

Superstar High The Time of your Life

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About the Book

Belle's falling for the new boy

Holly's in love

Cat's running out of time

Life at the Garrick School of the Performing Arts is never dull, and Belle, Holly and Cat are determined to make the most of every minute.

But training to be a superstar is tough, and as the pressure mounts the girls are going to have to stick together . . .

Superstar
HIGH

WHERE YOUR DREAMS COME TRUE

**THE TIME OF
YOUR LIFE**

Isabella Cass

RHCP DIGITAL

For Mac

CHAPTER ONE

Cat: Totally Under Control

CAT WICKHAM WAS walking on air!

OK, so she wasn't *exactly* defying the laws of gravity and bobbing around like a helium balloon. But she *was* fizzing with nervous excitement as she hurried to join her best friends, Holly Devenish and Belle Madison, on their favourite sofa in the elegant wood-panelled entrance hall.

It was the end of a long, busy afternoon at the end of a long, busy week - the first week back after the autumn half-term holiday - at London's world-famous Garrick School of the Performing Arts. And in just a few minutes Cat would be setting off to audition for a part in the end-of-term production of *Macbeth*.

And not just for any old part . . .

It was for the part of *Lady Macbeth!*

How brilliant was that? Cat marvelled for the millionth time. Only one of the best-known characters in a Shakespeare play - in fact, *any* play in the western world. Admittedly, not the *niciest* lady you could wish to meet - in fact, Lady Macbeth made the Wicked Witch of the West look like Snow White - but an actress's *dream!* First she bullies her husband into murdering the King so he can take the crown; *then* she places the blood-soaked dagger in the hands of the sleeping guards so it looks as if *they* did it.

What an amazing character!

Cat had never *dared* to hope that she might be up for a leading role in her very first term at Superstar High - as

the Garrick was usually known. As a brand-new Year Eight student, she'd originally tried out for a smaller part as Second Witch - but the directors had called her back for The Big One.

What an amazing chance!

This was no ordinary production. The Garrick staged a variety of spectacular dance shows, concerts and plays throughout the year, and their annual Shakespeare production was renowned in the theatre world as a major showcase for upcoming talent. London's top casting agents and theatre reviewers were always invited, and could be spotted in the audience, on the lookout for the stage stars of the future.

And being a serious actress was all Cat had ever dreamed of. Playing Lady Macbeth could be the launch pad that would rocket her into the stratosphere, warp-speeding her on her way to leading roles at the Globe and with the Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford . . .

Back down to earth! Cat warned herself. She had to *get* the part of Lady Macbeth first! And right now she needed a moment to catch her breath after the high-energy salsa marathon - otherwise known as advanced Latin dance class with Miss LeClair - that she and Holly had just completed. Holly was still wearing sweats over her leotard, her braids tucked under a wide hairband and her flawless brown skin still glowing with exertion. But Cat had sprinted up to her room for a high-speed change into a slinky black dress and killer heels. She just couldn't see Lady Macbeth in a tracksuit, somehow.

'Don't let me get too comfortable!' Cat sighed, sinking back into the cushions and closing her eyes.

'Well, good luck,' Belle said, elbowing her in the ribs.

'Oof, what was that for?' Cat gasped.

Belle grinned. 'Getting too comfortable. You were practically *snoring!*' She looked effortlessly stylish as usual, in designer jeans and a simple but perfectly cut white T-

shirt, her long blonde hair swept up in a loose knot. She'd spent her Friday afternoon in an advanced singing class rather than Latin dance - the flamboyant mambo and cha-cha-cha moves were not really Belle's cool, calm and collected style.

'I was clearing my mind, getting into character!' Cat countered.

Holly laughed. 'Not *too* much, I hope! Sharing sofa-space with a dagger-wielding psycho-lady? No, thank you!'

Cat looked up to see her good friend Nathan Almeida hurrying across the hall towards them.

'Cat, come quickly! We mustn't be late for the auditions!' he urged, sweeping his long black fringe off his forehead and adjusting his wire-framed glasses.

