

§ 1. Holly Sinclair arrives at the north London restaurant where she and I are to have lunch. She looks exactly what she is: a 21-year-old who, thanks to three number-one hit songs, a millionaire husband and blossoming acting career, is having the time of her life. Once she opens her mouth, however, you realise that the person inside her body is actually a middle-aged woman.

§ 2. She has recently acted in three quite different roles that truly caught her imagination. Her three number-one hits have brought her a big measure of artistic freedom, and she intends to make full use of it. "I don't have to do things for the sake of them. It means I can wait a while, find the right things. I've got the time to go out and find out about life, **observe** people and dynamic situations that help me in my work. Ultimately, I'm only ever going to do the things that interest me, that I feel I can do something with. Even if I'm offered a blockbuster, it may not be right at the time, or benefit me."

§ 3. Naturally, Holly Sinclair knew what she wanted in life from an unusually early age — and that, whether she cares to admit it or not, was fame and fortune. At 12, she left Swindon, where her father worked as a builder, and moved to London. Once there, she boarded with her great aunt and uncle while attending the Oldham Theatre School. Three years later, her debut single, "Like Me" became the first of her three number-one hits (she holds the record for being the youngest singer to achieve such a feat). It was not, she says, very hard to leave her parents and three young brothers. She wasn't even particularly homesick. "I wanted to study and I didn't want to stay where I was. I wanted more, I was just very ambitious. I don't know where it came from." After she became famous, most of the time she was rather alone. Her schedule left little time for being a teenager.

§ 4. Then she met her pop-star husband, Freddy Frinton. After their first date, Freddy sent her a silver Ferrari full of roses, in spite of the fact that Holly couldn't drive (the car has since been sold, because Sinclair prefers to drive herself around in a small family car). Then they got married in a Las Vegas wedding chapel, with no family and no rings.

§ 5. She spends her money on CDs and DVDs and going out. The only thing she really wants is a fast car. But then, she wonders whether she can't get another year or two out of her old car first. "Money's never been a big part of my life. Freddy and I never have conversations about money. Maybe we would if we were very poor." She still looks as **composed** as a waxwork model. Does she feel young or old for her age? "Not old exactly, but when I get together with friends, I see a difference in our personalities. Sometimes I get angry with myself that I've done too much, that I haven't saved anything. I mean, what could possibly make me excited?" Holly is smiling brightly, but it sounds as sad and as empty as anything I have ever heard.

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Why does Holly drive a small family car?

- 1) She can no longer drive the Ferrari.
- 2) She couldn't afford another Ferrari.
- 3) She likes the convenience of driving a small car.