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Holly enjoys getting lost on long countryside walks, getting lost in very good books, and finding any excuse to go to Pizza Express.

*Also by Holly Bourne*

*Soulmates*

*The Manifesto On How To Be Interesting*

*Am I Normal Yet?*

*How Hard Can Love Be?*

*What's A Girl Gotta Do?*

*...And a Happy New Year?*

HOLLY BOURNE

IT ONLY  
HAPPENS <sup>IN</sup>  
THE  
MOVIES

USBORNE

## To Eryn and Willow

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“Romance films are money-spinning cathedrals of love, wobbling on the foundations of unbelievable and damaging stereotypes.”

Audrey Winters’s Media Studies project

# Prologue

I wasn't expecting candles.

They lit the whole cinema – tea lights, the stout white candles you get in churches, thin ones stuffed into candlesticks. My skin itched in their heat.

I blinked and shook my head. “What the hell?”

Then I saw Harry.

He looked so damn proud of himself. His hair sticking up at every angle, his hands sheepishly in his pockets, head cocked, his teeth bared in his trademark smile. The flickering light made him look like a hologram.

Harry...

My body declared instant war on itself. My heart thudded against my ribcage, like it was using the force to try and pull me closer. But everything else fought against it. My intestines cramped, my stomach curdled, bile rose up in my throat.

“Audrey.” He stepped through the candlelight, and I took

a step back. His face sagged, teeth disappeared. “Audrey, please. Hear me out. I did all this for you.”

That much was obvious but it didn’t change anything.

“Harry, you can’t just light a few candles and...”

He stepped forward again, reaching me this time. He touched my face, smoothed away a tear with his thumb. A tear I hadn’t even known was there.

And I’m thinking... *If this was in a movie, what would you be doing, Audrey?*

*Would you be yelling at the girl on the screen? Chucking popcorn or cushions and screaming “DON’T DO IT, YOU MORON”?*

*...Or would you be sighing – willing her to hear him out?*

# 1

## THE GREAT CLASS DIVIDE

A rich girl meets a poor boy.

They come from different worlds.

She's heading towards amazing things but feels suffocated by them.

He's from the wrong side of the tracks. He was in a gang once. He's not any more.

But he looks rough enough around the edges for her parents to disapprove once the two of them fall madly in love, despite having literally no life experiences in common.



“Here’s where we keep the pulled pork.”

Marianna – “*everyone just calls me Ma*” – pulled up a metal hatch, blasting my face with the stench of dead pig.



“The what?”

“The pulled pork,” she repeated. “For the pulled pork hot dogs.”

“Cinemas serve pulled pork hot dogs?”

I jumped as Ma slammed the hatch closed. “Flicker is not just any cinema. We’re not like CineUniverse. At Flicker, we pride ourselves on a unique, artisan cinema experience.” She smoothed down her black silk shirt. “Now, if you just follow me into the kitchen, I’ll train you on how to make the fresh guacamole.”

Two hours later and I hadn’t learned any of the skills I’d thought I would at my first day working in a small independent cinema. Ma had not once mentioned films, or shown me where a projector was. Instead, I learned how to work the till, smush guacamole, shred pulled pork, pour the exact amount of balsamic vinegar into virgin olive oil to make a dipping pot for the “sourdough fingers”, oh, and mix “cinnamon dust” for the popcorn. It took an hour for Ma to admit that, yes, they did still have popcorn.

“When do you train me in taking ticket stubs and showing people to their seats?” I asked Ma, midway through washing the avocado out from under my fingernails. The cinema opened in less than thirty minutes, and I hadn’t even seen inside the screening rooms.

Ma smiled. “Oh, we don’t want you to run before you can walk.”

The smile made parts of my tummy hurt, like someone was about to jump out in a horror film. She didn't look older than thirty but she behaved like an android. Her hair was pulled back into a stiff bun and she clopped around in ridiculous heels. "You can just be in charge of food tonight. That's all I've put you down for on the rota."

I'd seen the colour-coded rota in the tiny staffroom upstairs. It had every hour split into ten-minute intervals.

"Great," I tried to chirp.

"Harry will be here in a second to do tickets. The new Dick Curtisfield is out, so it's going to be busy."

Dick Curtisfield. I used to adore his fuzzy, love-y films...

"Is that okay?" Ma gave me a look like I'd be murdered if I dared say anything other than yes. But busy was good. Busy was why I'd taken the job. I didn't care what lies people were happy to watch as long as I was busy enough to not think about the message that had landed on my phone on my walk in.

**Mum: Your father wants to sell the house.**

*He wants us to sell the house. Our house. Our home.*

I smiled back at Ma because smiling is sometimes the only way to stop yourself crying. "Sounds good to me. Now, can you explain cinnamon dust one more time?"

Busy was an understatement. The cinema only had two

screens, separated by a purple velvet carpeted area with a ticket booth and a teeny bar. By high tide, it was so packed you couldn't see all the intricate black and white paintings of Hollywood stars on the wall.

Harry turned up two minutes before we opened, stinking of cigarettes and bringing the cold autumn air in on his clothes.

"I know, I know," he said, as Ma tapped her watch. Then, before she could tell him off, he pulled her into a hug and lifted her up.

"Oi, Harry, put me down!"

When he did, she was bright red and smiling.

"There's a queue outside," he told her.

"That's why it's unacceptable for you to be late. Again. The rota says you should've been here thirty minutes ago."

"I'm always late, Ma. Can't you just accept that and schedule it into the rota?"

And she giggled. She actually *giggled*.

I stood behind the bar, nervously polishing the counter over and over. Harry noticed me, waved and walked over.

"Hello, new person."

"This is Audrey." Ma spoke for me, clopping behind him on her heels. "She's a sixth-form student, so she's only doing one school night a week and weekends."

Harry scooped behind the bar and came up right in my face, like personal space wasn't an issue. "I know you." He had dark hair that all stood on end and every part of him was a bit too long and thin, liked he'd been wrung out too harshly when wet.

I shook my head. “I don’t think you do.”

“No, I do...” He was about to say something else when Ma hissed, “Harry? The queue?” and he leaped back over the counter and opened the door to let the stampede in. Well, stampede is something Bridgely-upon-Thames doesn’t do, thank you kindly. It does Chanel No. 5 and Radley purses and detached houses and the *Daily Mail* and oboe lessons until you reach Grade Eight with distinction. The line descended on the bar like a really posh zombie apocalypse, and I dropped my washcloth, stuttering as I asked the first couple what they wanted.

“Can we get two Chilean Merlots, two popcorns with cinnamon dust, the garlic olives...oh...shall we just get a bottle? A bottle of Merlot...”

And I was too busy to think again. Which was fine by me.