayne. He slid his hands under my top and down the side of my bra. His hands were lovely and warm. I was underdressed as usual. 'Where can we go?' he asked, looking around as if a bed was going to spring out of the ground.

'There's nowhere to go,' I said, and I laughed because – I dunno. Like I say, there'd been all these boys lately. Everyone had been saying it. Annie, my best friend at school had said it, my mum had said it, my sister Julie had said it. 'All those boys!' I'd wanted them all so much but now, somehow, I was kind of pleased that there was nowhere to go. It was like, poor old Wayne, just his luck! I'd have shagged him up against the wall for a bag of jelly beans a month ago but times were changing.

Well, maybe they were.

I slid out from under him and ran off, laughing at him. I was twisting round to look at him and that's why I ran into the alchie.

He was standing on the pavement right in front of me with a can of Special Brew in his hand. I banged right into him, full on. I thought maybe he was going to get nasty but he smiled and touched me gently on my hip.

'Steady, steady,' he said.

I smiled back because...well, because I was it, wasn't I? No wonder Michelle was jealous! Wayne fancied me like anything. Dobby fancied me – I knew that, the way he looked at me, although he never said. And now even this alchie. I could see him glancing down

at me, and I expect he was jealous of me as well, because I had everything and he nothing. All right, he was just a tramp, he wasn't going to get anywhere near me. But still. I want everyone to fancy me. Not just the sports stars and the pop stars and all the boys. I'd like the old men and the young men and everyone to fancy me. I'd like the money in your pocket and the dirt on your shoe to turn round and look at me when I go past.

Then I thought, What's he doing? And I stepped back quick – what right did he have to touch me? Just because I banged into him? Wayne didn't like it either. He said, 'Keep your hands off,' in a sharp voice, and I said,

'Excuse me!'

'Why, what have you done?' said the alchie, and he gave me this shitty little smile.

I'd seen him around. I'd seen him on the bench by the flowershop near the telephone booths drinking with old blokes, and I'd seen him sitting in a blanket on a piece of cardboard with a dog on a piece of string at the other end of Copson Street, begging for change. He never even got it together to sell the *Big Issue*. He wasn't old, he was a young man. You'd think he hadn't had time to get worn down. He was still good looking under the dirt and the booze. He looked strong. He had nice hair, he had a good face. But...

'You're just an alcoholic,' said Wayne, and I said,

'Yeah!'

He gave us this crooked look. 'Give me a quid and

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I'll leave you alone,' he said. He said it like it was half a joke.

'I'm not giving you anything,' said Wayne.

The alchie glared at us. Maybe he was just being friendly, but he shouldn't have touched me. Then he nodded at me and said, spitefully, 'And your girlfriend's a slut, so what?'

'Get lost!' I yelled. That just made me so angry. So angry! Calling me names like that. I lashed out and knocked his can of Special Brew out of his hand. I didn't mean to. I was just fed up suddenly. I was fed up with things going all wrong. I mean! Everything could have been just right so easily. Everyone fancied me. I had Wayne there with his tongue practically hitting the floor. I should have been smiling my head off! But instead I had Michelle pulling faces at me and now this drunk. I mean, why do things work out like that? I could have fancied someone else, or Michelle might have been decent about it and understood, and the drunk could've been – I dunno, somewhere else. But it had to be shitty, didn't it? It had to be. It just seemed like everything I wanted to do lately had to go wrong because of other people.

I caught the can just right. It flew out of his hand and banged onto the ground. There was this horrible silence before my whole life vanished.

He was furious, you could see it in his face. He wasn't all that tall, Wayne was taller, but the alchie was a grown man and Wayne took a step back. 'My drink!'

he squeaked as it fell. The beer spurted out onto the road and he scrambled on his knees to get it before it all went. He got up and stood there shaking the can by his ear, slowly realising that there was nothing left. Then he got furious.

'My bitch, you little drink. My bitch!' he yelled. He was so angry about a little drink of beer. Wayne started laughing, because he got bitch and drink mixed up, but then he lifted his hand to grab me and I had to step back quick.

'Sorry!' I gasped. But he kept coming at me. He was falling on top of me. I had to run backwards. It was amazing – him so upset about a can of beer. He was about ready to pull my head off, I could tell by his face – it was all twisted up with rage and hate and horrible things. I was running backwards and he was still coming, so I had to twist round and leap away. Then I looked back but he was *still* right there, right there with his hands on my clothes. It gave me a fright but I still thought then that I could get away with a few steps.

'Wayne!' I shouted. I ran a few fast steps and looked round, but even before my head turned I could hear his breath right in my ear and that's when I started to get really scared because he just kept coming.

Something strange was happening. Everything around us seemed to be frozen. I was having to run really fast. I was thinking, The police station is just around the corner. I bombed up through the car park and onto Copson Street and then onto Hill Street by the police station. I could