



In the 1960s a schoolgirl is murdered in a rural Kent village. A local misfit is convicted, and that seems to be the end of the matter. Cedric Lily, the narrator, a schoolboy at the time, becomes obsessed with what really happened that Saturday. There were four of them in the vicinity of the murder, but only Cedric kept alive what they saw, and the gang were never friends again. Years later, in the windswept Northeast of Scotland, Cedric confronts Milky White who is working as museum curator on a ramshackle estate, and whose real reason for his presence on the day of the murder has haunted him ever since. Through a hall of fictional mirrors ending in personality theft and illusion, Little Nineveh portrays the darker side of schoolboy enmity and keeps the reader guessing till the end.

Extract :

Chapter One

That Saturday when Partridge strangled Yvonne Sharpe down Little Nineveh I was eleven and a quarter. The November sky bulged above us – a grey sack of angry crows, the trees had all been nudded weeks ago and the air smelled of pencil sharpenings. All concurrence between us stopped like an unwound clock. Daz and Skinny eleven that September. Milky White a year ahead.

Childhood was too tremulous an age to consider the languages of fiction. Honesty and innocence are finally trampled underfoot in the first term of Secondary School by older boys ; the way they always strip the unripe fruit from every tree. Truth was a windfall ; my sudden use of it an accident. I should have left it in the ditch where winter would have made an end of it. Didn't life always find its way back into the tree ? Didn't winters always end ?

Time in those winters of ours was measured in Saturdays, half-terms, frozen puddles and punctured footballs. November opened with conker fights and bonfires, closing on wetted gloves, quagmires and pike bungs. The last tench from down the pond had long been hooked, boasted and disputed. The first winter jack from the Rother at Bodiam had yet to fall to one of us. The goalmouth up the playing field soon churned with clay and sawdust as our village team failed us and sank to the bottom of the East Sussex League by their dozenth fixture. The skylight died earlier after the clocks went back and the school bulbs twilit the afternoons. Air grew colder and we knew that Saturdays were God's only gift to children.

By the Saturday it happened, Partridge had, as far as we knew, gone with summer. We thought we'd seen the last of him ; he never entered our minds, we who lived down Barratt's Road among the hundred brick-orange council houses built just after the war. There were twenty boys our age to choose gangs and teams from, a few squirts or brothers, plenty of sisters. And we were many gangs of duos and trios, meeting up at the Two Trees where allegiances shifted like the wind. We knew our village backwards too, but the common haunt for all the village children was the recreation ground up Church Hill. It was here that Partridge first appeared to us the opening week of the summer holidays, riding through the wooden gates on a racing bike.