

PRAISE FOR
BÍM BLAKE'S HOT TAKES



MY PENCIL CASE DOESN'T DEFINE ME



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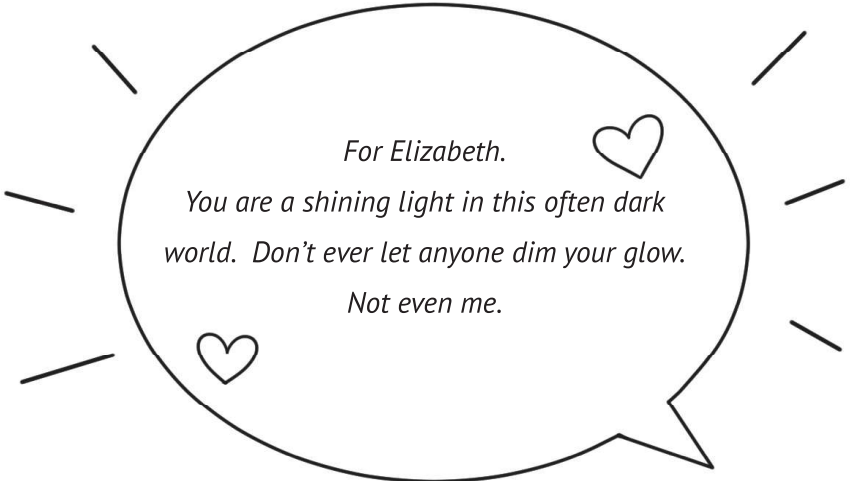
BÍM BLAKE'S HOT TAKES



TOLÁ OKOGWU



PUFFIN



For Elizabeth.

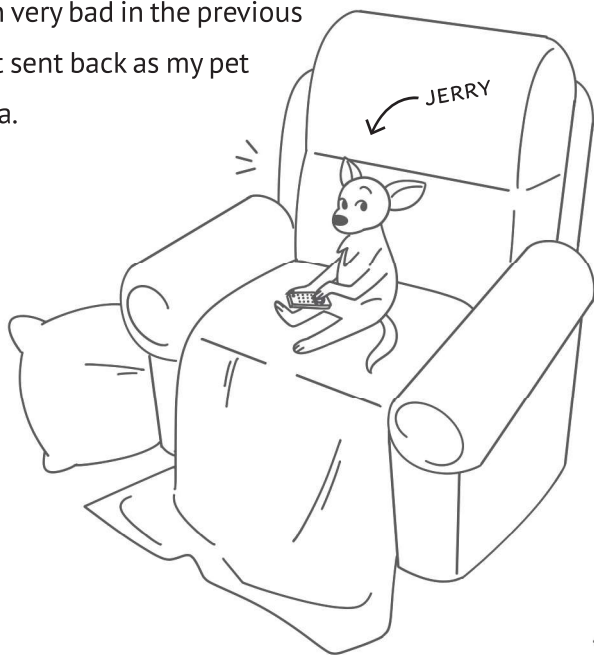
*You are a shining light in this often dark
world. Don't ever let anyone dim your glow.*

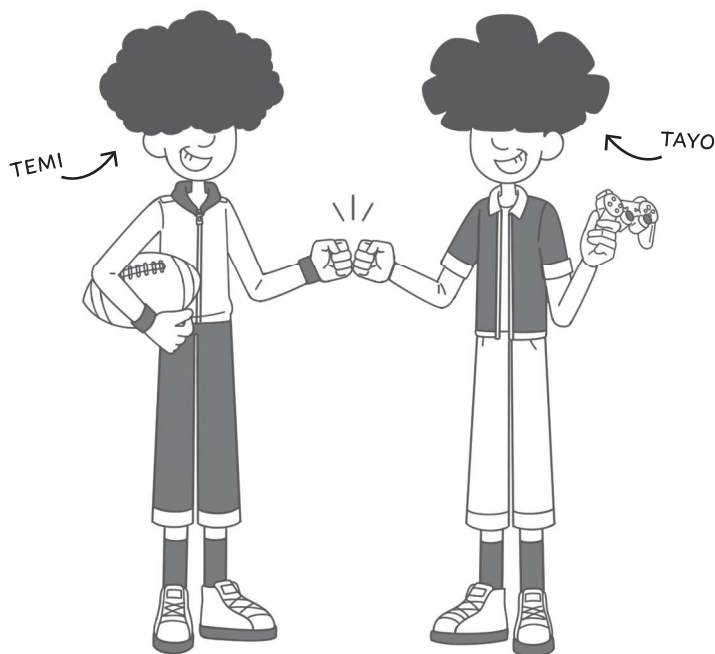
Not even me.

