The Super-secret Diary of HOLLY HOPKINSON



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Charlie Brooks and Katy Riddell assert the moral right to be identified
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CHARACTERS

HOLLY HOPKINSON





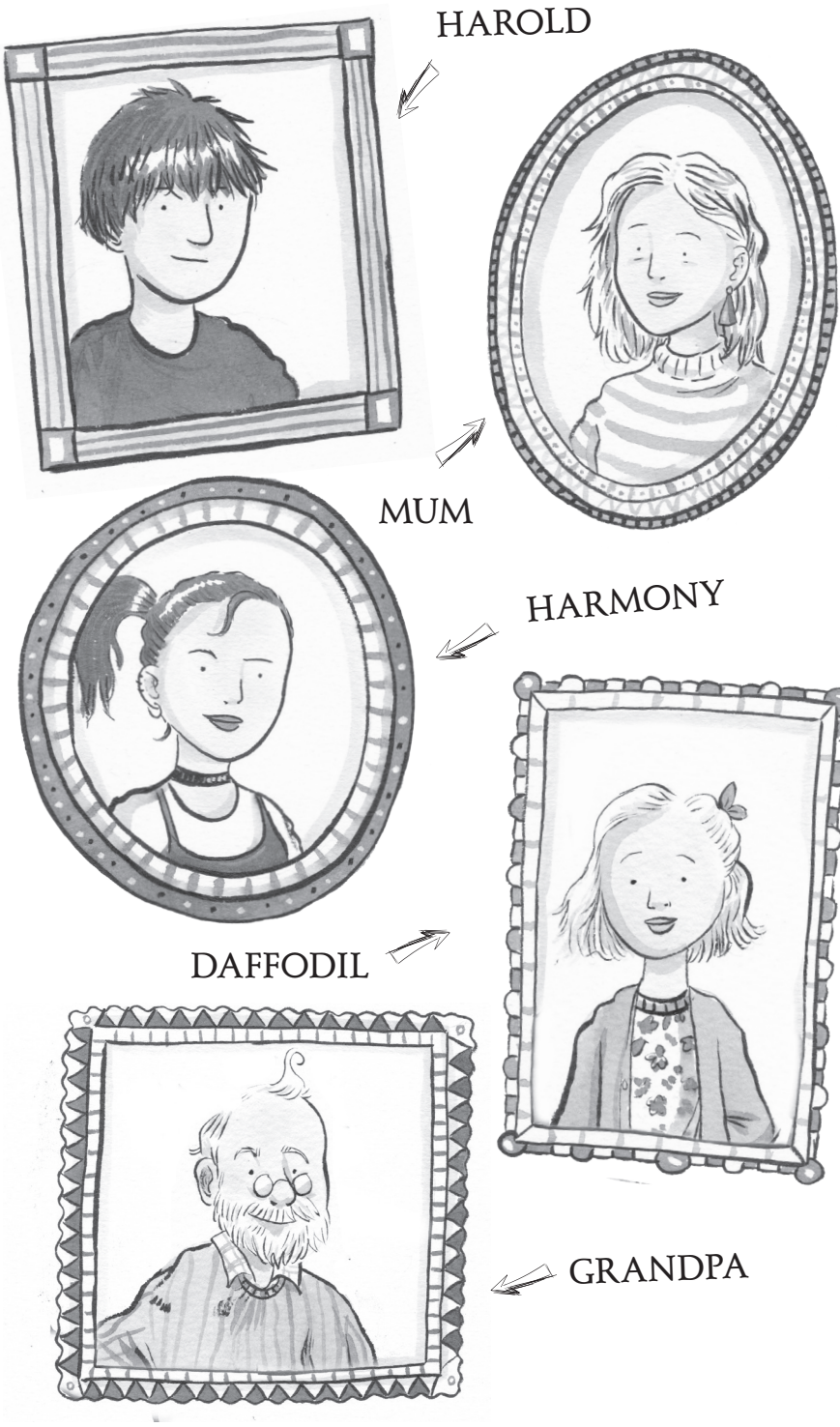
VINNIE

DAD





AUNT ELECTRA


HAROLD
MUM
HARMONY
DAFFODIL
GRANDPA

PROLOGUE

THIS IS VOLUME III OF HOLLY HOPKINSON'S OFFICIAL MEMOIRS - TRYING TO RECORD THE LIFE AND TIMES OF MY DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILY.

