


PROLOGUE



THESE ARE THE *LIVE* MEMOIRS OF
HOLLY HOPKINSON, WHO IS NEARLY TEN. 

I am writing them by my own fair hand so that historians and people from all over the world will have a real-life account of what life was like in twenty-first-century London without all the usual rubbish that adults put in.

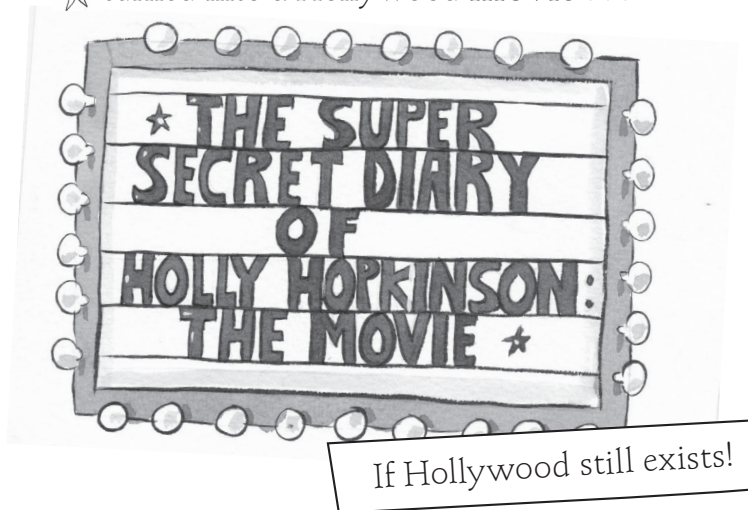
Who knows how far in the future it will be before *you* get to read them, dear reader. I imagine it could be hundreds – even squillions – of years before they are dug up,

★ published to international bestselling acclaim,
★ set behind glass at the British Museum,
★ studied in schools across the country

and



☆ turned into a Hollywood movie . . .



My family, THE HOPKINSONS, live in a lovely, warm, clean, modern house, thank you very much. My dad has a job in an office. I have *no* idea what he does, but he always wears a suit.

Mum works in PR. When I ask her what that is, she says it's

**'TAKING MONEY OFF IDIOTS WHO
HAVE NO IMAGINATION'.**

Harmony Hopkinson, my elder sister, is going through a difficult stage – well, that's what I heard Mum saying to her teacher in her *serious* voice.

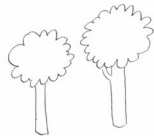
Harmony treats me like a little sister a bit *too* much. She needs to think more about how she's going to look when these memoirs are published.

She's only happy when she's going off to demonstrate* about something she disapproves of.

Harold Hopkinson is my older brother. He's a bit stropy and talks a load of codswallop. *And* he gets double-whopper spots on his nose these days. Dad says *he* was like Harold when he was younger, and Mum just says,

'NOW, WHY DOESN'T THAT SURPRISE ME?'

But I really don't know why Dad says he *was* like Harold, because he flipping well still *is*.



We also have a dog called Barkley, who likes eating and going to the park.

He also thinks the poodle who we sometimes bump into is the bee's knees. If he doesn't tone down his BOGGLE-EYES stuff we're going to get into *serious* trouble with the authorities.



* DEMONSTRATE –
to shout and scream
like the devil.

Finally, there's Aunt Electra, who lives in Hackney and visits us all the time.

'ECCENTRIC'
SAYS DAD →

'ANNOYING'
SAYS MUM →

'THE
GREATEST'
SAYS ME →

'SMELLS OF
CANDYFLOSS'
SAYS ME →



Despite our fab house and the corner shop at the end of our cul-de-sac, which stocks everything we need, Mum wants to move to a different area. (Dad says she's 'upwardly mobile'. I think it's caused by her **PILATES** classes.)

But we'll see about that – the rest of our family are quite happy being *immobile*, thank you very much.

I *quite* like my school, in spite of the teachers who are a SHAMBLES. At least they don't bother much about homework, and if I sit at the back of the classroom, I can talk as much as I like to my *best* friend in the world, Aleeshaa.

We are inseparable.

And Aleeshaa always has loads of pocket money, so after PE we'll gallivant across the park to the corner shop to buy stuff.



Once a week I'm allowed to go to Aleeshaa's house for tea. They live in a very swish flat above her father's art gallery up on Notting Hill.

Dad's always been a bit funny about Aleeshaa's father since they met at what Mum calls

'ONE OF THOSE PAINFUL PARENTS' EVENINGS'.



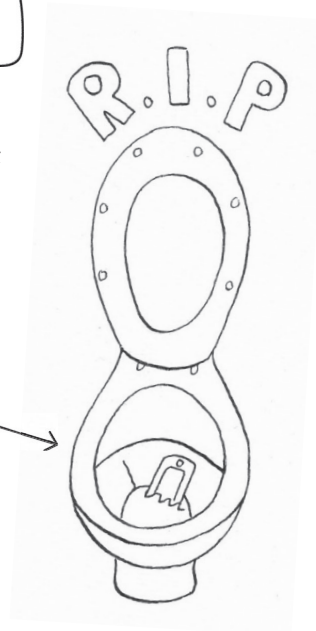
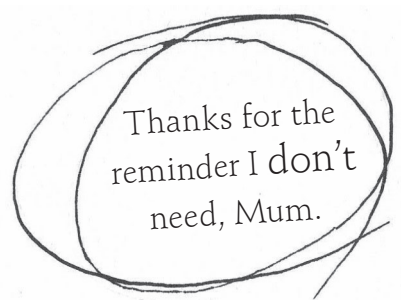
'Anyone would think he invented art,' Dad said.

'Excuse you, Dad,' I said in my *unforgiving* voice. 'Aleesha's father knows a lot about art . . . and so does Aleesha . . . she's going to art school, and she's got a mobile phone.'

'Fancy that,' Dad replied, pulling one of his goofy faces to Mum. 'But I can't quite make the connection between—'

'ENOUGH, GEORGE.'

said Mum. 'And you would still have a phone, Holly, if you hadn't dropped your old one down the loo.'



Anyway,
Aleesha and I have an
UNBREAKABLE BOND,



whatever my dad thinks. She says I should go
to art school with her, so I'm probably going to
do that.

Yes. All in all, my life is pretty
BOB'S-YOUR-UNCLE great.

Or so I thought.

