

There are 9.2 million refugees worldwide.

The UK offers a home to 3%.

Of those seeking a place of safety in the UK, a fifth are unaccompanied children.

Prologue

Things, as Luke Walker's mother is fond of saying, are getting out of hand.

The voices of his friends jar his ears as they stumble through some song by Lily Allen, clapping out of time, urging her on. Tom whoops with glee like a small child at Christmas, saliva dribbling down his chin. Charlie digs Luke in the ribs and shouts something in his ear but the words are lost in a fit of giggles.

The girl is in the middle of their ramshackle circle, her laughter almost hysterical. She says something none of them understand and spins round and round so that her skirt flares up and the boys can see her knickers.

Tom reaches out to touch her. 'Yeah baby,' he brays, but the momentum makes him lose his balance and he falls over, bringing Luke down with him.

Tom gropes the ground and swears.

Luke feels sick. He wants to go home. He would go home but he's boarding tonight, and if the house master catches him in this state he'll be in detention for a month.

And anyway, the field is spinning and he doesn't think he can stand.

'You like?' the girl asks them.

The other two applaud but Luke can't even nod his head. He doesn't like, not at all.

That night had started the same as any other. With prep finished and Mr Philips dealing with one of the homesick new boys, Luke and his friends sneaked out of school to mooch around the village. They pledged how different their lives would be when they could drive.

Charlie's the eldest and is getting lessons for his seventeenth, but that's not for over two months.

Luke should be next, but every time he mentions it his mum gives him the look and talks about how many young people die in road accidents.

Tom is the youngest of the group but will probably still be first to pass his test. His dad already lets him drive an old Jeep across their land.

They wandered down to the off-licence. Luke didn't know why they bothered because Mrs Singh knows they're all from the boarding school and under age. Tom called her a 'fucking Paki' and knocked over a rack of crisps. Luke hates it when Tom does stuff like that.

They finally dragged Tom out with Mrs Singh threatening to call the police, and there was the girl, leaning against the Post Office window opposite. She was one of that lot from the hostel. You could tell by the way she dressed, the way she wore her hair. And she stood like they all do, hunched in on herself, as if trying to disappear.

'Hey you,' Tom shouted.

She looked startled at being spoken to and was about to move on when Tom dashed across the street and caught her arm.

‘Do you want to earn some money?’ he asked.

She didn’t answer, her face a blank canvas.

‘Money,’ he repeated, rubbing his thumb and forefinger together as if she were deaf or an imbecile. So they paid her five quid to get them some bottles of cider and headed to the park.

It was built for the local kids but they’re all at home on their Nintendos. Only the boarders use it when they manage to slip out of evening prep. It’s cold and deserted, but at least they can get pissed in peace.

Luke doesn’t know why the girl came with them. Maybe she liked the look of Charlie, who’s tall and dark – all the girls fancy him. Or maybe Tom talked her into it. He’s ginger and has a big gap in his front teeth, but he has a way of getting people to do what he wants. ‘Leadership qualities’ his mum calls it.

Either way, she sat on the swings and shared their booze. She barely said a word, except that her name was Anna. Luke thought she was very pretty in a weird sort of way.

When she started dancing you could tell she didn’t really know what she was doing, that she was drunk. He should have told her to sit down. Why hadn’t he told her to sit down?

Now things are going pear-shaped. Tom has managed to pull Anna onto the floor. She’s still laughing but trying to push him away.

‘No no no,’ she says.

Tom mimics her accent. ‘Yes, yes, yes.’

She tries to push him away but she’s not very strong, and Tom’s the captain of the rugby first eleven. Luke notices how tiny she is and Tom easily holds the sticks

of her arms above her head. Her sweater has ridden up and Luke can see her ribs protruding through her skin.

'Come on, Tom, leave her alone,' he says.

Tom's breath comes in hard pants. 'Fuck off.' His forehead is greasy with sweat and the unmistakable bulge of Tom's cock pushes against his trouser leg.

Luke feels the acid burn of bile in his throat and tries not to retch.

The girl struggles to free herself.

'Give me a hand, Charlie,' says Tom.

Charlie seems unsure and hovers above them.

'Hold her arms,' Tom grunts.

When Charlie still doesn't move, Tom snarls at him.

'Hold her fucking arms, you queer.'

Charlie steals a glance in Luke's direction. He's terrified of what's about to happen, but more terrified of defying Tom. Luke wills him to walk away, to make a joke out of the whole thing. He doesn't. He kneels above Anna's head and presses firmly on her wrists.