MONDAY 23RD AUGUST

I've started a new journal on this cool app called *Inner Thoughts*. Partly because I'm beginning secondary school in two weeks and mostly because Jeremiah – aka Jerry – ate my first journal. Dad's taking him to the vet. Apparently, it's not normal for a dog to consume a whole A5-size notebook. Jerry's not exactly a normal dog, though, so there's that.

Last week I caught him watching TV. Not an unusual occurrence, except he was sitting upright in Dad's lounge with the remote control tucked between his paws. I'm convinced Jerry's living his second or third life. He must have been very bad in the previous one to get sent back as my pet Chihuahua.

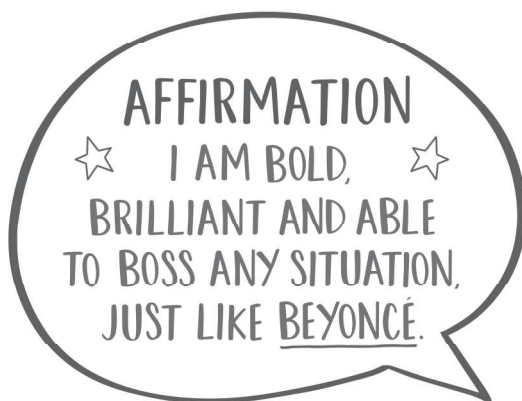




My fourteen-year-old twin brothers, Temi and Tayo, weren't very sympathetic. They don't care about anything except football, PlayStation and their own reflections. The twins have been modelling since they were babies, and every time I step into our local H&M, I see pictures of their lanky, lollipop bodies with fully matching cheesy grins staring back at me.

Temi, the older twin by three minutes, said he didn't understand why I needed a diary in the first place, as nothing interesting ever happens to me. I told him it's not a diary

but a place where I keep track of my eleven-year-old life and the most interesting details of each week. I also include weekly affirmations and all-important to-do lists ... SEE!



★ TO-DO LIST ★

☐ BEEF UP THE SECURITY ON MY INNER THOUGHTS APP
IN CASE THE TWINS GET NOSY.

Dad (his name is Samuel, by the way) suggested I start journalling after the epic fail that was Year Six. I kept forgetting pointless stuff, like my homework and chores. According to the twins, there's even *more* pointless stuff to keep track of in secondary school. So the journal is supposed

to help me stay on top of everything. Dad and my eldest brother, Dami (he's 19 and at university), both have one, and it really does keep their lives nice and boring.

Dad is a solicitor. He's the bald-headed, tan chinos with polo shirt and socks with Crocs type solicitor who bails environmental protestors out of jail at 3 a.m.. He does so much free, charitable work that one of his clients who owns a small supermarket often pays him with food. On the plus side, I get a ton of free Haribo Tangfastics and Pringles. I try not to dwell on the fact that they're sometimes out of date.



Dad has been very busy this summer doing things no middle-aged father is supposed to do. Things like working out at the gym at 6 a.m.. He's even started taking cooking classes to improve his skills in the kitchen. He calls it culinary experimentation. I call it attempted murder. P-Squared reckon I should be grateful I have a dad who even makes an effort.

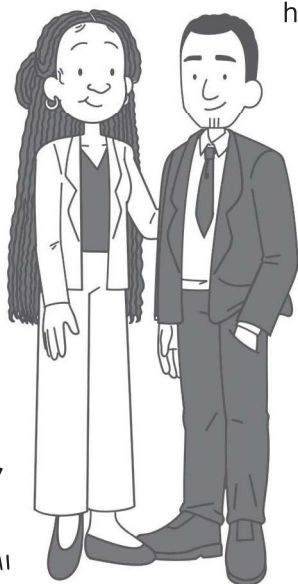
P-Squared are my twin aunts, and I usually see them at

least once a week when they come round on Saturday night to watch *Strictly Come Dancing* or some other TV show. Aunt Peju is a life coach and she's super bubbly and funny. She's a big fan of colourful turbans and caftans that clash. Because her hair is loc'd, her turbans are huge.



