I started seeing Sukh properly after that first walk to the bus stop. Well, when I say properly, I mean as my actual boyfriend. I’d had male friends before – you know, the kind of guys you flirt with at school, generally ones in the years above, who seem so much easier to talk to and more interesting than the geeks who are the same age as you. But I’d never actually had a boyfriend. Not a real, actual, call-up-all-the-time and text-till-your-fingers-ache kind of boy. I was excited and nervous and a bit scared all at the same time. I mean, what if I was wrong about him and he was just like all the other boys in my year? The kind that tells his mates everything that he does with his girlfriend. And I’m not talking about shopping either . . . I’d seen boys like that, talking about which bits of their girlfriend they had touched or seen naked and all that immature stuff. Real bastards who were just using the girls they were with. Like the guy Natalie lost her virginity to.

He was called Martin and he was in the year above us. Nat had pursued him for ages. She really fancied him and I suppose he was kind of nice, in a rugby player sort of way – if you like that sort of thing. He was all shoulders, thighs, big smile – and hairy arse, according to Nat. And eventually he’d given in and gone out with her. First it was all about holding hands and five text messages a day, and then dates to the cinema and shopping trips to Nottingham and stuff. Nat was really happy and I was really pleased for her because she was smiling all the time and seemed to have found the right man.

And then he started telling her that he loved her and that he wanted to stay with her for ever – real Hollywood romance type things. Nat, for all her bravado and independent-woman crap, is a hopeless romantic at heart. She took Martin seriously when he told her that he wanted to sleep with her, to take their relationship on to the next level, as he put it. Eventually, at some house party thrown by one of Martin’s friends that I hadn’t been allowed to go to, Nat slept with him. I couldn’t believe it when she told me about it the next day. I mean, she was only fourteen – it was against the law. And I had all these moral arguments going on too, burned into my conscience by my family. No sex before marriage. No boyfriends before marriage. Let’s face it, as far as my family were concerned, with me it was no nothing before marriage. That’s why I had been so shocked – it was just something that I thought I’d never do, not unless I was really in love.