Nathan was followed, at a more leisurely saunter, by Nick Taggart - who grinned and threw his stocky frame down into the narrow gap in the middle of the sofa, bouncing Cat, Belle and Holly up into the air.

'Chill, Nate!' Cat told him as she landed back on the sofa. 'We've got two whole minutes!' Inside, her heart was pounding and her stomach was doing a Mexican wave, but she knew that the best way to deal with her nerves was to *act* laid-back and unruffled. If she could convince everyone else she was super-calm, she could sometimes even fool *herself*.

Nathan hovered uncertainly. He was a gifted actor, but offstage he was terminally shy. He was getting better, though - at least now he could actually *speak out loud* in public, which was a major breakthrough. He'd also struck up a friendship with Nick Taggart - a boy who didn't know the meaning of the word *shy*. Or the words *serious* . . . or *sensible* or *solemn* . . . *Maybe I should buy him a dictionary for Christmas!* Cat thought.

Noticing Nathan checking his watch *again*, she attempted to wriggle free from her position, jammed between Nick and Holly on the sofa.

‘So, Nick, you’re Scottish – didn’t you want to audition for *Macbeth*?’ Holly asked. ‘After all, it is called *The Scottish Play*.’

‘Och, no, ma wee lassie,’ Nick replied, in an over-the-top Highlands accent. ‘Far too much *doom* and *gloom* for me! Anyway,’ he continued, ‘I’m working on the sound desk. I’ve got this *wicked* sound-effect for when the dagger goes in under King Duncan’s ribs – a sort of *scraping, squelching*—’

Belle laughed, holding up her hands. ‘Eugh! Enough *squelching* already!’ She was also trying to escape from the sofa, but was wedged firmly against the arm on the other side of Nick.

Cat smiled. Belle liked Nick a whole lot more now than she had at the start of the year – which wouldn’t be difficult, since her first words on the subject of Nick Taggart had been: *What a dork!* – but she still didn’t *always* get his non-stop comedy act. And she probably wasn’t enjoying being pinned to the furniture by his left elbow much either.

Unable to wait any longer, Nathan grabbed Cat by the hand and tugged. She popped up from the sofa like a cork from a bottle.

Now that the all-important audition was getting closer and closer, she was so nervous her legs felt as if they’d been replaced by overcooked spaghetti – her knees almost buckled under her as she stood up. But she wasn’t going to let anyone see. She disguised the wobble by pretending to check her tights for ladders.

Holly and Belle jumped up, hugged Cat and wished her luck. ‘We’ll follow you over to the Redgrave Theatre in a minute,’ Belle said. ‘It’s great they’re doing open auditions for the main parts. We can come and cheer you guys on.’

‘Not literally, I hope!’ Cat laughed, noticing Nathan’s worried look. ‘No yelling, *Go for it, Natey-boy!* as he comes on stage to do his Macduff speech, you two!’

'Spoilsport!' Holly replied, then turned to Nathan and hugged him too - so quickly he had no chance to sidestep the unexpected physical contact. He grinned shyly.

'I just hope you guys know what you're letting yourselves in for if you get these parts,' Nick said. 'There's only six weeks from audition to performance. It's going to be *Biiii-Zeeee* - with a capital B . . . and a capital Zee!'

But Cat wasn't worried about the mountain of hard work ahead of her. This was Superstar High after all. And no one ever said being a superstar was easy! With a jaunty wave she turned and followed Nathan across the hall.

'Don't panic!' she told Nick over her shoulder. 'I've got it all *totally* under control.'

CHAPTER TWO

Holly: Icing on the Cake of Happiness

'I REALLY HOPE Cat's right!' Holly sighed as Cat left.

'Aha! That's just what Lady Macbeth said,' Nick intoned in a mysterious *Lord-of-the-Rings*-prophecy kind of voice.

'What?' Belle scoffed. 'Lady Macbeth said, *I really hope Cat's right?* I don't remember that line!'

