

MO, LOTTIE and the Junkers

by Jennifer Killick



Opening the Box

This box belongs to Mo and Lottie

**DO NOT OPEN,
EXCEPT IN AN EMERGENCY**

(for example: if we have been imprisoned,
abducted or violently murdered.)

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Open box
- 2 Locate USB stick and insert into relevant computer port (a.k.a. the memory-stick hole)
- 3 Open folder named 'Junkers' (password is JUNKERSSUCK!!! - all caps, no spaces. [Lottie's idea])
- 4 Locate the AV clip 'Mo and Lottie: Our Vlog'. Press play - further instructions will follow.
- 5 Do not look at anything else in the box until we say!
- 6 Really, though, don't, or it won't make sense.
- 7 Everything else is in your hands.

P.S. - thanks and good luck 😊

x x x from Lottie and Mo x x x

File accessed...

Restricted folder...

Password required...

Enter password:

Password accepted...

Select file...

File selected...

Loading...

{ERROR CODE 79}

Reloading...

Audio-visual player standing by...

Buffering...

System ready...

Press [PLAY] to activate...

Vlogger 1 (Female – approximate age 10 years – approximate height 130cm – light brown hair):

Is it working now? *she approaches the recording device and her face fills the screen, showing a scattering of amber freckles across her nose and upper cheeks. The footage jumps as though the device is being shaken and several loud thumps reverberate through the speaker*

Vlogger 2 (Male – approximate age 10 years – approximate height 128cm – ginger hair):

It won't be for long if you keep hitting it like that.

Vlogger 1:

Well, one of us has to do something – we don't have much time. Check it again.

Vlogger 2:

huffs It's recording, OK? Let's get on with it. Wait – what are you doing?

Vlogger 1:

I'm plaiting my hair, obviously. These people are seeing me for the first time – I want to get my look right. I'm thinking Katniss plait, with a few strands

coming loose to show I've been running for my life.

Vlogger 2:

But they can see you doing it, Lottie! They know you're just sitting on a chair in my bedroom. Anyway, it doesn't matter what you look like.
sighs loudly

Vlogger 1 (Lottie):

That's an unhelpful comment, Mo, and I am going to ignore it. Now, pause the recording while I find a hairband.

Mo sighs again, slides off his chair and stomps over to the camera. A streak of dirt can be seen down the left side of his nose. A click can be heard and the recording pauses

a second click. Mo mutters a word which sounds like it could be a swear, though it is too quiet to be sure

Mo:

Can we get on...?

Lottie:

I'll start, shall I? Good. First, I will state my name for the recording. I am Lottie Magnolia Button. And this is...

Mo:

Mo.

Lottie:

Do it properly, Mo! They're not going to be able to identify your burnt remains if they only know you as Mo. Our lives could depend on this.

Mo:

Fine. Morris Albert Appleby.

Lottie:

Albert? Really? And I thought Morris was questionable.

Mo:

Are you serious? Your middle name is Magnolia. MAGNOLIA. What even is that?

Lottie:

It's a flower: beautiful but tough. Everyone knows

that. Honestly, who would have thought that you, Mo Appleby, are destined to be one of the saviours of man and womankind?

Mo:

Just get on with it, Lottie – we don't know how much time we have before...

Lottie:

...They find us. You're right. OK, this is a message – a terribly important message. If you are watching this message...

Mo:

They're probably going to stop watching if you say 'message' one more time.

Lottie:

If you are watching this MESSAGE, then it means something has happened to us and the future of the world is in your hands.

Mo:

We can't tell our parents because they won't believe us.

Lottie:

And we can't tell the police because we don't know who we can trust.

Mo:

Anybody could be one of them. Anybody could be a Junker.

Lottie:

And if you're watching this then it means they got us. We're probably dead.

Mo:

We're probably NOT dead. But we might have been junked, and that's almost as bad.

Lottie:

And I am ever so important, dear viewer. The world needs me. And Mo.

Mo:

Especially Mo.

Lottie:

So please keep watching and you'll understand

everything. I'm going to explain – to tell you our story...

Mo:

No, I'm going to tell the story, Lottie. You'll tell it wrong.

