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Adolescing, Chapter 2, December 1993, Chapter 3, January 1994

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December 1993

Prude

I went into Dawn's room because we never knock and she was inspecting herself!

Maybe she's sore or something but I bet it isn't that. It's just Dawn! She's always looking at things, like in Gran's garden, when she made us roll that stone over, ugh! A few minutes later she crept down stairs. I avoided her eye.

'Amy.'

'Dawn.'

I'm sorry but it's time she grew up! You have to keep yourself clean and everything but there is no need to look. I mean, what is so special about the dark wet places underneath things? It won't have changed since last time Dawn!

Princess

At school the worst thing was the changing room. I undid all my buttons except one, and laid out my games shirt on the bench so that I could put it on quickly. All clear? Now! Be quick, be quick but Dawn's looking! No, she's looked away. Ready now? Sandra keeps turning round! Amy and Julia, one on each side and now my arm is trapped inside my blouse. I'm going to the toilet to get changed. They all stared at me.

'Where are you going?'

'Nowhere.'

After half term somebody said, You've got to have a shower after games. I wrapped myself up in my towel but it didn't go all the way round. I only had one towel and some of them had three!

That must have been when I was still living at the Clifford Road Community Home because they never had enough towels and things to take to school with you. My little brother was with foster parents somewhere. I'd given up hope of a new family but Jill took me to a house in Wellswood. I watched television with the kids, Patrick and Gina (Georgina, that is.) They were nicer than the kids last time. I had to go there again on Sunday. They took me to the park and we played football with some other kids. I've already told you I'm hopeless at games but they kept shouting, Come on, come on! and made me score a goal. I was gasping for breath and laughing. Just before the end of term Jill came with her car again and said I was moving in with them.

I didn't go out much during the Christmas holidays. I don't know when you're allowed to go out when you are living in a family or what time you have to be back or anything. At least I got my own room, I thought I would have to share with Gina. In the evening I went down to watch the telly. They turned around to me and smiled. They were watching French and Saunders but after a few minutes I thought I'd go up again. My, you know, their mum stood up and shook hands with me to say good night. Then Patrick came back from his friend's house. I was on my way up to bed but Patrick called out,

'Hang on Dee,' (Cordelia, believe it or not! I was once middle class. Dad used to call me Dill or Dilly.) Anyway Patrick ran up the stairs after me, squeezed my waist and

kissed my cheek at the top, me twice the size of him (weight anyway) before I went to my room.

'Good night princess.'

Then he was watching the match on Boxing Day or the day after because it was Southampton or something but half way through he noticed me hanging around him again.

'All right, Dee?'

I thought I might as well go back upstairs but he got up off the floor and turned the telly off!

'What do you want to do tonight Dee?'

Me? What do I want to do? All we did was play Trivial Pursuit. He might as well have carried on watching his match. Suddenly the room was filling up with boys.

'Three one!'

'Whoo hoo!'

'Oh, who's your friend Patrick?'

'This is Dee, my sister.'

(Sister?)

'Sister? You've been keeping quiet about her!'

Lots of friendly boys crowding round me. I didn't know where to put myself! They were okay but I didn't risk coming down in the evenings after that.

January 1994

On the first day back at school we were getting changed for PE. Six of the girls stood round me in a circle so some of them were looking at me from the back and some from the front. I was trying to get back into my corner but they wouldn't move.

Whisper ('Why are we being so mean to her?')

Whisper ('Yes but come on! You know what she's like.')

Whisper ('It's for her own good really.')

Whisper ('There's no helping some people!')

I turned left and right and backwards. There was always someone standing in the way.

'Are you okay Dee? Do you want your things?'

Sandra went to fetch my kit out of the bag. She put it all down at my feet, shorts, tee shirt, socks, trainers. They want me to take my skirt off and everything while they watch.

Julia suddenly choked and spluttered. She had to turn away but the others closed the gap. I stood there shaking, holding my skirt with both hands but I couldn't take it off. Sandra said,

'Isn't she pathetic?'

Turning to look at each other, for a minute I thought they were going to rape me. I mean not really but, you know, like boys when they make you let them look. Then Sandra stood back and politely let me out. They went off but I stayed for a long time. Then I went to the toilet. I missed the class.

I told Violet about it before going home. She gaped at me.

'They what?'

'It doesn't matter,'

but Violet started punching the air and singing like a football crowd, 'LESBO BIMBOS BIMBO LESBOS!' Later on she was huddled up with Alice and Gretel. 'Hear what they did to little princess? We'll sick them!' They really do carry knives in their pockets, Violet and Gretel I mean, not Alice.

