



Praise for Violet and Boy's

# PERFECT ADVENTURES

"A creepy, magical tale of bravery and self-belief."

*Sunday Express*

"Full of the adventure, mystery and sinister goings on..."

*Rachael, Waterstones bookseller*

"This is one of those books that you think about when you're not reading it and can't wait to find out what happens next."

*Tom Fletcher*

"Brimming with humour, intrigue, danger and thrilling adventures..."

*Lancashire Evening Post*

"Helena Duggan builds an intriguing world and tells a gripping story..."

*The Scotsman*

"A quirky, intriguing novel..."

*Through the Looking Glass (blogger review)*

"A creepy adventure story full of twists and turns..."

*Scoop magazine*



*For Robbie, my Boy*

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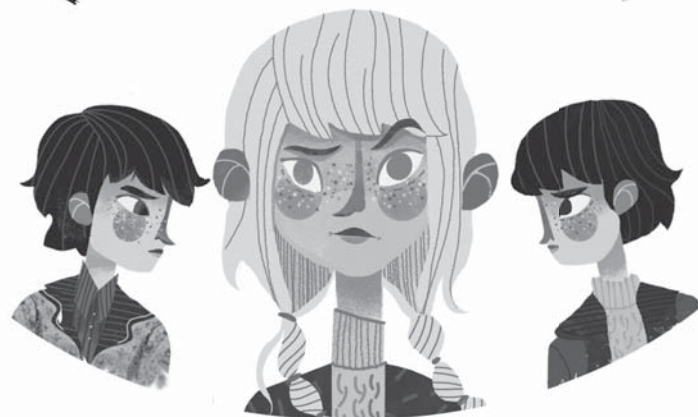
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# THE BATTLE FOR PERFECT



## HELENA DUGGAN





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# THE STORY SO FAR

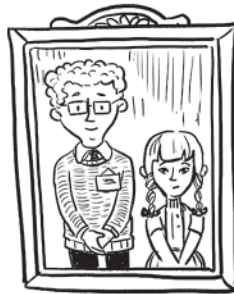
IN CASE YOU'VE FORGOTTEN

2.



THE ARCHER BROTHERS ARE HIDING A BIG SECRET.

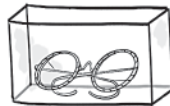
1.



DR EUGENE BROWN ARRIVES IN PERFECT WITH VIOLET.

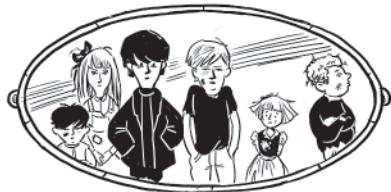
3.

VIOLET RECEIVES A PAIR OF ROUND-RIMMED GLASSES THAT REVEAL BOY AND NO-MAN'S-LAND.



4.

BOY AND OTHER ORPHANS IN NO-MAN'S-LAND HELP VIOLET UNCOVER WHAT'S GOING ON.



5.

THE ARCHER BROTHERS USE TEA AND THEIR GLASSES TO CONTROL THE PEOPLE OF PERFECT.



6.

THE WATCHERS WORK FOR THE ARCHER BROTHERS, GUARDING PERFECT AND STEALING IMAGINATIONS.



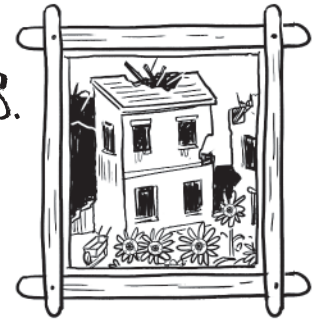
7.

IMAGINATIONS ARE STORED IN JARS AND HIDDEN AWAY IN THE ARCHERS' EMPORIUM.



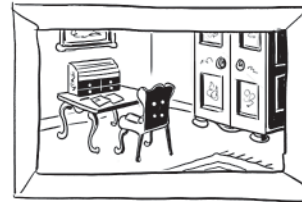
8.

VIOLET DISCOVERS THE GHOST ESTATE WHERE THE ARCHER BROTHERS GROW THEIR EYE PLANTS.



9.

BOY'S MAM, MACULA ARCHER, IS A PRISONER IN A ROOM IN THE GHOST ESTATE.