Lottie:

No way, Mo, you'll tell it boringly.

Mo *sighs*:

If by boringly, you mean truthfully, then yes I will.

Lottie:

It's my story as much as yours, Mo. I don't see why you should get to tell it.

Mo:

Shall we just take it in turns, then?

Lottie:

OK – I'll go first.

Mo:

No, I'll go first – the story starts with me.

Lottie:

Only technically.

Mo:

Right. Only technically, rather than in your imagination.

Lottie:

So, anyway, courageous viewer: please hear our story and take action. You might be our only chance for survival. And hurry – maybe there's still time. Maybe you can save us.



The Start of the Story

Mo

‘Hurry up, Mo – they’re here!’ Mum called to me from the empty hallway.

‘I’m doing a check,’ I said, standing in what used to be my bedroom at 79 Morello Road, but was now just a room waiting to belong to someone who wasn’t me.

‘Just one more, my love. I know it’s hard to say goodbye, but we really have to go. We’ve got a new adventure ahead of us.’

After ten perfect years of just me, Mum and our cat, Schrodinger, the time had come for us to become part of a new ‘family’. We were leaving our house – the one I’d lived in since I was born; the one I knew as well as I knew myself – and moving into a house across the street. Even worse, we were going to be living with Mum’s – I don’t want to say boyfriend, because, one: she’s too old to have a boyfriend; and two: it’s gross – we were going to be living with Mum’s Spencer, and his daughters, Lottie and Sadie. I could talk for hours

about how this was the worst thing that had happened in my life, but Lottie will use it as an excuse to interrupt, so I'll just say that I wasn't happy about it.

But Mum was. And my mum is the kindest, coolest, most awesome mum in the world. She has a smile that fills her whole face and she always smells like pancakes and strawberries. My dad disappeared before I was born; before Mum even knew she was having me. He just walked out one day and never came back. That made her sad for a long time. Not sad the whole time, but there were moments. Like when I was having trouble with some kids at school and my teacher called her in. She said she wished my dad was there to help us. And when we went on holiday, I could see her looking around, hoping she might see him. But then she met Spencer, and those moments happened less often.

Before I said goodbye, I had to complete one last check – to make sure I wasn't leaving anything important. I knelt on the floorboards and crawled slowly across the room, back and forth until I'd covered every centimetre. My carpet had been worn out and torn in one corner

where Schrodinger had scratched at it, so Mum thought it was best to pull it up and throw it out. The room looked so different without it. There were gaps between the wooden planks and I was worried that I might have dropped something; that something tiny might get left behind.

And that's when I found the loose one. In the cat-clawed corner, one of the boards wobbled when I knelt on it. Through the crack at the edge, I could see something shining in the darkness underneath – a dull, silver colour. I squidged my fingers under the board and pulled.

Lottie

Sadie and I were desperate to see our new room, but Dad wouldn't let us go into the house until the others arrived. So we stood outside 124 Morello Road – a big white house, with lots of wide windows, that stood out amongst the narrow brown brick houses surrounding it. It was at the top of the hill and set back from the road, up some steep steps, so it was higher and bolder and looked more important than the other houses on the street. It gave me the impression that it was keeping a lookout over Morello Road. We waited by the

door while the peculiar ginger boy, who was going to be our new brother, and the pretty ginger lady, who was going to be our new mother, had an intense discussion in the doorway of their old house, which happened to be opposite our new house.

I couldn't hear what they were saying, but it ended with the boy waiting until his mum had turned her back and then putting something shiny grey into his pocket.

'Hello again, girls – lovely to see you, as always! Isn't this exciting?' Our new mother smiled at us while Dad put his arm around her and kissed her (on the lips), which I still hadn't got used to. 'You remember Mo,' she said.

'Hi, Mo,' I said.

'Hi,' said Mo, looking at me as though he wished I was dead.

'Sadie, say hello,' Dad said, pulling on one of her little pigtails.

'Mew,' said Sadie, which is her way of saying hello.

'Try to use your words, Sadie,' said Dad. 'Emma and Mo can't understand you like Lottie and I can.'