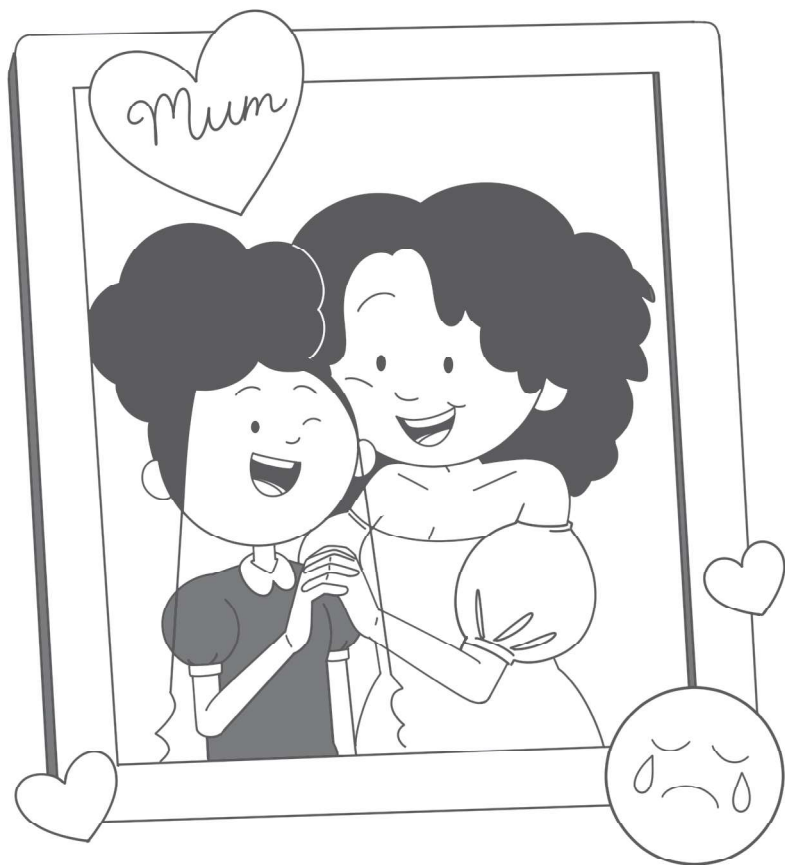
Aunt Pelumi is more 'down to earth' (her words, not mine). She's an accountant, and she looks like one. Boring suits with sensible shoes and an even more sensible fiancé called Josh. I sometimes think that Aunt Pelumi makes

herself look as quiet as possible so people won't suspect how loud her personality can actually be. I call them P-Squared because they're double the trouble and double the fun... You'll see!



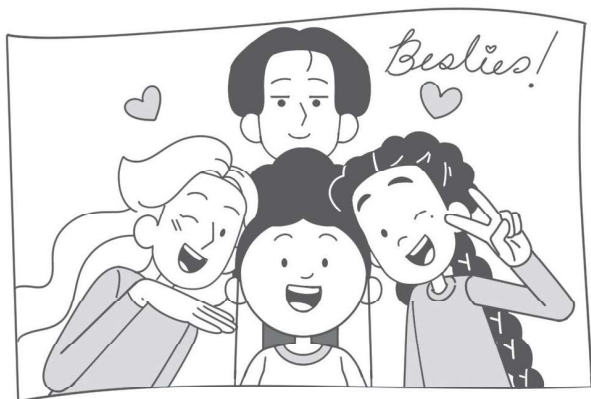
Mum's not with us any more. She died from cancer three years ago, though it sometimes feels like yesterday. Mum was the

centre of our world, and there's this great big hole in our lives where she used to be. I'm still working on filling it, but I don't think it's actually possible.



TUESDAY 24TH AUGUST

There are only two more weeks of school-free fun for me and my three besties – Pam, Ji-ho and Aisha. We call ourselves BTS (Besties That Slay). It used to be BTSTST – Besties That Slay Together Stay Together – but it was a bit of a mouthful, and our fingers got tired of typing it.



It's been a couple of weeks since I've seen any of them in person as they've all been away on holiday. Ji-ho spent most of the summer break in South Korea with his family, and he's going back again for Christmas. The twins were well vexed about it coz they fancy his older sister, Ji-won. Meanwhile, Aisha spent two weeks in Spain with her

mum, while Pam was living it up in LA with her parents. I'm the only saddo who stayed in London and didn't travel anywhere. Dad's clients are so needy that he has to be on call **ALL THE TIME!!**

Aisha, Ji-ho and I have been tight since Year Two after Joshua Sanderson insulted my afro puffs. Aisha bopped him on the nose, and Ji-ho calmly explained why he deserved it. Pam joined our little trio in Year Four after she accidentally spilled her lunch on Cleo Mackintosh.

Cleo's the girl people want to be – or at least hang out with in the hope her popularity will rub off on them – along with her best friends Adeola and Eliana. We call them Cleo's Coven (Aisha came up with it). Though there's nothing witchy about the way they look – they all love pastel colours – the way they act is sometimes questionable. Cleo's definitely not the girl you want to spill a whole bowl of lentil curry over. The encounter went something like this:



CLEO

How dare you, a mere mortal girl, spill your grotty food all over my goddess self. You are not fit to breathe the same air as me, never mind soil me with your South Asian-inspired lunch.

