

For
Josephine Lois Thompson
and Charlotte Josephine Hayes
— *big love.*

One

I have started this journal in the hope that something interesting and supernatural will happen to me but I fear this is unlikely. I am not an orphan and I do not live in a cupboard under the staircase. We do have a staircase cupboard — it is full of gumboots and old newspapers but I don't live in it and I have parents, two of them. Alive. And they both love me. A lot. This is good but annoying, as it is usually unloved orphans that have all the magical luck. Mum actually gave me a cushion with 'You are so loved!' written on it. I was like, what is this ... I wanted the one with the black leafless tree lithograph on it. It looks dark and mysterious. To be dark and mysterious is one of my lifelong goals. If passing inhabitants of an alternate magical world see the 'You are so loved!' cushion on my bed, they will keep walking.

When my dad comes home from business trips, he tries to read to me books like *Matilda* (best book ever) but I am getting a bit old for it and I point kindly to my hardback series of Harry Potter with the ADULT covers so he will understand I am quite literate and stuff.

I also have two sisters and tragically ... one brother. None of us can guess which one is Mum's favourite because she loves all of us so much — even Pig Boy slash the male sibling. Annoying MUCH? It's a love festival at our house. We range in age from twenty-four to eleven, with me being the youngest. I am the fourth child of an only child (named John) and a third adopted child (named Letty) who has no idea about her birth family, which I must say does give me hope in the dark-and-mysterious department. If I were Mum I would really want to know that sort of thing. She could be royal or something. My mum is special but she could be authentically special.

There are only two of us loved-up kids living at home at the moment, so sadly we look like a really typical family. *Typical* — this is a terrible concept, I hate typical. It is the exact opposite of interesting and unusual.

I live at home, naturally, as I am only eleven years old. My brother Linden (AKA Pig Boy!) is fourteen. He hates me and he lives at home. And then there is my twenty-two-year-old sister Fern. She is an Arts student who kind of lives at home when she is not cat-sitting. I find it disappointing that she has never looked after a black cat — now that could be interesting as it might be a 'familiar', which is a witch's magical lifelong pet. But no, they are all silvery blue or ginger; typically (shudder) they are a very boring stripe. Fern is not in residence at the mo — YAY. She always hogs Mum with her stupid love-life problems.

My eldest sister Zinnia is aged twenty-four. Zinnia has

moved to Spain to be with her Spanish fiancé Manuel. They are both working on a big engineering project. This is very exciting except Zinnia is not excited about it because she is so boring. Mum has to send her Vegemite, bulk Cherry Ripes and Smith's Crisps in a large box every month. When she skypes, Zinnia always ends up crying. I feel like saying, 'YOU ARE SO LUCKY TO BE IN A DARK AND MYSTERIOUS PLACE! Go and explore a Gothic basilica and eat some tapas and stop crying for heaven's sake.' But I don't. I am mature that way.

I am being packed off to my grandfather's down south for two weeks because my parents are going away to celebrate their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary. They go away every year at this time and they think it is funny to say they pretend they do not have four children for two weeks of the year. Hilarious. NOT.

Fern has to come home with the three cats she is minding to mind Linden. Mum says it is to keep Linden 'company' as her strapping lad certainly doesn't need taking care of, but then I overheard Dad say that he does not trust Linden to not burn the house down as he is 'easily stimulated' and 'easily led'. Mum replied that Linden is going through a 'difficult stage'. This stage is fourteen years long with no end in sight. Then I heard Mum say that she can't believe people trust Fern with their cats and there is no way she would leave Fern in charge of me and Linden while he is 'journeying through his special challenges' which is like ... being the best BULLY he can be.

It's not that Mum doesn't adore Fern — they are like besties with all their sickening girlie chat. It's more that Fern forgets stuff like food and hygiene and is not very observant of the Pig Boy bully 'going for Olympic gold'. She is not ordinary and is what Mum calls a 'free spirit'. You would think this would make me like her more. It doesn't. She is sooo self-involved. Bleurghhh!

So back to me ... I overheard Dad say a break from Linden would do me the world of good and that next term they should seriously think about enrolling me in a fun young people's dance class like funkyed-up jazz hip-hop so I can meet new people.

NOT HAPPENING IN THIS LIFETIME, FATHER DEAREST!