Luke realises now that she is screaming. The air shatters around him.

Tom clamps one hand over her mouth and uses the other to pull at his flies. Luke tries to get to his feet to help the girl but falls sideways and ends up flapping like a fish in a net.

Tom laughs. 'Don't worry, you'll get your turn, Lukey boy.' He thrusts his hips forward and Anna's eyes shoot open. He knows he has to do something. Anything. So why doesn't he move? Why is he still lying on the hard autumn ground? He closes his eyes, disgusted at himself and wishes for tomorrow morning.

Chapter One

The sky outside the office was clear and welcoming. The pale October sun attempted to make its presence felt and Lilly longed to take her lunchtime walk. She'd instituted a daily turn around Harpenden Park after a four-week contested divorce case that had frazzled her mind. She found that the fresh air calmed her, and it stopped her from wolfing more than a sandwich for lunch.

She turned her gaze from the window back to her client and sighed. Mr Maxwell was so absorbed in his story he had failed to notice his solicitor's evident lack of interest.

'I simply cannot justify another penny,' he said. 'And I cannot see why she should be allowed to sit at home all day while I work my socks off.'

Lilly wondered why a man with such a profound lisp would choose so many words beginning with 's', and pretended not to notice the spittle that was accumulating on his tie.

'She has three children to care for,' said Lilly, 'and they are your children.'

'We have an au pair for them.' He fixed Lilly with

eyes that bulged like marbles in an otherwise flat face. 'You have a child, Miss Valentine, yet you seem to manage to work without too much trouble.'

Lilly thought of her ridiculously complicated child-care routine, involving her ex-husband, friends, and anyone prepared to offer a lift to school.

'What do you think she could do to earn some money?' Lilly asked.

Mr Maxwell gave a dismissive shrug. 'She used to be a model.'

Lilly tried to hide her shock. What beautiful woman would go for this unappealing specimen of manhood? Mr Maxwell gave a tree-frog blink. The sort who would be happy to sit on her bony arse all day and count his money was the obvious answer.

'As galling as it seems, Mr Maxwell, the court has ordered you to pay maintenance to your wife and children,' said Lilly.

'Ex-wife.'

Lilly nodded. 'So you will have to pay.'

Mr Maxwell shuffled his whinging backside out of Lilly's office, his eyes pulsating.

As he left the building she watched him limp up the road. Lisp, blinking eyes, a limp – maybe she was being too harsh on the poor man. Then a blonde bounced towards him, her plastic breasts fighting to escape. She covered his bald head in tiny kisses and squealed.

Mrs Maxwell Mark Two was waiting in the wings. Some men never learned.

Lilly checked her watch and groaned, realising that her next client was due any minute. She tried to leave

a gap between them but divorce cases always overran. These people paid by the hour, so it was their funeral if they blabbed over their allotted appointment, which invariably they did. When it came to splitting up the marital assets, this lot would argue over the contents of the Hoover bag.

Lilly missed her care cases. Stropky teens who might spare you ten minutes between shoplifting in Tesco's and meeting their mates in the arcade. Sometimes they didn't turn up at all but left convoluted messages about ASBOs, social workers and pregnancy tests.

God, she missed it.

She pulled a Kit Kat from her bag. Chocolate and no exercise, a double whammy. As sugar and hydrogenated fat entered her system, she realised that the only thing keeping her sane was the weekly trip to Hounds Place. At least there she could do some good. Some real good.

'Might pop over there after this client,' she mused.

'Don't even think about it.'

Lilly turned to the door, where the ever scowling secretary-cum-receptionist, Sheila, had appeared.

'You don't even know what I was talking about,' said Lilly.

Sheila crossed her arms. 'You want to go running off to the Dogs' Home.'

'It's called Hounds Place,' said Lilly. 'As you bloody well know.'

Sheila scooped up some papers fanning the floor and slid them back into their file. 'Do you keep your house as tidy as this?'

‘Did you just come to annoy me or did you get bored with filing your nails?’

Sheila tried to put the file back in the drawer but the runners were jammed. She pushed and pulled, the metallic groans matching her own.

Lilly sighed. ‘Do you actually want something, Sheila?’

‘The powers-that-be want to take you for a drink after work,’ she said, without turning around.

Lilly put her head in her hands. ‘Bloody marvellous.’

‘Stop whining,’ said Sheila, and thrust her arm into the cabinet. It disappeared like a vet’s arm in a cow. ‘They probably want to thank you for your hard work and good attitude.’

