

# Episode 1

## Being new

### Part 1: Eddie's story

EDDIE



I was so scared I would be late and now I'm way too early. The caretaker has just unlocked the tutor room with KF on the door, but I'm not going in - not until I've found the toilets. It's the thing that's been terrifying me most about this new school, the nightmare stories I've heard about what the older kids do to the new ones in the toilets; so I'll go while it's empty. It's the fifth time I've had to go since I woke up. Mum tried to make me eat another breakfast; she said I must have lost the first one a few times over.

The other thing I have to do before I see anyone is scrape some mud onto my shoes. My granddad polished them like a mirror for me; I didn't tell him they were embarrassing - I told him they were great.

I go into the empty tutor room and look around. It's really sad and bleak, needs pictures or posters or something to cheer it up.



The others slowly begin to arrive; most of them seem to know each other and start chatting and mucking about. I try to look normal but I feel like a right saddo sitting there on my own. Then I catch the eye of this girl. She looks OK so I try smiling, thinking I probably look like a complete loser.

Instead of just ignoring me, she comes over and sits down by me. I take a deep breath.

'Hi, I'm Eddie,' I say.

'Hi, Eddie, I'm Laura,' she says, and then before I know it, we're chatting, and suddenly it begins to feel OK. When some other kids join in with us I start to wonder what I'd got myself so worked up about.



After a while most of the kids are chatting, except this one sitting on a table behind me. I turn round to talk to him, but as I do, he puts his feet on my chair and his shoes get mud on my trousers.

He doesn't apologise or say anything, so I glare at him and then ignore him.

Then the door opens and this woman walks in, who I suppose is Miss Forest, our tutor. She is big and broad with this plaited hair close to her head and bright red lipstick. She is wearing this flowery dress and green high-heel shoes. She looks OK, smiling round at us, until the kid behind me says:

'Welcome to your tutor group, Miss K Forest,' in this really sarky voice. She stops smiling then and asks him his name.

'Rafiq Hassan,' he goes like he's some sort of celebrity. She doesn't look like she's impressed with Rafiq Hassan; she just tells us all to sit down. As we're all getting settled, this really fit girl rushes in through the door, and when the tutor says to her,

'You are?' she says,

'Late, I suppose.'

I have to admit it was funny, but when we all laugh, she looks ready to die of embarrassment. I would have felt the same. I hate being late and to have everyone laugh at you is gruesome. Dionne the girl's name is. She sits down behind me, and the tutor woman goes and has a word with her. She says she'll talk to her later.

Then it turns out that the woman isn't Miss Forest anyway, she's Mrs King, head of something or other and is only being our tutor because Miss Forest is ill. So we still don't know what our real tutor is like.

Your first job,' says Mrs King, 'is to get to know each other. Choose someone you don't already know and ask them to tell you three interesting things about themselves. Be prepared to tell the rest of the group one of those interesting things. You have ten minutes.' And she sits down at her desk and just watches.

I would like to ask that Dionne, but I don't have the nerve, and Laura grabs me anyway, so I stick with her. In the end, Dionne goes over to this lonely looking girl and partners her. I knew she'd turn out to be gorgeous inside as well as outside, but she'd never look at me; not in a hundred million years.

The kid, Rafiq, who put mud on my trousers is left without a partner but he doesn't seem bothered. Maybe that's what he wanted. He looks like the sort of kid who gets what he wants. I wish I did.

## Part 2: Rafiq's story

RAFIQ →



I sit on a table at the back of the room swinging my legs. It's nothing like the classroom in our primary school. It's small and stuffy, and there's nothing on the walls except peeling paint. Grim. I don't know any of the kids in the room, except Rosie Brown who was in my class at my old school, but she's not someone I'd ever speak to. She's not exactly smart - we used to say if she was any dumber you'd have to water her. She's sitting on her own, biting

her nails and chewing her lip. She looks scared. I watch the other girls trying to pretend they're not scared; joking around, touching their hair. The boys are chatting to each other, not to me, but that doesn't bother me. I put my feet up on the chair in front of me. This kid gives me a look, but I don't move them.

There's no way I'm scared of anything at this new school. I know all about it. My brother, Prahlad, is in year 10, and he's told me everything I need to know. He says the teachers think he's great because he's so smart. He told me that Miss K. Forest, our tutor, is new, only just trained as a teacher. 'You'll be able to do just what you want,' he told me. What I want is to be what I was at my old school: the smartest kid in the year - in every way. I look around and think there's not much competition.

Just as I'm thinking this, Miss K Forest walks into the room. It goes totally quiet. Everyone stares. She looks around at the kids one by one. No one moves. I lean back on the top of the table. When her look lands on me, I go,

'Welcome to your tutor group, Miss K Forest.'

'You are?' she says. I tell her.

'Good morning, Rafiq Hassan,' she says. 'Please sit on your chair.' The other kids begin to snigger. They're so lame.

'Good morning, tutor group KF,' she says. 'Please all sit down on your chairs.'

We clatter into the seats, moving bags onto the floor and coats to the back of chairs. Suddenly the door bangs open and this girl storms in. Miss K Forest looks at her,

‘You are?’ she says.

‘Late, I suppose,’ says the girl, tossing her head. The class erupts, laughing. The girl shoves her way through the bags and sits down in the space next to me.

‘I meant, what is your name?’ says Miss K Forest and her voice is low and quiet, like a growl. The laughing stops. The girl stares at her.

‘Dionne Taylor,’ she says.

The class watches Miss K Forest. She walks past the bags to the back of the room where I’m sitting. She goes right up to Dionne.

‘Come and see me later, Dionne,’ she says, really quiet. I know Dionne’s going to get it.

Then Miss K Forest turns to the rest of us.

‘I am Mrs King, head of lower school,’ she says. ‘Miss Forest is unwell so I will be your tutor until she returns.’ Nobody speaks. So she isn’t the new tutor. I thought she looked old.

She asks us to do something with a partner and then she plonks herself down behind her desk. For a few minutes it is chaos, kids rushing round trying to find someone to work with. I just sit back up on the table, looking around to see who I want to do this with. Others pair up, until I see

everyone has a partner except Rosie Brown, Dionne and me. Rosie looks like she might cry. I realise I'm going to have to work with a girl, and am just about to ask Dionne, when she goes over to Rosie.

'OK to work with me?' she says.

'Triffic,' says Rosie, looking stupidly happy for the first time. Doesn't she know Dionne only chose her because she was the last girl left?