

## CHAPTER 1

# My best friend's sister

I was out with Eddie last night. Eddie's my best friend, though I guess that's not saying much; I don't really *have* friends. Just a few people I say "hi" to now and then. I say "hi" to Eddie more often than anyone else and I suppose that makes him my best friend, but we're certainly not close in the way that you are with *your* best friend. Phew—I should have taken a breath there!

Anyway, like I was saying, I was out with Eddie last night. We're not doing much, just hanging around on the street corners. We kinda like it that people cross the streets to avoid us and nobody wants to look us in the eye. Just what they think

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we are or what we'll do I can't imagine. Well actually, I can; they think that we're going to vandalize the neighborhood and maybe trash their cars after dark when they're safe behind their curtains. Eddie wears a hoodie and never smiles when there are people around. He likes how that freaks them out. I like it too, if I'm honest. The thing is, you'd think that people would *know* that we're not out for trouble just by looking at *me*.

You see, while Eddie likes to think he's cool—he always wears the latest stuff—I don't go in for it. Even just hanging around on the streets with Eddie I'm wearing penny loafers by Prada and Ralph Lauren casual pants, a two-button jacket by Sean John and an open-collar Pierre Cardin shirt. And if other kids laugh at me and sneer—and they do—I take comfort in the knowledge that my shoes cost more than their entire wardrobes. In some cases, that would go for my haircut too. What? So I have parents who can afford it and like to indulge me. So what? Saves them ever having to listen to me.

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So where was I? Oh, that's right; I'm hanging out with Eddie last night. We're sitting in the bus shelter across from the playground. Eddie is chain-smoking as he sometimes does. French cigarettes that give off an awful smell. We are waiting for his bus—Eddie lives a couple of miles away—and Eddie starts talking about girls. Eddie says that most people at school think that I'm queer because of the way I dress. As if I don't know *that* already.

“So are you?”

“Am I what?”

“You know... queer.”

There, see. I told you we're not really close.

“Well, if it puts your mind at ease, no. No I'm not.”

It crosses my mind that Eddie might not believe me. We sit in silence for a moment, with him drawing slowly on his cigarette