'Not that!' Nick laughed, batting her on the head with a cushion. 'The *don't panic, I've got it all totally under control* bit - Lady M said it when she was persuading Macbeth to stick the knife in. Or words to that effect, anyway! And look where it got *her* . . .' He mimed a throat-slitting action.

'Well, Cat's not exactly planning to *murder* anyone,' Belle said impatiently.

'No, but she's taking advanced drama,' Holly said, 'and advanced Latin dance. Plus, touch wood, she'll have the leading role in the play - there'll be hundreds of rehearsals.'

'And her school work, of course, and band practice,' Nick added. Holly, Belle and Cat had formed a girl group, Nobody's Angels, shortly after arriving at Superstar High and had won a Highly Commended in the talent competition before half-term. Somehow, Nick had appointed himself as their unofficial band manager!

'Yeah - and time-management isn't exactly Cat's strong point,' Belle said.

That's true, Holly thought. Cat was always oversleeping, putting things off to the last minute, and missing deadlines. It was part of what made Cat so lovably . . . well, Cat!

It hadn't been too disastrous so far, apart from a few near-miss detention situations in Mrs Salmon's science class. But things were going to get much tougher from now on.

For the first half-term all the new students had attended the same lessons: school subjects in the mornings, then core singing, dancing and acting classes in the afternoons. But now they'd been placed into their ability-sets for school subjects, and, on top of the core performance classes on Monday to Wednesday afternoons - which everyone still had to do - they were all taking specialist options, known as *advanced classes*, on Thursday and Friday afternoons.

Dance was Holly's passion, and she was taking the advanced dance classes, which covered ballet, modern, jazz, tap and Latin. But although she had a good voice and loved singing in Nobody's Angels, she hadn't got into advanced singing yet; the standard was incredibly high. At least she was able to do an advanced musical theatre class, which included singing and which she loved - her dream was to star in West End and Broadway shows.

Belle was the musical one with the fabulous voice. She was in all the advanced singing classes and took piano and music theory lessons, *and* she was in the top set for every school subject! Belle's half-term report had been a glittering galaxy of A-stars. It wasn't *just* because she was smart, hard-working and organized; there was also the minor incentive that her dad had threatened to pull her out of the Garrick and send her to a 'normal' school if she didn't get perfect grades.

They were *all* going to be busy, but Holly knew that Cat would have to switch into high-octane turbo-drive if she was going to keep up with all her commitments.

‘See you at the Redgrave in a few minutes!’ Nick declared, leaping up from the sofa. ‘I’m going to call for Zak on the way.’

Holly looked around contentedly as he disappeared through the back door into the courtyard. The entrance hall was a favourite meeting place. It was bustling with staff and students hurrying from classes to after-school activities, checking their pigeon holes for messages, or just stopping to chat with friends. Holly still couldn’t believe that she was actually *part* of Superstar High.

It was the kind of place where *anything* could happen . . .

And usually did!

In fact, Holly thought, she was officially the luckiest girl in the world.

Great school, great friends – she even had a great room-mate, ever since Bianca ‘Furious Girl’ Hayford had thrown a strop and demanded she move out of their room and swap with Lettie Atkins.

Holly’s new room-mate, Gemma Dalrymple, was a down-to-earth Australian girl who was almost as crazy about dancing as Holly was – and, most importantly, didn’t go into nuclear meltdown if Holly stepped onto her side of the room.

Oh, and then, of course, ever since the gala showcase party just before half-term, she’d also had a great *boyfriend!*

Holly found her thoughts drifting. She was re-living the moment – the scent of roses, the sound of party poppers, Ethan’s sea-green eyes . . . *her first kiss*. Holly’s thoughts did a lot of drifting these days. She had to keep reminding herself that she hadn’t dreamed the whole thing – that Ethan Cool-and-popular-captain-of-the-football-team-and-all-round-Year-Ten-superstar Reed was her real, live boyfriend! He was the icing on Holly’s Cake of Happiness: thick, double-chocolate-fudge icing . . .

. . . with rainbow sprinkles on top!

'Ooh, sorry - what?' Holly asked, snapping herself back to reality.