We are still macarooned* in the middle of flipping nowhere (Grandpa's farmyard near Lower Goring) since Dad lost his job in London, and my parents kidnapped me and my DOOFUS brother and sister.

I am OFFICIALLY waiting for social services and a TV camera unit to come and find me, but if they're anything like the drivers from the Amazon, I'd better not hold my breath any time soon.

* MACAROONED – stuck in a remote place somewhere that looks a bit like a biscuit.

The village has actually become quite famous since Dad put his excessive screen-time TV watching to good use and turned our pub, the Chequers, into a bistro eating experience. But not always for the right reasons.

We have my swaying Aunt Electra from Bohemia, thank you very MUCH.

She is now OFFICIALLY general manager, generally managing to cause trouble. And, with both Dad and Aunt Electra in charge of the mismanagement, it's losing money faster than all of Grandpa's horses.

So Dad has now agreed to stop being a 'doofus' celebrity chef, but Aunt Electra is still putting spanners in the works of the Village Cultural Events Organising Committee (VCEOC).

Although I am officially attending the Lower Goring village school, I have a double-whopper full plate in my lap when it comes to keeping my family on the rails, as they say in the WILD WEST.

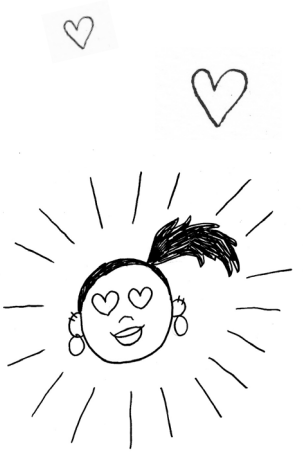
My current RESPONSIBILITIES are running



But I am looking to expire* myself.

So my main holiday job at the moment is managing The Cool, the traumatic band in which my GOOFY brother, Harold, is lead singer and drummer. Things have not gone smoothly for The Cool – even with the assistance of my sister, Harmony, who writes tragic songs for Harold and Stickly, the other guitarist.

* EXPIRE – go up in a large puff of smoke.



Harmony is still as keen as mustard on protesting with social-media friends she's never met, when she can find something suitable to get outraged about that doesn't get in the way of her being boggle-eyed in love with Stickly, or happen when it's raining.

My mum, Sally Hopkinson, is now a **FAMOUS PR GURU** who computes* to London spit-spot fashion. She's also a bit of a handful when she gets the wind between her knees. Particularly when she's orbiting round Mrs Smartside on the Village Cultural Events Organising Committee and going chin to chin with Mrs Chichester, Chipping Topley's worst and only interior designer (and mother of my **OFFICIAL** countryside best friend, Daffodil).

Dad is not a big fan of Mrs Chichester's shop. He says, 'Just shoot me if I ever buy a scented cushion off that ghastly woman.'

Pardon my French.

* **COMPUTES** – think hard on a train.

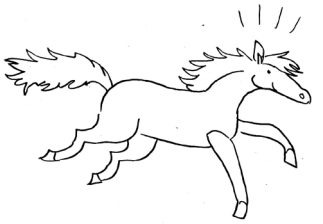
Aleeshaa is my **OFFICIAL** London best friend, but she hasn't been a very good one since my parents **KIDNAPPED** me to the countryside; but she is dead cool, so I'm giving her another chance.

Secretly – and obviously I don't tell Daffodil this – I want to be a cosmopolitan like Aleeshaa and drink cocktails with cranberry and lime juice in them.