‘It’s OK, we’ve got plenty of time to get to know each other,’ Emma gave Sadie a bag of chocolate buttons. ‘Say hello to Sadie, Mo.’

‘Hello to Sadie,’ Mo said, looking at Sadie as if he wished she was dead.

‘Let’s do it, shall we?’ Dad said, putting the key in the lock of our new front door.

‘Yay!’ Emma laughed and clapped her hands.

Sadie munched on her buttons.

Mo kicked his shoes against the steps.

‘Pineapple,’ I said, to fill the silence and because it seemed appropriate.

We walked into the house.



Too Much Stuff

Lottie

After spending a million hours unpacking, it became clear that we all had a lot of stuff and not enough places to put it. This was especially relevant in Mo's case because he had mountains of full cardboard boxes that he mysteriously referred to as 'his collection.'

'We're going to have to store some of it in the garage,' Dad said. 'Would that be OK with you, Mo? I know your collection is important to you.'

I didn't like the way Dad was being all careful around Mo, but apparently he's a hashtag 'sensitive boy' and we had to be hashtag 'extra considerate'. If it had been mine or Sadie's belongings that were overflowing out of the house, we would have just been told they were getting dumped in the garage, no arguments.

Mo looked panicky.

'We just can't fit everything in, Mo-Bear,' Emma said, kneeling down and holding his hand. 'It'll be safe in the garage.'

‘We could all do with a bit of stream-lining,’ said Dad, ‘Especially with our non-essential items. How about we all get one box each that we can fill and keep in our rooms, and everything else goes into the garage?’

‘Well that sounds very fair, doesn’t it, Mo?’ Emma said, smiling at my dad like he was some kind of brilliant and wondrous genius. ‘I have lots of things I don’t really need in the house, so I’ll do it too.’

‘My box needs to be private,’ said Mo. ‘No-one’s allowed to go in it.’

‘We’ll all have a secret box – out of bounds to everyone else. How does that sound?’ Emma said, giving Mo a Curly Wurly.

‘Great,’ Dad said.

‘Mrow,’ Sadie said, which meant she agreed.

‘Huff,’ Mo said.

‘I promise never to look in anyone’s box,’ I said, crossing my fingers in my head, rather than behind my back, in case anyone saw.

Mo

How could this house be so much bigger, but feel so much smaller than our old home?

The thing about me is that I collect junk. No, wait – that’s not quite right: I collect items that other people might mistakenly call junk. Things that have been dropped or forgotten: the bits of paper that fall out of pockets; the random shoe from the middle of the road; the half-bald teddy lying next to the swings. It isn’t that I want the things for myself – I’m not weird or anything. It’s just that I can’t stand to see things left behind.

I know what the other kids say about me. They think because I don’t say anything back that I can’t hear them laughing when I stash a soggy mitten in my bag. I do hear them, but I don’t care. I can’t just leave it there, drowning in a puddle, when to somebody somewhere it could be the most important mitten in the world.

Nobody and nothing is junk. Every item has a story, and a home, and probably someone missing it.

For as long as I can remember, I’ve collected stuff and kept it all in labelled boxes that I stored in the house. But, apparently, now that I had sisters, I had to try harder to share. And that included my space.

I filled my box, leaving just enough space for the thing I found under the floorboard. As I put

the lid on, Lottie walked into my room, without knocking, and sat on my bed. *She sat on my bed.*

Her hair was brown and curly and she'd worn it a different way every time I'd seen her. Like she actually spent her time thinking up a different hairstyle for each day of the week. That's just mental. Her freckles and eyes were the colour of honey – full of sugar and sunshine. They were probably the prettiest eyes I'd ever seen. I didn't like them one bit.

'I don't like you calling my mum "Emma", I said. 'It sounds weird.'

'Then what do you suggest?'

'How about "Miss Appleby"?''

'That's absolutely ridiculous,' Lottie said. 'She isn't my teacher. How about I call her "Mum"?''

It was the most horrible thing I'd ever heard. "Emma" is fine.'

'I'm glad we have that settled.' She looked around my room, making a face. 'But while we're on the subject of names, you've been saying Sadie's completely wrong and she's finding it quite upsetting.'

