Praise for the 

series!

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Holly Bourne

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'This funny and touching coming-of-age story will reflect the experiences of many youngsters making the transition to secondary school or experiencing changes in the family.'
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Sinead O'Hart, author of *The Time Tider*

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Karen McCombie, author of *Catching Falling Stars*

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'A delight! It's warm and engaging, and perfectly pitched. We are all Lola and we all know a Cleo!'
Abie Longstaff, author

'A warm, funny and bittersweet story of growing up and growing apart . . . just loved it.'
Tamsin Winter, author

'Williamson shows a rich insight into the emotional life of a Year 6–7 child . . . I can't wait to get this into my school library.'
Jenny Jones, librarian, Clifton College

'A perfect read to show how tricky that timeless, gut-wrenching experience of changing friendships can feel.'
Ros Roberts, author

'It made me laugh and cringe in equal measures . . . I absolutely loved it. A perfect transitional read!'
Jo Clarke, author of *The Travelling School Mysteries* series

'Another perfectly observed and pitched story of Year 7 life, funny, warm and true.'
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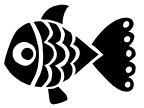
'Daniel Littleton navigates challenges at home and Henry Bigg Academy in this relatable early secondary school story. Children aged 9–12 will connect with Daniel's journey of self-discovery.'
School Reading List

Lisa Williamson

Selfie Queen



illustrated by
Jess Bradley



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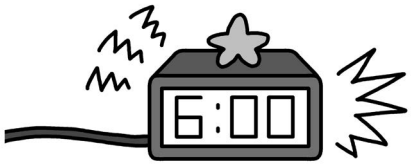
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For Daisy
LW

For Cathy and Franco
JB

Chapter One

It was Friday morning, and I was *so* excited. A professional photographer was coming to school to take our photo, and I couldn't wait!



When my alarm went off at six a.m. (a full hour earlier than usual), instead of pressing the snooze button and going back to sleep, I sprang out of bed, already wide awake and ready to start beautifying.

Some people hate having their photo taken but I absolutely love it. Of course, it helps that I'm really pretty, but the fact is, there's a lot more to taking a good photo than just having a nice face. You have to know your angles and what poses work for you and how to come across as confident. I've been taking selfies since

I was old enough to press the shutter button, and let's just say the practice has definitely paid off. I literally couldn't wait to get in front of the camera!

I put my dressing gown on over my nightie and headed out onto the landing where I ran into Dad who was already dressed and ready.

'You're up early,' he said.

I hardly ever see Dad in the mornings because he leaves for work super early. I don't know much about his actual job, apart from the fact that he does something to do with finance and is in charge of a lot of people.

'It's school photo day and I need to get ready,' I replied.

'I see. Well, enjoy, sweetheart.'

'Oh, I will!'

I went into the bathroom and began my routine, starting with a nice long shower. I washed myself thoroughly with my brand new Very Vanilla shower gel, then shampooed and conditioned my hair, giving it a final rinse with freezing cold water to close the cuticles and make it extra smooth and shiny.

Back in my bedroom (and smelling delicious), I double-cleansed my face and put on a gel eye mask. While that was working, I massaged my face and neck with a jade roller, then applied three different kinds of serum, an eye cream, a moisturiser and a lip mask.



Next, I removed the towel from my hair and combed through a smoothing cream and heat protectant before reaching for my top-of-the-range multi-styler. Once my hair was dry and sleek, I pulled it into my signature high ponytail, taking extra special care to tame any flyaways with styling cream.

Finally, I turned my attention to my make-up. According to the official school rules, make-up isn't allowed at Henry Bigg Academy, but if you're skillful (like me), you can totally get away with it. Of course, it helps that I only use the very best quality products, and have watched so many online tutorials, I could probably do my make-up with my eyes closed and still look amazing.

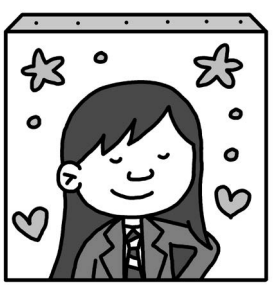
I don't usually wear lipstick to school but as

this was a special occasion I painted my lips a pretty pink before misting my entire face with setting spray. I put down the bottle, inspected my reflection in the mirror and smiled.