And I've forgiven her for not answering any of my messages because she keeps losing her phone.

My dad's father, Grandpa, is RATHER GOOD FUN. The one thing, however, which is a bit fishy about Grandpa is that he keeps the attic locked and says a headless ghost called Mabel lives up there who is very cross. So we all know he's just making that up – but we're not sure why.



Mum says he's a **DARK HORSE**, which is, quite frankly, ridiculous. I think she means he 'has' a dark horse, which is true – Le Prince.

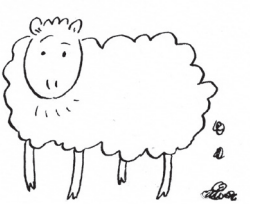
Grandpa is pretty cool about us **INVADING** his farmyard to live in, possibly because all he really cares about is watching horse racing on TV. I am now his horse-racing manager since I appointed myself. His other horse is Declan, who has personality issues that my OFFICIAL animal best friend Vinnie and I need to sort out.



Vinnie is also in line to be one of my OFFICIAL other best friends if he plays his cards right. He's the grandson of Vera, who comes from the north. Vera and Grandpa are dating (although Dad says they're both too out of date to be dating). She mainly washes and irons Grandpa's underpants and bakes cakes that Dad says could have wiped out the Charge of the Light Brigade.

Vinnie is NOT what you would call an academic type. But he CAN talk to animals, which is COOLENDO, as they say in Azerbaijan.

You should know that Grandpa's farmyard is basically an open-air bog (that's a bathroom with no bath in it if you're an American historian). There are animals wandering around, doing stuff whenever they feel like it.



OFFICIAL NEWS ONLY FOR PEOPLE FROM ABROAD – in case you were away when Volumes I and II were finally found in the biscuit tin, you won't know that I have special MAGIC POWERS thanks to the MAGIC POCKET WATCH that dotty Aunt Electra gave me when I was ten years old.

It's been handed down the female side of the Hopkinson family since some bloke called Thomas Mudge got BOGGLE EYES with our ancestor Ethel in 1760.



She was playing the piano for George III at Windsor Castle every night – because that was her job, OK – but he was fed up with listening to Handel's stuff. So she hypnotised the Master of the King's Music and played some modern music from New Orleans. And, even though it was American and they were **REVOLTING***, it cheered the king and Queen Charlotte up no end.

So that's how it all started. If I swing my **MAGIC POCKET WATCH** in front of someone's nose, backwards and forwards, forwards and backwards, and repeat:

* REVOLTING – a bit smelly and not very good at English.

'SPIRO, SPERO, SQUIGGLEOUS SCOTCH,
CAST YOUR EYES WHITHER MY WATCH.'

I can hypnotise adults and get them to do ANYTHING I flipping well want them to. EXCEPT it isn't quite that straightforward. Because sometimes what I intend to happen doesn't, if you get my drift.

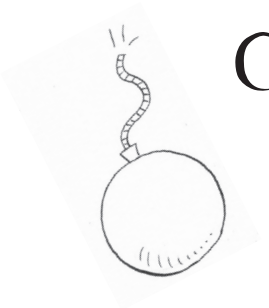
Aunt Electra keeps trying to explain it to me – and bangs on about 'it must be for good or fun . . . or there will be unintended consequences' (whatever they are when they're at home, not minding their own beeswax).

BUT THE FACT REMAINS –

SOMETIMES IT

GOES WRONG.

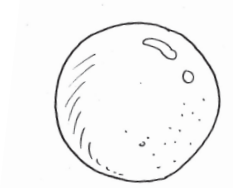




CHAPTER 1

THE BOMBSHELL

SO MUM DROPPED A FLIPPING
DOUBLE-WHOPPER CANNONBALL
ON US THIS EVENING, THANK YOU





VERY
MUCH.

