

a letter from holly

To my spinsters,

When I was twenty-five, I was sexually harassed on my way to work. In fact, what happens to Lottie at the opening of this book is essentially word-for-word what happened to me. I was going through A Very Bad Year, and something snapped in me that day. I knew I wanted it to stop. All of it. I didn't want any other girl to walk down the street and have that happen to them. That was the day I came up with the idea for this trilogy and the Spinster Club and Evie, Amber and Lottie.

Sometimes I want to thank those horrible, awful men in the van. As, really, they changed my life. Writing these books has changed me – they've helped me grow and learn and develop. What's been so amazing is seeing how you guys have responded to them too. Honestly, I could never have dreamed how funny, angry, strong, honest, brilliant and kick-ass my readers would turn out to be. Whenever you contact me to say you've started your own Spinster Club, or stood up to some sexist bullshit, or done a school assembly about International Women's Day – it warms my heart in such a deep way I can't even describe it.

Even with three whole books to explore feminism, I felt the spinsters and I have only exposed the tip of the iceberg

that is inequality. I wasn't able to touch properly on feminism and how it relates to race, or disability, or sexuality, or gender identity, or class. Inequality is like a really shit onion, with layers upon layers of oppression pinning down different people in different ways. My experiences of being a woman will be different from yours. Lottie's, Amber's and Evie's experiences won't be entirely like yours. Also, if you're one of my awesome male readers, that doesn't mean you aren't also oppressed (and doesn't prohibit you from being a spinster either!).

I couldn't cover it all. But, what I hoped would happen with these books is that it would inspire you to fight for the change you want to see. To help you realize that, whoever you are, whatever you've experienced, whatever hardship you've faced, you have a voice and you are allowed to use it. Your voice counts. Your experience counts. Your anger counts. Together we can fight this. Together we are stronger. Together we can fight for a world that is healthier and happier for everyone in it.

I'm writing this on the first proper day of spring 2016, looking out at the daffodils. I don't know where you are as you're reading this. But wherever it is, I am reaching through my computer screen, and holding your hand through the pages of this book. I am travelling through time to tell you to GO FOR IT. I want to hear YOUR voice. I want to hear YOUR experience. What happens to you and what you go through matters. Your voice matters. I am passing on the torch. I want to see what fires you start (please, not literally,

please always be safe). If these books have started a ripple in you, I want you to take that and make your own ripples.

It's not easy. Fighting for what is right rarely is. You will have days when you're too exhausted or angry to speak out. There will be times when it's not even safe to. Some days you'll get it wrong, or change your mind, or be a huge hunking hypocrite, and have people drag you across the coals for it. You'll come across people who are more pondscum than people. You will find yourself defending your anger, defending your experience, practically daily – not just to The Man, but even to other feminists. Even, sometimes, to people you love and adore. But you're not alone. Find other people who get it. Start a Spinster Club. Find people who say “Me too”, rather than denying your experience. They're out there. They care. They understand. If you look for them, you will find them. And it changes everything. It makes the fight so much easier.

Thank you so much for coming on this journey with me. I cannot wait to see what journeys you are yet to go on. The incredible things I believe you are going to achieve. And, of course, the cheesy snacks you are going to devour.

Spinsters – it's over to you.

LOVE FROM
HOLLY