'How have I been saying it wrong?'

'You pronounce it like "Say-dee", not "Say-dee".'

What the heck? ‘You just said it the exact same way twice!’

‘You obviously weren’t listening properly.’

‘Maybe you weren’t speaking properly,’ I said. I didn’t really know how to deal with someone so unhinged.

‘It must be all that...interesting hair blocking your ear-holes.’

‘What do you mean, “interesting hair”?’

‘I’ve never seen anything like it in my life. You know you could wear it a different way?’

‘A different way?’ What was she on about?

‘Yes, something less Victorian street urchin and more, you know, nice. I could style it for you, if you like?’ She stood up and started coming towards me.

‘Hell, no.’

‘There’s no need for the inappropriate language, Mo. I was only trying to help.’

‘I don’t need your help.’

‘Maybe you don’t, but your hair certainly does.’

‘Who even cares about hair? It doesn’t matter!’

Lottie gasped. ‘Take that back.’

‘Hair is stupid, hair is stupid, hair is stupid,’ I started chanting and marching around the room, waving my arms in the air.

Lottie

His hair was bright orange, which was fine. The problem was the way he wore it, like he'd never brushed it in his life. And he always had dirty fingers that he scratched his nose with, leaving black smudges on his face. He looked like he should be picking pockets or sweeping chimneys. It bothered me. And you know those dogs who have huge chocolatey-brown eyes, which always look sad? Well, Mo's eyes were like that, but they were dark blue. Blue eyes are supposed to be twinkly, cheerful and always look like their owner has something up their sleeves. Sad blue eyes are not a thing. Unless your name is Mo Appleby, apparently. And the worst thing was that they were ever so endearing – they made me want to share my cookies with him. It was extremely irritating.

And I don't even know where to start with his clothes. They should have been mismatched and holey, but instead they were cool and really brought out the forlornness in his face. I suspected his mum chose them for him.

'What have you put in your box?' I asked.

'That's private,' he said, putting his hand on the

lid like I was going to try to look inside. As if I'd be stupid enough to attempt it right in front of his face. 'What have you put in yours?'

'A hair from the tail of a unicorn. He gave it to me to thank me for saving his life.'

'Right,' Mo said.

Sadie walked in carrying a fat, orange cat under her arm like a handbag.

'What are you doing in here?' Mo said, looking outraged. 'And what are you doing with Schrodinger?'

'Perow meow prew,' Sadie said.

Mo just looked at her.

'Preowt.'

'What is she doing in here? What is she doing with my cat? And why does she talk in that way?' Mo turned to me, bright red in his plump cheeks.

'She came to see what you put in your box, obviously,' I rolled my eyes. 'Also, Schrodinger is a stupid name. Let's call him Tiger instead, and get him a stripey jacket.'

'Let's not,' he said.

'And Sadie was just starting to talk when Mum left. Meow was her first word. She's saving all her other words until Mum comes back for us.'

'Where's your mum gone?'

‘She’s on a top-secret archeological dig. As a matter of fact, she’s discovered the fossil of a dinosaur that nobody’s ever found before. She’s calling it the LottieSadieSaurus. She’ll come for us when her work is done.’

‘Why didn’t she take you with her?’ Mo asked. (I discovered early on that he is not very tactful.)

‘No schools in the Sahara,’ I said.

‘Right,’ said Mo.

Mo

I had two strange girls in my bedroom.

One of them was throwing stuff out of my drawers while cuddling my cat like he was a teddy bear. He seemed to like it, too, which was so annoying. The other girl was asking rude questions and telling me stories about her mum that I wasn’t a hundred per cent sure were true. What had my life become?

‘We always wanted a brother,’ Lottie said. ‘You’re not quite what we imagined, but you’ll have to do.’

‘What did you imagine?’

‘Less short, less ginger.’ Lottie put her hands on her hips.

‘Eroww,’ Sadie said.

‘Sadie, you shouldn’t call people chubby,’ Lottie said.

‘Rowwr.’

‘Yes, even if they are. And that hat doesn’t suit Tiger – try the green one.’