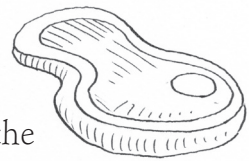
She has been on top of the world since the world-famous film director Steven Speedberg snapped her up to be his PR guru while he was making *Black Beauty* on Vince's farm next door.

But when Mum finally skidded to a halt, looking like the bee's knees when she got home from 'the Big Smoke', I knew something was up.

'Is everyone home?' she shouted in her 'bossy' voice.

'I've got **SOME NEWS**.'

'Well, excuse you . . . haven't we all when we can be bothered to be at home?' I muttered to no one in particular – although Barkley was the only one listening in case I was offering steak.



Grandpa was watching the replay of that day's horse racing. So, although he was 'home' in the technical sense, good luck to anyone wanting to do human interrelations with him.

Dad had actually got back from the Chequers just before Mum landed. As he seemed to have ants in his pants I think he's ALSO planning to announce some **BIG NEWS** himself, but he isn't doofus enough to clash with the PR monster machine that is my mother – he'd end up looking like one of those pheasants you see squashed on the side of the road if he tried to pull a stunt like that. So Dad was keeping schtum.

Harmony was curled up like Moggy, our 'excessively impertinent' cat, in one of Grandpa's exploding armchairs, humming some CALAMITOUS lyrics to herself.

Harold was making a mess in the kitchen and, as Dad says, 'managing to appear quite intelligent at the same time as being a complete numpty'.

I just can't get my head round how that works. I suppose it might be like pretending to do *The Times* crossword?

Vera, Grandpa's pants-ironer, was hanging around like she does, even though she'd sorted his underwear out hours ago. She sticks to Grandpa like a BARNACLE.

So there was a full condiment* apart from Aunt Electra, who was probably doing some bohemian gallivanting stuff in the Chequers.

'We're all ears,' Dad told Mum once Harold had extracted his head from the microwave oven (never try this with anyone's head).

* CONDIMENT – herd of Hopkinsons.

'Well, it's all very exciting,' Mum announced in her 'guru' voice.

'This isn't, like, some SWOT* thing again, is it? Because it's, like, sooo basic and I'm sooo, like, not doing it,' Harmony said from her armchair nest.

'DON'T BE RIDICULOUS, HARMONY.' Mum said.

'WHATEVA, MAN,'

Harold added in his 'ROCK-AND-ROLL' voice.

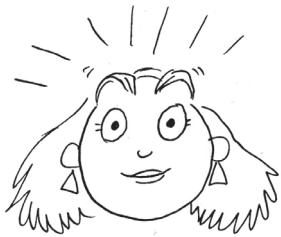
'EVENTS, DEAR BOY, EVENTS.'

'Just listen for one minute, will you? This is very exciting . . . and an amazing opportunity. OK, so I've been offered the job of EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PR worldwide for *Black Beauty*.'



* **SWOT** – actually means 'Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats'.

Mum's eyebrows did their thing and took off into orbit in opposite directions.



'WELL, THAT'S FANTASTIC, SALLY,' Dad said.

'Amazing . . . well done. You deserve it. Isn't that **GREAT NEWS**, children?'

'DOUBLE-WHOPPER hurray, Mum! I can't wait to see Mrs Chichester's face when she hears about this . . . and Mrs Smartside's!' I cheered.

'That's, like . . . sooo cool, Mum,' Harmony purred.

'Events, dear boy, events,' said Harold. Normally he gets a 'shut up' for that, but we were all excited for Mum – except Vera, of course, who just sniffed, and Grandpa, who hadn't heard a word Mum had said.

'Thanks,' Mum replied, using her 'PR' voice – which means you know you haven't heard the whole story.

'The thing is . . . their main office is in New York.'

CHAPTER 2

AUNT ELECTRA'S PEP TALK

AUNT ELECTRA CAME TIPTOEING UP TO MY BEDROOM FOR ONE OF OUR LITTLE CHATS WHEN SHE GOT BACK TO THE FARMYARD.