‘In my new role as advisor to the rich, ugly and divorcing I make them shitloads of money. Good attitude is not part of the package.’

Sheila was now virtually inside the cabinet, her shoulders and chest lost in its recesses, her face pushed against the handle.

‘I don’t know why you’re so miserable. You’re making good money, aren’t you?’

It was true. Lilly’s wage had increased by fifty per cent since the firm had reallocated her caseload.

‘The root of all evil,’ she said.

Sheila’s cheek was contorted by the pressure of the metal. ‘You weren’t saying that when you didn’t have any, you just moaned endlessly about the state of your house, how your car was knackered and you couldn’t afford Sam’s school uniform.’

‘But it’s so boring.’

‘Grow up,’ Sheila grunted. ‘It beats the bunch of

no-hopers that used to come here thieving the staplers.'

'Vulnerable kids,' Lilly sniffed.

'Junkies, most of them,' said Sheila. 'Like that bleeding nutter who drank the bleach.'

'Kelsey was not on drugs,' said Lilly. 'It was her mother who was addicted.'

'Whatever.' Sheila shook her head as if the details were unimportant. 'The point is it nearly bankrupted the office.'

'We got paid,' said Lilly.

'Legal Aid scraps, and you know it,' said Sheila. 'And as for those scroungers at the Dogs' Home, I don't know why you bother.'

'Because it stimulates my intellect,' said Lilly. 'Something you wouldn't understand.'

'I understand that having kids means making sacrifices.' At last Sheila withdrew her arm, bringing with it a battered book. 'This was stuck at the back.' She threw it onto Lilly's desk. *The Art of Positive Thinking*.

'Something to stimulate your intellect.'

Lilly put her head on the desk. 'Do I really have to go for a drink?'

Sheila's laugh was nothing short of cruel. 'Rupinder says it's a three-line whip.'

It's been a horrid day. A nightmare. Mr Peters had bawled Luke out for not paying attention in Latin. He'd said he was wasting his talents, and that it was nothing short of criminal. Luke had wanted to tell him how close to the mark he was.

During Information Technology he'd surfed the Net to see how long people got for rape, how old he'd be when he got out of prison. He couldn't breathe when he saw life was an option. He'd seen a politician on the telly saying the government were cracking down, that 'life should mean life'. He'd bitten his lip until it bled, terrified he'd burst into tears in front of the whole class.

Worse still, Tom had been acting like nothing was wrong. He'd even boasted in the common room about meeting a 'right little goer'.

The other boys had laughed at him, said he was talking bollocks.

Tom leaned over the snooker table and potted the black.

'Ask Lukey boy, he'll tell you what she was like,' he said. 'Gagging for it, wasn't she?'

Luke smiled weakly, but he could still hear the girl screaming and see her slender wrists being held so tightly that they seemed to turn blue-black. A bit like the sky before a storm.

Now the bell is ringing and Luke can finally escape. Thank God he's not boarding tonight. He wants to go home, to throw himself onto his Arsenal duvet and let it all out. Maybe he should tell his mum. Maybe she could help. Even if she can't it would stop the whole thing running through his head like a bad film on a loop.

He sees her car parked by the cricket pitch and bolts towards it. Inside it smells of clean washing.

His mum smiles. 'Had a nice day, love?'
He can't answer and squeezes his eyes shut.

'Is everything all right, love?' asks his mum.
He stirs his pasta with a limp wrist.
'Luke?'

Her voice is so very gentle. He feels wrung out like a damp cloth, all the moisture down the sink.

She lifts his chin and looks into his eyes. 'You would tell me if something was wrong?'

He sees in her familiar face a lifetime of wiped noses and birthday teas. This isn't a broken window or a bad school report. How can he tell her what he has been part of, what he has done? She can't make it better. No one can.

He forces some words out. 'I'm just tired.'

'You look peaky,' she says, and presses a cool palm against his forehead. 'You're not hot but you're obviously coming down with something.'

He pushes his bowl away. 'Yeah. I feel sick.'

Relief plays at the corner of his mother's mouth. This is her territory.

'Better lie down, love,' she says. 'Will you be all right while I collect your sister?'

The thought of Jessie, a year younger than Luke, fills his mind. What if some boys took her to the park . . . held her down . . .

He runs from the room, his hand over his mouth, acid bile running through his fingers.

* * *

His bedroom is spinning and Luke concentrates on a small brown water stain on the ceiling.

'I'll be twenty minutes,' his mum calls from the bottom of the stairs. 'How about I call at Waitrose for some Lucozade?'