All the effort had been worth it.

I looked absolutely perfect.

As I made my way downstairs to breakfast, I passed my big sister Yasmin's Year Seven photo. Mum had had it blown up into a huge canvas and it hung in pride of place in the hallway so it would be the first thing anyone saw when they came in through the front door. I couldn't wait for mine to hang beside it and for visitors to comment on how pretty I was, the way they always did when they saw Yasmin's picture.



Mum was in the kitchen making a post-workout smoothie. She's nearly forty-seven but people always think she's thirty-five at the most. When she was younger, she did some modelling and competed in beauty pageants. One of my favourite things to do when I'm bored is to get out the photo albums and

study the photos of her strutting up and down the catwalk wearing a sparkly gown and high heels. I love it when people comment on how alike we are.

'How do I look?' I asked.

Mum studied me and frowned.

'Come here,' she said.

I went over to where she was standing. She took my chin in her hand, gently rubbing my right cheek with her ring finger.

'Your blusher just needed a bit more blending on that side,' she explained. 'All fixed now.'

'Thanks, Mum.'

'You're welcome, darling. Now, remember to keep your chin down. *So* much more flattering. And be sure to smize.'

Smize means smiling with your eyes. I'm *really* good at it.

'Like this?' I asked.

I struck a pose, pretending the kettle was the camera lens.

'Perfect,' Mum said.

At 8.20 a.m, I knocked on my best friend Evie's front door so we could walk to school together. She usually has her backpack on, ready to leave, so I was a bit thrown when her mum opened the door and told me that Evie was hiding in her room and refusing to come out.

'Why?' I asked.

'She's feeling a little . . . self-conscious,' her mum replied. 'I was hoping you might be able to persuade her that it's not that bad.'

Intrigued, I headed upstairs to Evie's bedroom and knocked on the door.

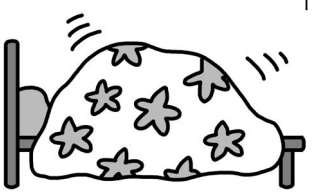
'Who is it?' came a muffled voice.

'It's me, Cleo. Can I come in?'

There was a long pause.

'I suppose so.'

I pushed open the door and stepped inside. Evie was nowhere to be seen, but there did appear to be an Evie-sized mound under her flowery duvet.



'Evie?' I said, taking a step towards it. 'Are you all right?'

'No,' came the reply.

'Why not? What's happened?'

'I can't show you. It's too awful.'

'Don't be silly,' I said with a tut. 'I'm your best friend.'

There was another long pause before Evie emerged from under the duvet.

I let out a gasp. Evie's fringe, which usually skimmed her eyebrows, was now a maximum of three centimetres long. And wonky. *Really* wonky.

'It was only meant to be a trim,' Evie said miserably, 'but I couldn't get it level, and the more I tried to even it up, the worse it got.'

I stared at her in shock. Butchering your hair was bad enough, but to do it on school photo day was the stuff of actual nightmares!

'What am I going to do?' Evie wailed.

'Nothing.'

She stared up at me in horror.

'*You're* not going to do anything,' I said briskly. '*I* am.'

'But we don't have time! If we don't leave now, we'll be late!'

I hesitated for a moment. I'd been in Year Seven at Henry Bigg Academy for six months

and hadn't been late or absent once. There was a rumour that anyone with one hundred per cent attendance and punctuality would be presented with an Amazon gift card in a special assembly at the end of term. Did I really want to ruin my unblemished record? Then I looked at Evie and her terrible fringe and the desperation in her eyes and knew that I couldn't live with myself unless I made this sacrifice.

I reached across and took her hand in mine.

'It's photo day,' I said bravely. 'And I'm going to make sure my best friend looks fabulous if it's the very last thing I do.'



Evie and I both wound up with late marks from our form tutor Ms Martinez, but it was totally worth it. The other Girly Pops (the name for our friendship group) *loved* Evie's new micro-bangs.

