

Goodbye, Copper Pie

the school summer fair

‘Keener, can you believe it?’ said Fifty.

I shook my head.

He was staring at Copper Pie, who had just blasted a ball into the top left-hand corner of the goal. We watched Copper Pie get a slap on the back from his partner on the stall, none other than Callum – the meanest and nastiest boy in our class . . . in our year in fact . . . in the whole school probably, maybe even the world, the universe, etc.

‘Can you believe he’s gone over to the dark side?’

I shook my head again. There weren’t any words for how I felt.

I looked across for the hundredth time. How could Copper Pie, my oldest friend, be running a stall at the summer fair with *Callum*? Copper Pie was the one who saved me from being bitten by Annabel Ellis in nursery, the one who tickled me to stop me from holding my

TRIBE

breath and fainting in the nativity play, the one who ate my lunch every time I didn't like it.

If anyone had told me that he would desert me, desert Tribe, I'd have said they were lying. No way would he ever, ever leave: that's what I would have said. But I was wrong.

I'd been looking forward to the summer fair for ages. We all had, because in Year 6 you're allowed to have your own stall. And of course the five Tribers (me, Fifty, Jonno, Bee and Copper Pie) were doing one together (I'll fill you in on the details later). But at the last minute Copper Pie switched allegiance big time to do 'Save or Score' with Callum.

For a pound you could choose either three shots at Callum in goal or three turns in goal trying to stop Copper Pie scoring. Their sign said, *Save three goals or score three and win a fiver.*

And to make it worse, their stall had the biggest queue. There were masses of dads and toddlers and a few girls and even some mums waiting for a turn. Every time there was a good save or an awesome shot the crowds ooh-ed and aaaaah-ed. Copper Pie was in Man United Away (all black). Callum was in Liverpool Home (red). I wished they weren't the centre of attention. Showing off in front of the rest of Tribe. It didn't seem fair. We, the loyal ones, were doing a stall *together*, the way you should do if you're friends. And we're best friends, better than family.

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THE TRIBE FAMILY

FIFTY: Small and likes fire.

BEE: Sleepwalks whole conversations.

KEENER: Is a keener (and surf dude).

COPPER PIE: Football mad, junk food mad, and gets mad about ginger jokes.

JONNO: Looks mad – big Afro and glasses – but isn't. Has moved house and school loads of times, but this time he's staying . . . with Tribe.

If you want to understand how I felt, imagine your mum had left you and chosen another family, a better one, tidier or funnier or better looking. Imagine her having a great time with them, while you stood at the side and watched.

I wanted to bang my head against something hard, except that it would hurt. I wanted to smack Copper Pie in the face and yell, but I've never hit anyone and I didn't want to start with him because he's a lot more experienced with his fists. I turned away and looked back at Fifty. He sighed. We didn't need words to know what the other one was thinking.

Bee and Jonno were sitting cross-legged under our

TRIBE

table, talking to each other. I thought about joining them . . . but I didn't. I stayed where I was and watched all the people enjoying themselves.

There was nothing left on our stall. We ran out twenty-two minutes after the fair started. It didn't matter – we'd made loads of money.

I thought about having a go on 'Splat the Rat'. I'm good at that. If you watch the people who go before you, you can count how many seconds it takes the rat to slide down the pipe. So, when it's your turn, all you have to do is count and, when you reach the magic number, wham the stick at the space below the pipe. Everyone else waits for the rat poke its nose out, but by then it's too late.

I decided not to have a go. I knew it wouldn't make me feel any better. How could it? Tribe couldn't carry on without Copper Pie. I can't explain why. It's not as though he was the leader or anything – we don't have one. But he was part of its beginning and we agreed no one could leave and no one could join. So it was broken. Tribe was broken.