Luke doesn't answer.

When he hears the front door close he lets the tears spill. He curls into a ball and weeps, snot pooling under his nose, sliding onto his lips, until it becomes clear what he has to do.

He wipes his eyes on the back of his hand and packs a bag.

Lilly had tried, she really had. She'd put on her coat and fully intended to head to the bar where her boss and the other partners were waiting for her. But when it had come to it, Lilly had made a sharp right turn and jumped into her new Mini Cooper. Sheila was right about some things. A car that started first time, every time, was a joy on a par with a night with George Clooney.

As she sped down the A5 she pulled out her phone.

'Rupes, it's me. Sorry I couldn't make it to the pub but I need to collect Sam. He said he'd leave home if he had to go to after-school care again.'

It was true that Sam preferred not to stay late at school with the boarders. He said the common room smelled and tea in the refectory was always the same. 'I don't know how they do it, Mum, but whatever day you go it's always some sort of mince,' he'd said. 'They give it different names but it doesn't fool anyone.'

To say he hated it was perhaps an exaggeration, but extreme times called for extreme measures.

Rupinder said nothing. Lilly could imagine her pursed lips and tried to make light of it. 'You can give me my bollocking tomorrow and save yourself the price of a pint.'

'Just get your backside over here.'

Lancasters had changed hands again. Now a franchise of a famous chef who had never stepped out of the West End, it had restyled itself as a gastropub. What this meant in reality was sage-green walls by Farrow & Ball and steaks costing fifteen quid a pop. As usual, it was almost empty.

Rupinder and the others were congregated at the far end of the bar. Lilly heard the pop of a champagne cork and her heart sank. Had she missed something important? Whose birthday was it?

'What's the occasion?' she called, all faux bonhomie.

Rupinder held out a glass of bubbly. 'Your application for rights of higher audience. You passed.'

Earlier that year, Rupes had come under pressure from her colleagues to give Lilly the boot because of her propensity to speak her mind and take on cases that would add little to their pension funds. Rupes had resisted but had agreed to improve her bottom line. One suggestion was that money should stop being wasted on barristers and that Lilly should handle her own advocacy wherever possible.

'Wow,' said Lilly. Drowning in the sea of divorce cases, she'd forgotten all about the exams she'd taken that summer.

'Wow indeed.' Rupinder's tone was cold. Lilly was obviously not forgiven for her attempted escape. 'Congratulations.'

Sheila drained her glass and helped herself to a refill from the jeroboam. She didn't tilt her glass, and the expensive froth flowed down the stem.

'I suppose you'll be in the office even less now,' she said. 'And muggins here will get all the extra paperwork.'

'Every cloud,' said Lilly.

'Perhaps we could all put our differences aside and pull as a team,' said Rupinder, 'just this once.'

Lilly girded herself for a lecture but was saved by her phone. 'I told you Sam would get the hump.'

Rupes looked gratifyingly crestfallen so Lilly didn't mention that football training wouldn't finish for another hour.

She stood away from the others.

'Miss Valentine?'

'That's me,' she said.

'I'm from Hounds Place. I wonder if you have any time to speak to one of the residents.'

Lilly looked over at Rupes and gave her best contrite parent face. 'I'll be right there.'

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The People of Britain Have Had Enough! Blood River at 15.05

This country used to be something to be proud of.

It used to stand for something around the world.
Its people knew who they were.

Can we say that any more?

The People Of Britain Have Had Enough! Skin
Lick at 15.12

No we can't.

The country has gone to shit with all the bending
over backwards for immigrants.

The People of Britain Have Had Enough! Snow
White at 15.15

What really annoys me is when you walk down
the street and every other person is a foreigner.
I went on a train to London last week and heard
about twenty different languages. I began to
wonder where I was . . .

The People of Britain Have Had Enough! Skin
Lick at 15.22

I know what you mean, Snow White. My home
town has three mosques. Three!!!

We truly are living in Englastan.

The People of Britain Have Had Enough! Snow
White at 15.26

I read that some schools are forced to celebrate
Eid and Diwali but the children aren't allowed to
send Christmas cards to one another. I don't want
my children bringing up that way.

The People of Britain Have Had Enough! Skin
Lick at 15.38
It's a scandal.

The white indigenous population of this country
will soon be in the minority and then we'll lose all
our heritage and culture.

Prepare to say goodbye to Easter, New Year's
Eve and Bonfire Night.

The People of Britain Have Had Enough! Blood
River at 15.46

I for one am not about to surrender everything I
hold dear.