'How's my little town mouse?' she asked as she came in, whiffing nicely of sweet stuff like candyfloss and MARSHMALLOWS as usual.





Aunt Electra has been my soulmate since the family Hopkinson was shipwrecked (in a non-sea way) upon the rocks of Lower Goring – my lifeline in the troubled seas of the Chipping Topley area.

'Haven't you heard the news?' I asked. 'We're about to be cast adrift AGAIN . . . and, if you think Chipping Topley is the back end of nowhere, try flipping New York, thank you very much.'

'What are you talking about, Holly?' Aunt Electra asked.

'Excuse you . . . someone must have told you. Mum's been offered a job in New York.'

'NEW YORK?'



'Yes . . . and you don't need to be a mathematical abacus to know it isn't anywhere near York.'

'Well, that's a bit of a turn-up for the books . . . and a full circle in a way,' Aunt Electra mused, not sounding alarmed enough by a long piece of chalk.

'WHAT DO YOU MEAN "FULL CIRCLE"?'

'Oh . . . well – don't you remember? – when I was a little bit younger than you, your Grandma Esme – who was my mother, of course – and Grandpa took me to New York for a couple of years.'

'THAT'S A FLIPPING LONG HOLIDAY.'

'WELL, IT WASN'T REALLY A HOLIDAY . . . MORE LIKE A MIGRATION.'

'DAD'S NEVER MENTIONED THIS EITHER.'

'NO. HE WAS SENT BACK TO ENGLAND BECAUSE HIS CHEST COULDN'T TAKE THE AIR.'

'POOR DAD.'

'Hmmm . . . well, as you're about to find out, New York is an exciting place, but they do speak in riddles, like, "Have a nice day, sir," which really means, "Go away." And, "Is there anything else I can get for you, sir?" which means, "If you don't give me a huge tip, you can get it yourself."'

'That sounds worse than trying to have a conversation with Vinnie.'

'And they get their words muddled up. Some man told Grandma Esme that he liked her pants, so she knocked his block off.'

'How did he know what sort of PANTS Grandma was wearing?'

'He didn't. In New York they think trousers are called pants.'

'So why were you all there if you weren't on holiday?'

'Well, of course Grandpa was trying to be an artist, so he painted some of the time . . . and Grandma and I used to hang out in clubs where she sang, sometimes all night.'

'Aunt Electra . . . I'm beginning to get the feeling that you are kidding me,' I said.

I know what my aunt's like when she starts telling one of her stories.

'Let's not worry about it now, Holly,' she replied – and off she popped to find something to eat in the farmyard for her breakfast.

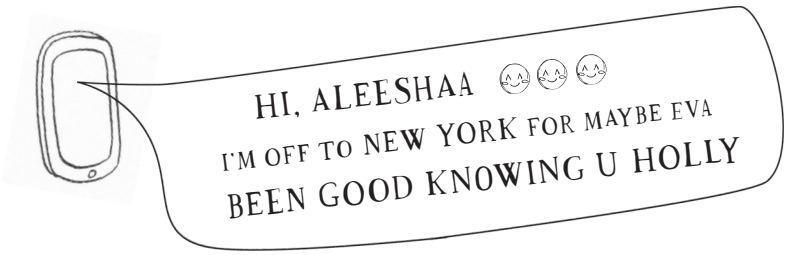
So I have got a lot of thoughts crashing round my head like fireworks that some DOOFUS LUNATIC has let off indoors – and there was me thinking that life around Chipping Topley was close to the edge of civilisation.



THINGS COULD BE ABOUT TO GET A LOT WORSE – THANK GOODNESS I HAVE MY

MAGIC POCKET WATCH.

I sent Aleeshaa, my OFFICIAL London best friend (albeit slightly demoted at the moment), a text to alert her.



She came back to me pretty quickly, so I guess she's found her phone and been waiting for me to get in touch.



How COOL is that? Aleeshaa is already in therapy!