Belle twitched her perfect eyebrows in a knowing smile. 'I was talking about Cat,' she said. 'It was lovely staying at her house for half-term, but her mum was on at her nonstop to try out for big West End musicals. She says it's the only way to break into the big time.'

'But how's Cat going to find time to trek round to professional auditions?' Holly asked.

'I don't know,' Belle sighed. 'She's going to be swamped. That's why I'm only going for a minor part in *Macbeth*. I want time to have a *life!*'

'And Cat doesn't even *want* to do musical theatre.' Holly shook her head. She knew Cat's dream was to be a classical actress - performing in Shakespearean tragedies and ultra-serious award-winning plays. 'Definitely not *The Lion King* or *The Sound of Music* - I can't see Cat skipping around singing about whiskers on kittens and apple strudel . . .' she added. 'Shame, I love that song!'

'Me too,' Belle replied, grinning. Next moment they were singing harmonies on *My Favourite Things*.

Holly heard voices and turned to look over the back of the sofa. She stopped mid-note as she noticed an unfamiliar tall boy with shoulder-length brown hair slouching against the school secretary's desk on the other side of the hall. 'Hey, who's *that?*' she whispered.

Belle's beautiful singing voice trailed away and she joined Holly in spying over the back of the sofa as Miss Candlemas, the housemistress, hurried into the room, swathed in her multi-coloured scarves, beads and bangles.

Mrs Butterworth, the secretary, scooted out from behind her desk on her trusty swivel chair. 'Ah, there you are!' she grumbled, peering at Miss Candlemas over the gold frames of her glasses. 'Better late than never!'

Ignoring Mrs Butterworth's comment, Miss Candlemas beamed at the mystery boy. 'All aboard for the grand tour! Jump to it!'

The boy grinned, stood up straight and saluted cheekily.

'*The entrance hall lies at the heart of the original seventeenth-century building,*' Miss Candlemas recited as they crossed towards the dining room.

' . . . *which served as the grand ballroom in Regency times . . .*' Holly and Belle exchanged grins as they whispered the words in chorus. The speech was identical to the one Miss Candlemas had given when she showed them round the school at the beginning of September!

Holly laughed. 'Do you remember Nick Taggart doing his tour-guide act?'

'Yeah, it would be hard to forget!' Belle groaned.

'And how . . .'

Holly's voice faded away as she realized that Belle was no longer listening. Her lavender-blue eyes had zoomed in towards the dining-room door.

Belle was *gawping* at the boy!

Holly hadn't realized that she was physically capable of doing anything as *uncool* as gawping, but that was the only word for the transfixed expression on her face. Holly looked at the boy more carefully.

His light brown hair was slightly dishevelled - but in a good I'm-too-cool-to-fuss-with-my-hair kind of way. He shook it back now and then to reveal hazel eyes and high, angular cheekbones. Not that Holly noticed such things, of course, now that she had a boyfriend. There was something pirate-like, something of the Johnny-Depp-as-Captain-Jack-Sparrow in his swagger and the rebellious glint in his eyes.

'Maybe he's thinking of applying here for next year,' Holly whispered. 'Not that you'd be *interested* or anything!' she added, grinning.

But Belle hadn't heard - or hadn't yet regained the power of speech. Holly couldn't be sure which.

It was time to set off to watch the auditions, and Holly and Belle followed the tour party out into the courtyard. Pirate Boy held the door open for them. He seemed to catch Belle's eye and stare at her for a brief moment before hurrying after Miss Candlemas and her call of 'No shilly-shallying now!'

Holly could hardly believe her eyes: Belle's perfect complexion - usually cream with a hint of peach - was slowly turning to raspberry with a hint of beetroot.

Belle was blushing!

But Belle didn't *do* blushing! Holly couldn't have been more surprised if her friend had started wearing jumble-sale dungarees and granny-knitted Bob the Builder tank tops. Gawping *and* blushing? Belle would be thrown out of the International Cool-as-a-Polar-Bear-with-Frostbite Club if she wasn't careful.