Mass immigration has been a disaster and it's
got to stop.

We are at saturation point.

Write to your MP saying you will no longer
tolerate being a second-class citizen in your own
home.

Boycott shops owned by in-comers.

Fly the flag of St George with pride.

Snow White closed the lid of her laptop. She hated to
leave a live discussion but she needed to pick up her
husband's shirts from the dry-cleaners'. She checked the
clock. If she didn't dilly-dally she'd still have enough
time to pop into the butcher's and get home in time for
the live podcast.

A hostel had recently opened in Manor Wood, within
half a mile of Sam's school. The building, Hounds Place,

had previously been a police-station house but had been bought up by a professional landlord who saw the potential for squeezing five desperate refugees into each room.

The influx of nearly thirty foreigners into a small village like Manor Wood had not been greeted with overwhelming delight. The infamous hospitality of the English countryside did not, it seemed, extend to the raggle-taggle bunch of young men and women who had risked everything to leave their wartorn homelands.

Lilly had begged Rupes to let her represent two fourteen-year-old boys who had fled the Taliban. Without any relatives in the UK care orders had been made without fuss or objection so the use of Lilly's time had been negligible. Two had become four, then a teenager from Bosnia arrived and another from Uganda. Although she kept the increasing numbers quiet, particularly from Rupes, Lilly now represented at least half the kids in there. It didn't take up too much of her energy, she told herself, as she checked her watch.

As soon as she crossed the threshold a young man in a checked shirt and denim jacket sidled over.

'Hello, Artan,' said Lilly.

He should have been a good-looking boy with his full pink lips and the blackest of lashes, but something about him always unnerved Lilly. His entire family had been killed in Kosovo, but he never seemed angry or sad or even confused. He was cold.

'How are you?' she asked.

Artan shook his head to indicate that things were not good. 'I need to speak to you.'

'I've got twenty minutes,' said Lilly.

They went to the kitchen and the few residents who had been sitting around chatting got up and left. Something was very wrong.

'Have you been arrested again, Artan?' Lilly asked. A month ago she'd got him off with a warning for shoplifting.

'It is nothing like that.' His eyes were vacant, devoid of any clue as to what lay beneath.

'Are you in trouble?' she asked.

'Something has happened to my friend,' he said.

'Something bad?'

'Very, very bad,' said Artan.

Alarm bells started to ring. 'Has he been hurt?'

'It's a girl,' said Artan. 'And yes, she has been hurt.'

The alarm bells were pounding out now. The three-minute warning.

'Go on,' said Lilly.

'Some boys from the village have taken advantage of her,' said Artan.

'You mean she's been raped?'

Artan nodded.

'Has she been to the police?' asked Lilly.

'It is not so simple,' said Artan. 'She doesn't trust them.'

Lilly nodded. Despite special suites and task forces, most rapes continued to go unreported, and refugees were even less likely to take their chances with the authorities.

'She doesn't think the police will believe her,' he said.

'Why not?'

'She drank alcohol with these local boys and went to the park with them,' he said. 'They will say she wanted to have sex.'

'Why did she go with them?' asked Lilly.

'Because her mind is not clear,' he said.

The silence was thick between them. Lilly knew all their stories were horrific. That none of them were unscathed.

'Can you promise these boys will be convicted?' he said.

'No one can make a promise like that.'

Artan leaned towards her, his voice dropping. 'Is there a good chance?'

Lilly weighed her words very carefully. 'Rape is one of the most difficult offences to prove, and in a case like this where it's one girl's word against three presumably squeaky-clean schoolboys it would be even more difficult.'

Artan closed his eyes, his breathing slow and heavy.

Lilly shivered. 'But that's not to say she shouldn't report it.'

'Why?' His voice was barely above a whisper. 'So that she can be humiliated again and again?'

When he opened his eyes they seemed even more desolate than before.

'I'm sorry,' said Lilly.

She thought she saw a flash of anger skitter across his face.

'We are not animals,' he said. 'These boys must be punished.'

* * *

Twenty-four pounds.

It was daylight robbery.

Still, it was the best organic beef from cows allowed to roam freely around their farm in Sussex. Mr Simms even had photos of 'the girls' above his counter, all doe eyes and bell collars. Some thought that was a step too far but Snow White saw nothing wrong with it. Grandpa had kept chickens and had slit their throats in front of her for Sunday lunch. She could still hear the damned squawking.

People these days had no respect for the provenance of their food. They wanted everything clean and shrinkwrapped.