So it's Grandad and me for a fortnight. He is so ordinary it makes me want to sigh. He makes jam and has a jam collection. JAM! Thirty different combinations with fig, it's not even something sexy like strawberries. It's a yawmfest. But he is a dear sweet thing and I do love him a lot. And I love his house. And he is big on food and hygiene. He makes a cake every day — a lot of times the cake contains fig, which is vomitous, but every few days he pulls out a hazelnut and chocolate cake with GANACHE and it more than makes up for nibbling politely on figgy loaf. Mum and I once tried to make the chocolate cake at home but it was a disaster and this made Mum cry.

Back to the house — Grandad's house is the oldest in the street by a long way. It has pretty stained-glass patterns

around the front door and roses that are older than Dad. So they are ANCIENT! Their branches are like ... gnarled and as thick as sausages. When I was little I thought they were magical and spent a lot of time crawling in and between them. I was looking for fairies (blush!) but all I got was scratched — rewrite: severely hacked to pieces — and Grandad would chase me around with some homeopathic ointment that probably contained stewed figs.

So food and hygiene covered.

I am taking this journal of course. I am enjoying writing with my new pacer but I am on the lookout for a quill or a fountain pen. My violin is already packed up and ready to go because Grandad is a fantastic audience and he would be sad if I didn't play for him. A lot. I am also taking my laptop because it has all my novels and stuff on it. Grandad doesn't have an internet connection so I won't be able to google new words to learn — which is my all-time favourite hobby in the world! Grandad says his eyes are too weak now for a computer, but when he stays with us in Perth he always manages to enjoy searching for designer cake recipes or the value of coins in his coin collection.

I won't write any more until we get to GG's. This is what we call Grandad, thanks to Zinnia.

Zinnia, Fern and Linden ... their names are woody, weird and embarrassing. We are all named after plants. I guess Dad is into gardening and Mum is into babies. They must have imagined Linden would grow into a wise talking tree. Wrong.

And then there is me ... I am Lily (so glad I didn't get stuck with Fern), which is the same first name as Harry Potter's mother, and my surname is Griffin, which is pretty close to Gryffindor — so I think this is a good omen that I could be a chosen one in some sort of way. EXCITEMENT!

Two

On this visit to Granddad, I am going to concentrate my paranormal investigations in the Rosy Room across from the kitchen. We call it the Rosy Room because the walls are covered in faded pink rose wallpaper circa nineteen-forty-something. It's creepy, I'm sure I can feel a weird vibe coming off it, which is very Potteresque of me. I'm quite drawn to vibes. I love the word *circa*, it means *around about*! Actually I love all kinds of words. According to the Pig Boy I am a nerd and a word-freak. WHATEVER!

I asked Granddad about the wallpaper and he said it was a bit before his time. He said the house belonged to Grandma's family first and then he and Grandma inherited it. Our name for Grandma is Nimmy (thanks Zinnia ... NOT). I would like to ask her what is up with the creepy room off the kitchen and I also have a lot of other inquiries about stuff. But Nimmy does not have the answers anymore. She lives in a nursing home three streets away. Granddad visits her every day. She has a sort of dementia.

Sometimes she remembers Granddad and on those days

he is very happy, and sometimes she even pretends to remember me, which I think is incredibly kind of her since she got ill when I was around six and she couldn't possibly connect that gorgeous child with this beautiful preteen. Still she tries, she tells the nurses, 'This is my granddaughter,' and because she has three granddaughters I feel it is a pretty good guess, which I think means she is still in 'there' somewhere. But my dad thinks she is 'gone'. I do not like it when he says that. I think it is 'incredibly simplistic' (Dad is always saying this) and quite rude but then, she is his mother and he would kind of know that sort of stuff. But seriously, it does upset me and I wish he wouldn't say it.

When I look at all the beautiful pictures of Nimmy in her younger days (she was so beautiful back then), I get a very sad vibe. I also get a very sad feeling that I do not look like her. AT all.

I am now at Grandad's house. I am unpacking and Grandad is cutting up the cake. It is a plain vanilla butter cake and there has been no mention of fig whatsoever. Yay!

The cake was delicious (no surprise) and Grandad has slipped off his Italian loafers and is having a nap. Grandad is a bit 'dapper'. This means he is neat and stylish.

I am going to examine the Rosy Room for interesting and mysterious stuff. The key to the room hangs on a hook right next to the door so it will be easy to get into. Apparently Nimmy wouldn't let anyone in and the key went missing for a long while. GG found it recently and put it back where it belonged. GG said it is a bit of a storage area for things

Nimmy couldn't part with. Sometimes I stickybeak around when GG unlocks the door to find one of his coins or stamps. It has a lot of old furniture and boxes and tins and clothes, so something a bit vintage and antique might show up — which is my second favourite thing next to dark and mysterious.