10.

WILLIAM ARCHER DEVELOPS THE REIMAGINATOR — A MACHINE TO GIVE PEOPLE BACK THEIR IMAGINATIONS.



11.

PERFECTIONISTS AND NO-MAN'S-LANDERS UNITE TO DEFEAT THE ARCHER BROTHERS AND THE WATCHERS.



12.

THE GATE BETWEEN PERFECT AND NO-MAN'S-LAND IS KNOCKED DOWN.

≡ WELCOME TO TOWN! ≡  
PLEASE TURN OVER...



13.



GEORGE ARCHER AND THE WATCHERS ARE IMPRISONED IN THE TOWN HALL. EDWARD HAS DISAPPEARED.

14.

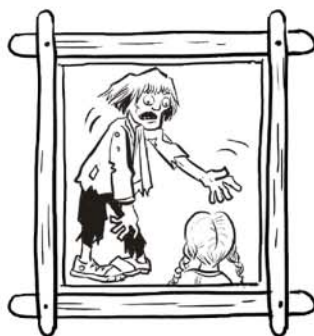


AS STORM CLOUDS GATHER ROBBERIES BEGIN TO HAPPEN IN TOWN.

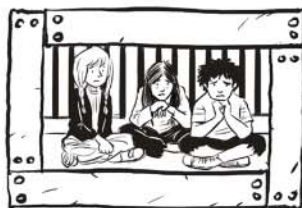
15.



CONOR CROOKED AND BEATRICE PRIM GO MISSING. BOY IS BLAMED FOR ALL THE BAD THINGS HAPPENING IN TOWN.



16. VIOLET IS ATTACKED BY A MONSTER.



18. VIOLET IS CAPTURED BY NURSE POWICK AND THE CHILD SNATCHER, AND IMPRISONED WITH BEATRICE AND CONOR.

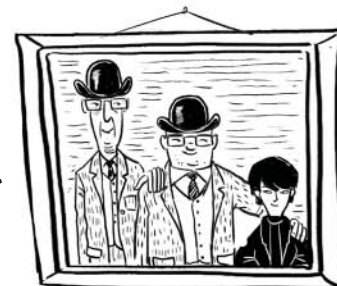
17. BOY SAYS THINGS THAT MAKE NO SENSE AND IS ACTING VERY STRANGELY.



19.

EDWARD ARCHER SEEMS TO RESCUE THE CHILDREN AND RETURNS TO TOWN A HERO. GEORGE IS RELEASED.

20.



THE ARCHER BROTHERS PLOT TO RETURN TO POWER BY DIVIDING THE TOWNSFOLK. BOY APPEARS TO BE WORKING WITH THEM.



21.

JACK NOTICES TWO BOYS IN A PHOTO VIOLET FOUND IN THE ORPHANAGE. BOY HAS A TWIN BROTHER.



22.

VIOLET AND JACK DISCOVER THE OUTSKIRTS AND RESCUE THE REAL BOY.

23.



THE ARCHER BROTHERS REVEAL THEIR SINISTER PLOT TO TAKE BACK TOWN AND ARE ARRESTED.