PAM

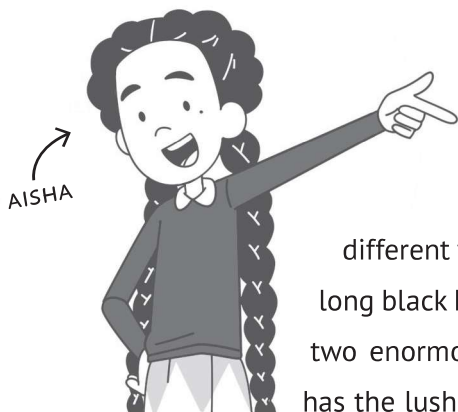
Please forgive me. I am truly not worthy.

CLEO

No, I shall not. And, no, you are not. Now disperse. I hope never to see your displeasing self ever again.

OK, I may have exaggerated a bit, but Aisha and I did find Pam crying in the bathroom afterwards, and we helped her clean up. She's been hanging with us since, though from the outside, Pam probably has more in common with Cleo than she does with us. The same perfectly curled hair, only Pam's is red instead of brown. The same obsession with skincare, make-up and social media trends. They even use the same filters on





their selfies, despite the fact they're already really pretty.

Aisha's pretty too, but in a different way. She's super tall, and her long black hair is permanently styled in two enormous French braids. She also has the lushest eyebrows I've ever seen.

I admit it, I have eyebrow envy. Mine are like skinny sticks stuck to my face.

When it comes to my style, Pam describes it as confused. Give me a pair of chunky heeled boots (I'm on the short side), a cute skirt and an oversized tartan shirt, and I'm good to go. Ji-ho, on the other hand, always looks neat, right down to the perfectly straight middle parting in his hair. It's the only thing about him that is. His room is always a mess. He's tall like Aisha, and they both like to pat the top of my head. They think it's affectionate, I think it's annoying.

It's our monthly sleepover on Friday night. We've been having them since Year Five, and they're usually the last Friday of each month because I'm rubbish at keeping track of dates. Ji-ho only stays until about 11 p.m., then one of his

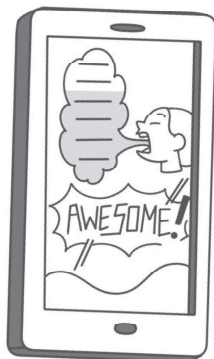


parents picks him up. We mostly watch movies, eat a ton of junk food, then crash out around 1 a.m.. It's always loads of fun.

But before the sleepover this week, we're going to buy new school supplies. Pam says stationery matters in secondary school, so ours needs to be perfect. Not sure what difference a sharpener or pencil case will make, but it was easier to agree than argue with her. Besides, it means we get more time to hang out before school starts.

Once it does, I'll be back on curfew, and Dad will cut my screen time down to non-existent. Pam doesn't have any restrictions on her bedtime or phone usage, and Aisha's mum at least lets her use hers until 7 p.m. on weeknights. And don't get me started on Ji-ho. He hacked his phone so none of the parental controls even work any more. He reckons he's going to be rich one day when he works in tech, making apps. I'm not so sure. His last genius idea was an app that rated burps.

Dad only lets me have an old, restricted phone and it has exactly three apps: *Instant messaging*, *Maps* and now *Inner Thoughts*. How sad is that? The unintended result of having such a basic phone is that I'm free to observe



the world around me in detail. The twins call it being nosy, but I call it being a good journalist. That's what I want to be when I grow up, just like Mum was.

Everyone says I look like her – same big eyes and full lips, so how *amazing* would it be to do the same job she did?! I know it will help me to stay connected to her, especially as I'm scared that I'm already forgetting her. I can't even remember what she used to smell like any more.

I know Mum would want me to use my investigative skills to do some good. She believed that everyone has the power to change the world. Temi doesn't love my sleuthing skills, though. It might be because he got in trouble after I figured out who was scoffing all the custard creams last year. Spoiler alert: it was him. Few people know that the custard cream



was once declared the most dangerous biscuit in Britain due to its high 'crumb dispersal' rating (flying bits of biscuit). Once I clocked Temi's red and swollen right eye, I knew immediately he was guilty. Served him right, to be honest.

Tayo says it's very strange that I make such detailed observations, and yet I didn't manage to notice knickers poking out of the bottom of my school trousers. It's only happened twice, and in my defence, it was because I ran out of trousers and had to raid the laundry basket. Don't judge me! It's why I've now officially sworn off leg gloves and switched to skirts.

Luckily for me, *Inner Thoughts* also has a cool blog feature where I can write articles about my observations that my followers on the app can read. I have two articles and exactly three followers at the moment (bet you can guess who). I'm calling the blog *Bim's Hot Takes*. I need to make sure my journal entries are set to private and my blog to public, though. How embarrassing would it be if I accidentally posted my journal for the whole world to see?!

Talk about CRINGE!! 🤦🏻

★ TO-DO LIST ★

☐ CONVINCING PAM THAT OUR PENCIL CASES DON'T
DEFINE US.