How offensive! ‘Really? Well, I never wanted one sister, never mind two. And stop putting hats on my cat!’

‘That’s OK. I’m sure you were much too busy putting things in alphabetical order to think about the joy of sisters. We must be a fabulous surprise for you. And how dare you try to take Tiger’s hat from him when it makes him look like a white-hot fashionista?’

My room was in a state. They were out of control, like a whirlwind. They were a girlwind. Just then the doorbell rang and they ran off, leaving me to wonder what a white-hot fashionista was.

Lottie

Our new front door has some of that cloudy glass in it, so you can see a deformed reflection of whoever is on the other side.

As we reached the bottom of the stairs, I could see the outline of a small woman with long, bouncy hair. For a second I thought it was Mum – that she'd come back for us at last. But as I pulled open the door, it wasn't Mum's face I saw.

There was a stranger there. At first I thought she was young and extraordinarily beautiful, but when I looked again, I changed my mind. She had masses of shiny blonde hair that went all the way down her back. I'd never have thought it was possible to have too much hair, but somehow she managed it. And there was something off about the colour – it didn't go with her skin or her eyes. Her face wasn't right either. It looked like her skin was stretched almost too tight over her cheeks, and her neck looked a bit crinkly. My nana has a crinkly neck, and it looks lovely, but on this woman, with her tight face, it was all wrong.

'Oh,' I said, feeling like I might cry.

'Good afternoon, sweet girls,' the lady smiled, looking over my shoulder and down the hallway behind me. 'Have you just moved in? Could I perhaps have a little chat with your mother and father?'

'Prow,' Sadie said and walked off into the living room.

‘Did the removal truck and boxes give it away?’ I said, annoyed that I could have thought for a second that this woman was my mum.

‘What a cherub you are!’ She clapped her hands. ‘Just delightful! Now, angel, – your mother and father?’

‘Mother! Father!’ I called. ‘There’s someone at the door for you.’

‘I’ll just step inside, shall I?’ the woman said, peering into the boxes in the hall as Emma and Dad came out of the kitchen. ‘Ah! There you are, at last. I came to introduce myself – I’m your new neighbour, Lorelai. I’m sure we’re going to be great friends.’

‘Hello,’ said Emma. ‘Lovely to meet you. I’d offer you a coffee but we’ve not unpacked the kettle yet.’ Emma and Dad laughed, but Lorelai just stared at them.

‘I’ve just moved in myself across the road,’ Lorelai said. ‘And I don’t even have a kettle, so I’m happy to wait while you look for yours.’

‘Oh, right, of course,’ Emma said, while Dad gave her a look. ‘You’d better come in.’

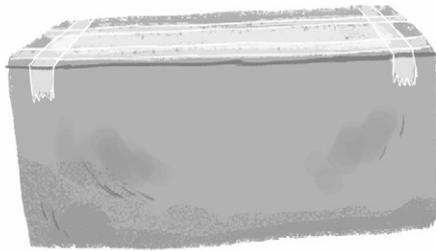
‘While you’re looking, you couldn’t be a doll and loan me some sugar, could you?’ Lorelai walked past Emma, towards the kitchen.

Emma raised an eyebrow at Dad who shook his head.

‘No problem,’ Emma said. ‘Please make yourself at home.’

‘I think she already has,’ Dad whispered to me as he followed them into the kitchen.

Rather than listening to whatever boring conversation they’d be having, I went to find Sadie.



First published in 2019
by Firefly Press
25 Gabalfa Road, Llandaff North, Cardiff, CF14 2JJ
www.fireflypress.co.uk

© Jennifer Killick 2019

The author asserts her moral right to be identified as author in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patent Act, 1988.

All rights reserved.

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form, binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

All characters in this publication are fictitious and any resemblance to real persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

A CIP catalogue record of this book is available from the British Library.

print ISBN: 978-1-910080-92-4
ebook ISBN: 978-1-910080-93-1

This book has been published with the support of the Welsh Books Council.

Typeset by: Elaine Sharples
Original cover art by Gareth Conway
Cover design by Kathryn Davies

Printed and bound by 4 Edge Ltd