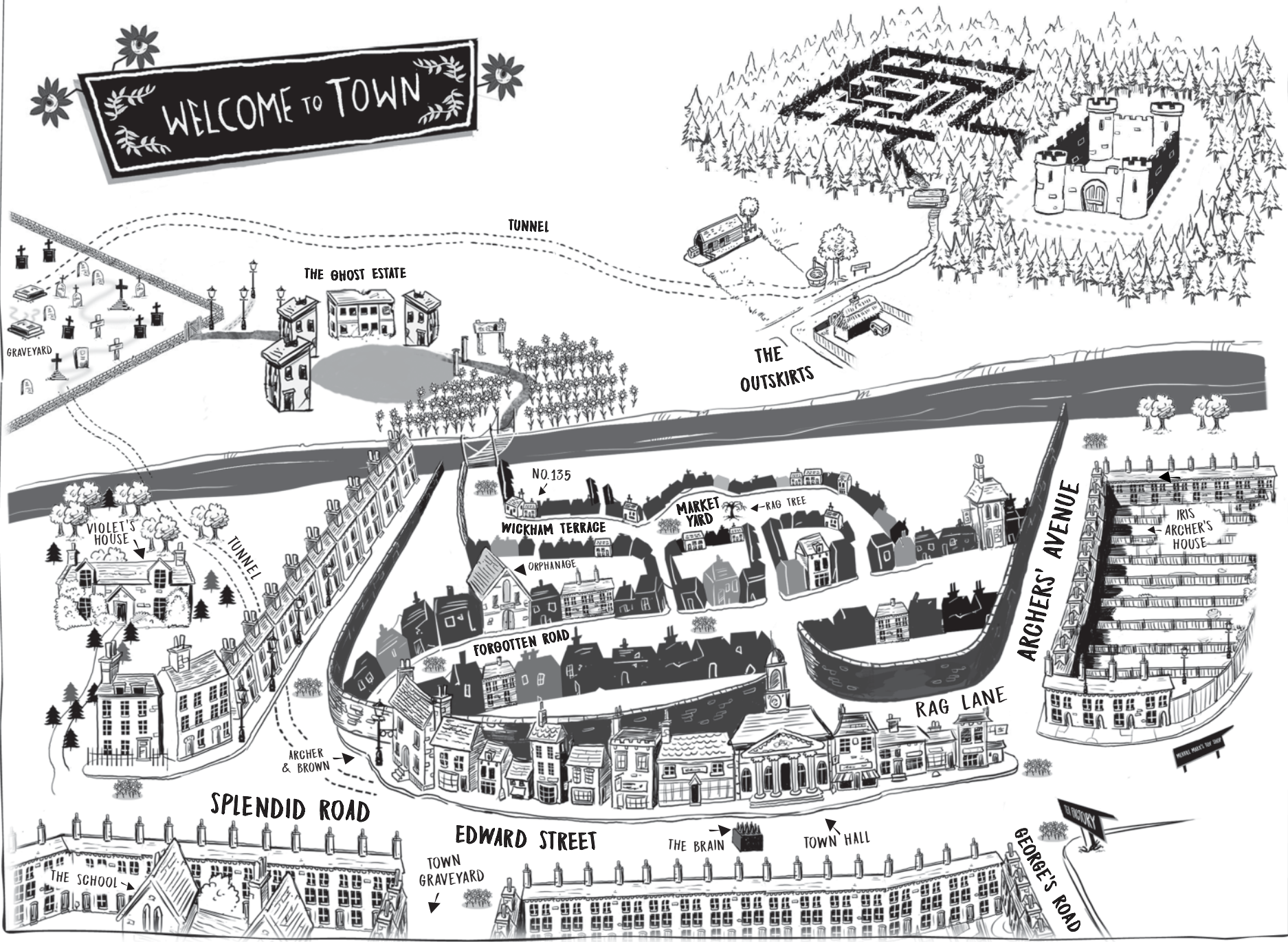
24.

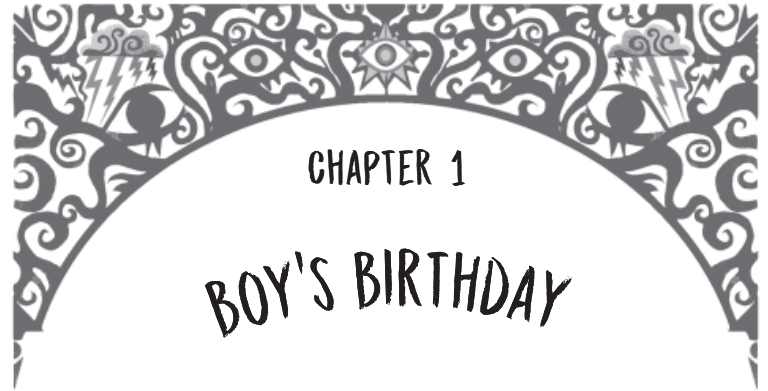


MACULA ARCHER DIES IN A TUSSE WITH NURSE POWICK AS SHE TRIES TO RESCUE BOTH HER SONS.

AND SO OUR STORY CONTINUES...