Okay, my hand is shaking. It is literally shaking. I HAVE FOUND SOMETHING. It took me a while to work out exactly what it was I found, because it was hiding under some old letters and cards in an old chocolate tin. When I began to have a suspicion about what it was, I did not want to touch it. I have to confess that at first, I let out a little squeak and dropped the tin of letters onto the floor.

I snuck into the kitchen and Grandad was still snoring in his chair by the old range, warm from cooking the cake. I got a pair of tongs and went back to pry off the letters and cards.

My hand wobbled around a lot and I kept thinking it couldn't be what I thought it was — because that would be crazy and highly unlikely. These two things are always good indicators that you are onto something a bit special and supernatural.

It is what I suspected.

It is a finger.

A FINGER!

Sickening. I had to leave the room and go into the

kitchen again. I nearly woke up GG but he looked so old and tired I didn't have the heart. So I sat down and ate another slice of his most excellent cake. I waited at least ten minutes and then I began to feel 'calm from the carbs' (Fern says this as she stuffs her face — now she has the muffin top to prove it) and my brain started to work again.

This is it.

This finger is my calling. This finger is my destiny. So I am going to investigate it and use the surrounding facts to build a picture of how a finger has come to reside in an old chocolate tin in the Rosy Room.

Later in the day ...

Okay ... so this is really freaky and I am feeling a chill as I write this. The finger is fresh. If that is not creepy enough, the cards and letters from the chocolate tin are dated 1945 to 1952. I have read a couple of them for clues. They don't seem to contain any. They are like:

*Dear Lucy,
Happy Christmas 1950, so lovely to see you
again. Keep strong.
Love, Uncle Don and Aunty Ena.*

I know Lucy is my grandma that we call Nimmy, but who is Beryl?

April 1946

*Dearest Beryl,
May I trouble you for your simply delicious
jam-filled sponge recipe? I also adore your
mock cream ...*

Not riveting stuff, although the mock cream recipe does intrigue me.

The papers are yellowing and stuck together and there are a couple of black-and-white photos of two girls and a cat. (Not black but stripy — SIGH! Sighing is so Zinnia.) If the finger was put in the tin all those years ago, wouldn't it be all black and green and blue with dried blood and, more than likely, wouldn't a bone be sticking out?

This finger is pink and all dewy. The nail is quite pretty and clean. There is no dirt under it. The lid of the tin was really hard to get off and I had to get a metal letter opener out of the desk drawer. It took me ages and I stabbed myself twice but I felt compelled to finish off the job, as I was very drawn to the tin. I think I might have a gift and my gift is telling me that the finger has been there a long time. But my eyes are telling me the finger looks ... I don't know how to say this ... the finger still looks alive.

Grandma Nimmy has been in the nursing home for four years and so it is just Grandad GG here. My powers of deduction tell me Grandad must be responsible for the finger. It is quite probable that he cut off someone's finger.

Maybe he has even murdered someone. Maybe he is not my grandad but an evil *doppelganger* (which I'm not sure how to pronounce but it means a *look-alike* on the outside but totally different on the inside). I am really feeling sick now and should not have eaten the second piece of cake.

Grandad has just opened the door and popped his head around the corner and asked what I want for dinner. I actually had the presence of mind to answer, 'Fish fingers,' and I watched his face really carefully. He slapped his hands together and said, 'Yummy! Let's do wedges with that, Lily Pilly!' like he was really looking forward to fish fingers and wedges with his youngest and favourite grandchild. I have to listen to my intuition (because I have a gift) and it tells me Grandad is not a murderer but my awesome GG.
PS GG is the only one who can call me Lily Pilly.

Three

Before we got the fish fingers and stuff at the shops, we walked around to Nimmy's Home. She is no longer beautiful. In fact, and this really pains me, she is quite unattractive. She has crusty freckles that are now the size of planets and her front tooth is missing. There was an incident with a gingersnap biscuit recently. Apparently she is not to have them anymore as she 'can't manage them' and nobody is sure who gave it to her. Dad was really cross about it.

I don't like to look at the gap but find I can't stop. She didn't know Grandad or me today. I could tell Grandad was sad and he went off to find her missing underpants that were clearly labelled. Sophie, our favourite nurse, stayed for a minute and asked me what I was reading now — she so gets me. I said I had just finished the Anne of Green Gables series. She said that series was an ALL-time favourite. Even though it is not supernatural at all, I like it ... it is still a really good read. Anne is such a crack-up.

Last holidays I had just finished *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* and we had a discussion and stuff on it.