Violet and Alice shared my room when I was still living at Clifford Road. They called me the little princess because I'm big and you know, I used to say please and thank you but there was something I used to do that other girls don't do, even girls in care. I started doing it in the toilet. I could never go anywhere else even when I got my own room because what would they think if I started locking the door? I squeezed a finger into myself a little way then brought it out sticky. It felt like you'd expect to feel at that age if you meddle with your bottom half. It wasn't a nice feeling really but like other mucky things, you know, picking a scab or something, once you get started you can't really stop yourself. I pushed a bit further each time I went, and worked my finger around to make the feeling stronger and stronger till it got so strong I was panting and sweating and I'd, you know, come. I didn't think how it was the same as a boy coming but I know all about it now and, like I said, even the girls at Clifford Road never did that, whatever else they did. At the end I had to wipe all the stickiness off down below and my hand, you know, and put some deodorant on before I pulled the chain. I should never have gone there when the others were at PE. If you keep getting away with it, you know. I saw lots of feet through the gap at the bottom of the door. I hadn't been there long but I thought, How long have

they been there? I wondered, Should I go out now or should I wait till they go away? I waited but eventually I pulled the chain, unlocked the door and looked out at them. All six of them, Dawn Trotter, Amy Finn, Sandra Christaki, Julia Blake, Victoria Churchill, and Helen, I can't even remember her surname. Helen came round to our house on New Year's Eve, I mean Patrick's house of course. She spent the whole time making jokes with Patrick and his friends. Now she stuck her middle finger up in the air and put it in her mouth for about ten seconds so it was wet when she took it out and she wiggled it slowly at me. Then she put it back in her mouth and did it again. Everyone was looking from her finger to me and from me to her finger. I couldn't even get to the basin to wash my hands. I rushed out of the room and heard a burst of laughter as I shut the door.

I sometimes go to the library during break except I don't read really. Through the open door I could see Sandra and Amy talking with Alice and Violet but Violet promised to sick them for me, Sandra anyway and Amy's no better! They were whispering together and every few minutes they all burst out laughing.

That night Jill came round to see me at home. She was writing on her pad the whole time. She asked me, How's it going at school Cordelia? I said okay. She was in there talking with, you know, Patrick's parents for ages. Well, I know what's going on! They're planning to send me away again. Then Helen came round to our house again. She was getting off with Patrick. I watched them from the swing in our garden but all they did was snog each other even when they had a chance to, you know, do it. She looked really sexy, Hels, in her sports top with her belly bare if you like that sort of thing. Patrick looked younger than her but he's

older really.

In my room I took off my skirt and blouse. I looked at the shape of me in just my underclothes and tights. I don't have nice feminine hips like Helen. I took my tights off too, oh no I can't! but I knelt down by the chest of drawers and looked through my other underclothes. I laid them all out on the bed. Gina came downstairs dressed like this on Friday. Everyone saw, even Patrick and Dad, her dad. I tried on different bras and knickers in the mirror. They're stupid compared to Gina's and none of them match!

The next day I stood shivering at my bedroom door for an hour before I made up my mind. I listened to make sure that no one was there and walked out to the bathroom just as I was. I did it every day except when I was on. It was like the moment you walk out of the Co-op with a can under your jumper and your throat blocks up. Then you think you're clean away but the woman grabs you by the shoulder, that's how it felt when I met Patrick coming out of the bathroom. He looked across at me just in my bra and those knickers. I went on past him in a cold sweat and when I was in there I slid down onto the floor squirming with embarrassment. Do you have any idea how that feels? Fantastic!

On Saturday he came into my room and said, Come on Dee, it's United v Chester. I said no but he grinned and said, Come on! I decided to wear the skirt Alice gave me. When we got to Plainmoor all his mates were there but no girls of course. I had an idea because of that girl who used to hang around the boys in Lymington Road. You know. It was stupid but I couldn't stop thinking about it so I went to the toilet. I came back and they were shouting something about the Chester winger. I don't know, sorry, I don't understand football. We were standing in the crowd at the front so none

of them noticed but at half time Patrick and this other boy turned round. They were staring right at me. They've seen! No they can't see anything from there but they've seen! I started screaming in a panic. No I can't be screaming or someone would hear me. I'm fine. I held down the bottom of my skirt and grinned at them. Patrick just turned away but the other boy came up to me. I don't think he came in with us.

'How are you enjoying the game?'

'It's fine, fantastic!' I suddenly spluttered with laughter because it was so funny.

I should have gone back to the toilet afterwards but it was dark already. We ran for the bus through the street lights. I can't run properly and I had to hold on to my skirt. On the bus it was just blokes from the football, no girls or women. I pulled it down my thighs as far as it would go but it's the one Alice gave me and I'm bigger. Richard and Martin were leaning over the backs of the seat in front of me and making jokes. They were looking straight through my skirt. I looked too, oh! I closed my eyes but that's no good. I opened them again but now I'm holding my breath! Patrick was looking away from me, unlike the rest of them. Every single one of them, who cares about him? I'm panting now.

Just say no

'Is this all right Amy?'

'I don't know.'

Fingers trapped in my clothes, pushing, ow pinching, soothing now, smoothing all my wrinkle and loose rag, spreading me out.

'I'll keep 'm secret.'

'We don't have secrets Violet! I hardly know you,'

but she has been hanging around me for weeks. Perhaps she likes me, or likes my, all that? Ugh! I ought to shout Help! Murder! (giggle) but I can't it's tickling.

'Hee! Hah!'

'This is fun isn't he?'

'I don't know.'

If the girls knew about her but I bet they do. If they knew about me! It's still not too late. Just say no!

'Violet, I think, I don't know,'

and that's a weird shiver in my tummy and down my legs. I hopped from foot to foot I can't stop oh cripes I'm bursting, it's leaking!

'Do you want me to stop?'

'I don't know.'