# WELCOME TO TOWN





CHAPTER 1

BOY'S BIRTHDAY

Violet stared at the miniature eye plant blinking inside a small glass box. She shivered as the creature turned and looked straight at her, its translucent skin-like petals flapping slowly as its thin red stem pulsed with the blood that fed it.

Eugene Brown, Violet's dad, clad in his white lab coat, was busy scribbling some sort of complicated maths equations on a blackboard across the room to her left, a cloud of chalk dust surrounding him. Her best friend, Boy, was scratching his head, sitting at the large steel table in the middle of the room as he tried to tackle the homework Mrs Moody had set them. The summer holidays had only just finished and Boy was finding it hard

to get back into the swing of school. His struggles hadn't been helped by Mrs Moody's workload.

They were in the cellar of Archer and Brown, the town optician's. It was a much nicer place now than when it had been owned by Boy's evil uncles, Edward and George, and known as the Archer Brothers' Spectacle Makers' Emporium. The cellar used to be where the Watchers, Edward and George's vicious army of thugs, had hung out and it had been a cold, unwelcoming room. Rough hammocks had hung from the bare stone ceiling on large metal hooks and old wooden crates were used as tables and storage around the space. It had smelled too, of large, sweaty, hairy men. Now, since Eugene had started using it as his new lab, coloured rugs dotted the flagstone floor, paintings hung from the walls and a large old fireplace, which had been uncovered behind some of the Watchers' stinking mess, blazed heat from its hearth, warming the grey walls. And there were eye plants everywhere, encased in glass boxes on steel lab benches.

It was because of the eye plants that Violet's family had first come to the town formerly known as Perfect, when Edward and George had read about Eugene's research in *Eye Spy* magazine and sought him out. First the Archer brothers had tried to use the plants to do terrible things, then William Archer had installed them as a security system around Town, but now Eugene had

decided he wanted to use his eye plants the way he'd originally intended. He'd recently been given money from a university to do so, and was working diligently on developing the eye plants to help the blind see.

Violet's mam, Rose, had been a successful accountant before Perfect but after her imagination was stolen by the Archer Brothers she'd given all of that up. When Eugene got his funding she stepped in to run the optician's shop above with Boy's dad, William. Violet hadn't seen her mother as happy in a long time.

"I still think they're creepy," Violet whispered, looking through the glass box at a distorted Boy, who was busy biting the end of his pencil. She'd finished her homework ages ago and was getting bored as she waited for her friend to finish his.

"They're not creepy, Violet," her dad corrected, looking round at her through a veil of chalk dust. "These little beauties are going to help so many people! Won't that be amazing?"

Violet knew he was right – the plants would help people. After all her dad was a great scientist, everyone told her that. But it didn't mean the things weren't disgusting. Even after everything, the sight of them still gave her shivers.

"I know," she said, looking across at Eugene, "but why can't you experiment with something less disgusting,



like hair transplants or ears or anything else?”

“Oh yeah, that sounds lovely, Violet – imagine a field of ear plants!” Boy smirked, distracted.

Boy was talking about the field on the far side of the river just over the footbridge. Eugene Brown needed space to sow and mature his eye plants and so, with agreement from the Town Committee, he’d begun growing them in the wasteland separating Town and the Ghost Estate.

“Why are you two talking?” Rose Brown rounded the bottom of the spiral stone staircase reaching down to the cellar from the shop above, and marched into the room. “Aren’t you meant to be doing your homework and not disturbing your father, Violet?”

“I’m finished!” she announced as her mam dropped a copy of the *Town Tribune* on the table where Boy was working.

“That’s great, pet,” Rose said as she pulled Violet’s opened copybook over to her and peered down at the text. “Maybe you’ll get a smile from Mrs Moody this time!”

Mrs Moody was their teacher and she never smiled.

“That’d be a miracle, Mam,” Violet snorted, plonking down into a yellow armchair beside the fire.

Violet and Boy had been coming to Archer and Brown to do their homework ever since classes started back. The

building was just at the bottom of the road from school, it was an easy place to get their work done quickly and meant Violet and Boy didn’t have to go home alone. Violet had never liked being on her own – she’d always imagine all sorts of wild scenarios for every sound – but Boy normally didn’t mind his own company. Ever since his mam had died though, Violet noticed her friend didn’t want to return to Wickham Terrace unless William was there, and William was working so much lately that Boy had practically spent the whole summer at the Browns’. Violet had overheard her mam whisper that Boy’s dad was burying himself in his work.