She had taught her children that life just wasn't like that. When a fox had killed every last one of their pet bunnies she had told them to stop crying and let them sit up with her until midnight when she took him out with her shotgun. 'Sometimes you have to get your hands dirty.'

She put the meat in the fridge and logged on to her laptop.

Welcome, Snow White – today's live podcast will start in five minutes.

Excellent. She hadn't missed it.

Humming to herself, she made a pot of Darjeeling.

Lilly's mind was still heavy with what she had heard. When she pulled into her son's prep school she almost hit a Mercedes and its driver hooted. Lilly was tempted

to give her the finger, but such a gesture would be considered rude and vulgar, an unforgivable sin for the middle-class parents among whom Lilly already had few friends.

She was about to berate herself once again for giving in to her ex-husband on the subject of schooling when her mobile rang.

The voice was Irish honey. 'Hello, gorgeous. Got time for a natter?'

Lilly got out of the car and smiled. 'For you,' she said, 'I've always got time.'

It was Jack McNally, a copper Lilly had known for years, and had flirted with for nearly as long before he'd finally made a move.

'What are you wearing?' he asked.

Lilly laughed. 'I'd like to say a basque and fishnet stockings.'

A passing parent wrinkled her nose. Lilly wanted to stick out her tongue.

'But,' said Jack, 'I'm sensing a "but".'

'To be honest, I'm at school, and even I'm not brazen enough to parade around here in my undies.'

'You wouldn't want to make all those yummy mummies jealous,' he said.

'Now I remember why I like you.'

She sauntered to the football pitch where Sam, in goal, was in position to save a penalty. Lilly hardly dared watch, even though it was only a practice session. 'So how're things?'

'Same old, same old,' he said.

'Oh,' she groaned, as Sam batted the ball clear of the

goal, the slap of the leather against his skin audible even from the touchline. Though it was undoubtedly uncool for a nine year old to show any pain his middle-aged mother couldn't help herself.

'You okay?' he asked. 'You sound a bit distracted.'

'I had a funny meeting just before you called.'

'Funny ha ha, or funny peculiar?'

'Funny disturbing,' she said. 'A girl from the hostel has been raped.'

'One of the asylum seekers?'

'Yeah. Her friend wanted to know what would happen if they got the police involved.'

'And?' Jack asked.

'And I told him the truth.'

The referee blew his whistle and ten boys ran towards Sam, who had clearly saved the day.

'I've got a bad feeling that he might do something stupid,' she said.

Ever the professional, Jack's tone was serious. 'Like what?'

Lilly waved at her son, who shook hands gravely with the other side and then scampered towards her, wind-milling his arms.

'I don't know, it could be nothing. Ignore me.'

'It doesn't sound like nothing, Lilly.'

Sam was almost upon her. 'You know how I over-react. He was probably just upset. Anyone would be.'

'Lilly, you don't overreact,' said Jack. 'You have excellent instincts, and if you think something is going down you need to tell someone.'

'I will, well, I might. I need to think it through.' Sam jumped into her arms, nearly knocking her off her feet. 'Look, I have to go, Peter Shilton needs his tea.'

* * *

Welcome, members. Today's discussion will feature regular contributor Nigel Purves.

Snow White helped herself to a Garibaldi and settled down. Nigel was always good value.

... I want to talk to you all about diversity and I want you to think about whether this is a good thing.

Snow White dunked her biscuit and smiled at her screen. Nigel was such an articulate man, able to make his point with a clarity and conviction that was sadly lacking in most politicians. And he knew how to work a suit and tie. The Des Lynam of the Far Right.

... On the face of it we might find difference a good thing – after all, who wants everything to be the same? Diversity makes life interesting, no?

But pause for a second and ask yourself what makes family so special.

Snow White reached for a ginger snap. Nigel was on top form.

Isn't it the fact that everyone is cut from the same cloth? That you have things in common? That you are a homogenous group?

Nigel ran a hand through his hair, still thick with flecks of grey.

Whatever anyone tells you, it is perfectly natural for each of us to want to be with our own kind. Some might call that racist. I say it's just common sense . . .

'Mum, I'm starving.'

Bugger. Snow White shut down the podcast.

'Is there anything to eat?'

The girls were home early. Nigel would have to wait.

'I have scones,' she said. 'Or crumpets. You choose.'

'I know a man who knows a man. He'll get you what you need.'

Artan nods and hands the money to the Albanian.

He doesn't ask any questions. Knows he wouldn't get any answers. He's thought about this and nothing else since he met with the solicitor.

These boys must pay.