'They're so chic,' Laurie-May said as we joined the queue to have our photos taken.

'*So* chic,' Emilia agreed. 'What made you decide to get them?'

'I don't know really,' Evie said with a shrug. 'I just had this feeling that they would suit me.'

Wait a second! Was Evie really going to take all the credit for *my* skill and quick thinking?

'Well, you were right,' Francesca said before I could say anything. 'Seriously, Evie, you could be French.'

'Really?' Evie said with a delighted squeal.

'Absolutely. In fact, you look a bit like that old-fashioned movie star. My mum has a poster of her in our downstairs loo. You know the one I mean, she's really pretty . . . Audrey something.'

'Audrey Hepburn?' I asked, frowning.

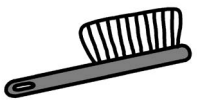
'That's it!'

'She wasn't French.'

'Well, she *looked* French,' Francesca replied.

As Laurie-May pondered whether she could pull off micro-bangs (I'm sorry but there was no way, not with a forehead that size), I reached into my blazer pocket and pulled out a compact mirror. Thanks to my careful preparation, I still looked immaculate. Sadly, a lot of my classmates hadn't put in anywhere near as much effort. Or, in some cases, any effort at all. Take Lola Kite and Astrid Chaney who were just ahead of us in the queue, goofing about as usual. Lola's hair

looked like it hadn't seen a hairbrush in weeks. Meanwhile, Astrid's blazer had a splatter of purple paint on the lapel and was so crumpled it looked like she'd just fished it out of a bin. It was totally bizarre. Why would you not want to look your best? *Especially* on a day as important as this.



'Would you like to borrow my hairbrush, Lola?' I trilled, producing my Tangle Teezer from my bag and waggling it in her direction.

'No, thanks,' Lola replied, not even bothering to look up from her silly thumb war with Astrid.

'Are you sure? It's just that these photos are going to exist for ever. You may not care right now, but a couple of years down the line, I have a feeling you might wind up wishing that you'd accepted my kind offer.'

'I'll take my chances, thanks,' Lola replied, letting out a squeal as Astrid trapped her thumb.

'Honestly,' I said to the others (loudly, so Lola would definitely hear). 'There's no helping some people.'

I wasn't exactly surprised by Lola's response.

She's never liked me. A big part of the reason for this is because I *sort of* stole Evie away from her at the beginning of Year Seven, but the fact is, I suspect Lola and I were destined to never get on, whatever the circumstances.

'Are you going to smile with teeth or no teeth?' Evie asked as the queue edged forward.

'Oh, definitely teeth,' I replied, tossing my hair over my shoulder.



It was a no-brainer. My smile is one of my best features.

In front of us, Lola and Astrid were now practising their posing, taking it in turns to pull sillier and sillier faces.

'*So* immature,' I said with a tut as they collapsed into hopeless giggles.

Evie didn't say anything. She always goes quiet when I say anything negative about Lola, which I really don't get. I mean, there's a reason they're not best friends any more.

Before too long, it was my turn.

Striding onto the makeshift set, the bright lights on my face, I immediately felt right at home.

'OK, just take a seat on the stool,' the photographer said, 'then angle your body a bit to the right and look straight down the lens for me.'

'If you don't mind, I prefer the right side of my face,' I said, sitting down.

I swivelled to my left instead, popped my shoulder ever so slightly, lowered my chin, and smized like I'd never smized before.



The photographer raised her eyebrows, clearly impressed.

'Right it is then,' she said, pressing the shutter button.

Chapter Two

I was still buzzing from the photoshoot on the walk home from school with Evie. I couldn't wait to tell Mum all about it.

'What are you doing this weekend?' Evie asked.

'My dad's taking me out for the day,' I replied. 'We're going out for lunch and to see *The Red Shoes* at the cinema.'

The Red Shoes is one of my favourite films ever. It's about a ballerina who puts on a pair of magical red pointe shoes that force her to dance. I've loved it ever since I was little, but this was going to be the first time I'd ever seen it on the big screen. For lunch, we were going to Lumiere, my favourite restaurant. It's French and really fancy with