The pair normally stayed in the basement, using the large steel desk to finish their school stuff. Then, if they got everything done, sometimes Eugene gave them money and they’d race to Sweet Patisserie on George’s Road for buns before the baker’s shop closed for the evening.

“Seems Marjory Blot has the same nose for a story as Robert. It must run in the family,” Eugene said, staring at the *Tribune* now opened on the table.

Robert Blot, Marjory’s brother, had once run the local paper but had given up his position when he was offered a place on the Town Committee. His sister now wrote the news and Violet had often seen her sneaking through the streets wearing sunglasses as if she were some sort of undercover detective. It was kind of funny since the

woman's mass of white frizzy hair meant she could never be mistaken for anyone else.

"What's the story?" Rose asked, looking up from Violet's copybook.

"The missing scientist, the one I was telling you about, Dr Joseph Bohr. Marjory has written an article on him. The whole thing is very strange really – it says he was taken in the middle of the night, straight from his home."

"Oh! Iris knew him!" Boy said excitedly, clearly looking for more distraction. "She told Dad about it the other day. I think she worked with him or something, like a million years ago."

"Your granny's not that old, Boy!" Rose laughed.

"Iris must have had important friends. Dr Bohr is one of the world's greatest minds, though he's long retired now. I must pick your granny's brain – it'd be interesting to hear all about him. Fascinating man, fascinating mind!" Eugene shook his head.

"You've skipped a few questions, Violet." Rose gestured to the page in front of her.

"No I haven't," Violet said, walking over to the table. Her cheeks flushed as her mother silently pointed to the book. "It's this place, Mam, the eyes creep me out. I can't concentrate with them watching me the whole time!" she snapped defensively.

"That's a silly excuse, pet," Rose said. "You'd better

do them or Mrs Moody will be writing more notes in your diary."

Violet huffed and sat back down at the table beside Boy, pulling over her book to read the first missing question.

"The eyes made me do it!" Boy teased quietly as Rose disappeared back up the stairwell.

"Very funny." Violet swiped a look at her friend.

"I thought you weren't scared of anything?" he continued.

"What do you mean? I'm not!" she replied, trying to write her answer.

"What about the eye plants then?" he smirked.

"I'm not scared of them, Boy, they just freak me out. They're disgusting!"

"You seem pretty scared to me!"

"I'm not!" she snapped, flustered, as she picked up an eraser to rub out a mistake.

"Well, if you're not scared then prove it! I dare you to stay in the eye-plant field tonight!" Boy whispered.

Violet stopped what she was doing, looking up to make sure her dad hadn't heard. "The whole night?"

"No, just maybe...fifteen minutes. I dare you to spend fifteen minutes alone in the eye-plant field tonight." Boy grinned. "You can call it an early birthday present to me! You keep asking me what I want!"

“So for your birthday you’d like me to stay in a field? That’s not a present!” Violet said, her cheeks glowing red.

“It’s not any field, Violet.” He put on a scary voice and stared straight at her as his dark eyes grew large. “It’s an EYE-PLANT FIELD. Anyway,” his voice changed back to normal, “the look on your face will be the best birthday present ever!”

Boy’s thirteenth birthday was approaching in a few days and Violet had racked her brains for something to get him. It was the first since his mam had died and she wanted to make it nice so he wouldn’t be sad. She’d thought of baking a cake but the last time she’d tried that she almost burned down the kitchen. Then she’d considered a football or boots or even a skateboard, but nothing felt right, nothing seemed special enough.

“That’s a stupid present – it’s just a dare, and anyway I won’t be scared!”

“Then it’ll be easy.” Boy laughed, turning back to his book. “And it’s my birthday – you’re meant to do whatever I want!”

Violet fumed into her book. Saying no to a dare, especially one from Boy, was almost impossible.

“Okay,” she sighed, rubbing a frustrated fluff-filled hole in her page.

Spending fifteen minutes in the field wasn’t that long

– surely she could manage that. And it would wipe the smirk from Boy’s face – something she couldn’t wait to do, even if it was his birthday soon.