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Opening extract from
**Molly Moon's Incredible Book of
Hypnotism**

Written by
Georgia Byng

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MOLLY MOON'S

Incredible Book of Hypnotism

Georgia Byng made her debut as a talented new children's author with *Molly Moon's Incredible Book of Hypnotism*. This exciting and funny adventure starring Molly Moon, an orphan who discovers a hidden talent for hypnotism, was a runaway success. It was published in thirty-six languages and forty countries, and won the Salford, the Stockton and the Sheffield Children's Book Awards. Its sequels, *Molly Moon Stops the World*, *Molly Moon's Hypnotic Time-Travel Adventure*, *Molly Moon, Micky Minus and the Mind Machine*, *Molly Moon and the Morphing Mystery* and *Molly Moon and the Monster Music* have firmly established Molly as a favourite with readers all around the globe.

Georgia Byng grew up in a large, noisy family in a house in Hampshire. She now lives in London with the artist Marc Quinn and her three children. Georgia loves to travel, whether it's flying off to India to research ideas for a new book or whizzing around London in her little electric car.

Also by Georgia Byng

MOLLY MOON STOPS THE WORLD

MOLLY MOON'S HYPNOTIC
TIME-TRAVEL ADVENTURE

MOLLY MOON, MICKY MINUS
AND THE MIND MACHINE

MOLLY MOON
AND THE MORPHING MYSTERY

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MONSTER MUSIC

MOLLY
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of Hypnotism**

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*To Marc with love
for his encouragement and support
and for making me laugh*

Chapter One



Molly Moon looked down at her pink, blotchy legs. It wasn't the bath water that was making them mottled like spam, they were always that colour. And so skinny. Maybe one day, like an ugly duckling turning into a swan, her knock-kneed legs might grow into the most beautiful legs in the world. Some hope.

Molly leaned back until her curly brown hair and her ears were under the water. She stared at the fluorescent strip light above her, at the fly-filled yellow paint that was peeling off the wall and at the damp patch on the ceiling where strange mushrooms grew. Water filled her ears and the world sounded foggy and far away.

Molly shut her eyes. It was an ordinary November evening, and she was in a shabby bathroom in a crumbling building called Hardwick House. She imagined flying over it like a bird, looking down at its grey slate roof and its bramble-filled garden. She

imagined flying higher until she was looking down on the hillside where Hardwick village lay. Up and up she went until Hardwick House became tiny. She could see the whole of the town of Briersville beyond it. As Molly flew higher and higher, she saw the rest of the country and now the coastline too, with sea on all sides. Her mind rocketed upwards until she was flying in space, looking down at the earth. And there she hovered. Molly liked to fly away from the world in her imagination. It was relaxing. And often, when she was in this state, she'd feel different.

She had this special feeling tonight, as if something exciting or strange was about to happen to her. The last time she'd felt special, she'd found a half-eaten packet of sweets on the pavement in the village. The time before she'd got away with watching two hours of evening television instead of one. Molly wondered what surprise would greet her this time. Then she opened her eyes and was back in the bath. Molly looked at her distorted reflection in the underside of the chrome tap. Oh dear. Surely she wasn't as ugly as that? Was that pink lump of dough her face? Was that potato her nose? Were those small green lights her eyes?

Someone was hammering downstairs. That was strange, no one ever mended anything here. Then Molly realized that the hammering was someone banging on the bathroom door. Trouble. Molly shot up and hit her head on the tap. The banging outside was very loud now and with it came a fierce bark.

'Molly Moon, will you open this door *at once!* If you don't, I'll be forced to use a master key.'

Molly could hear keys rattling on a ring. She looked

at the level of her bath water and gasped. It was much too deep and well over the allowed level. She jumped up, pulling the plug out as she did so, and reached for her towel. Just in time. The door swung open. Miss Adderstone was in and darting like an adder to the bathtub, her scaly nose wrinkling as she discovered the deep, draining water. She rolled up her crimplene sleeve and pushed the plug back in.

‘As I suspected,’ she hissed. ‘Intentional flouting of orphanage rules.’

Miss Adderstone’s eyes glinted spitefully as she took a tape measure from her pocket. She pulled the metal strip out and, making excited slurping noises as she sucked on her loose false teeth, she measured how far Molly’s bath had gone over the red line painted round the bottom of the tub. Molly’s teeth chattered. Her knees were now turning *blue* and blotchy. Despite an icy draught that was coming through a crack in the window pane, the palms of her hands began sweating, as they always did whenever she was excited or nervous.

Miss Adderstone shook the tape measure, dried it on Molly’s shirt, then snapped it shut. Molly braced herself to face the wiry spinster, who, with her short grey hair and her hairy face, looked more like a Mr than a Miss.

‘Your bath is thirty centimetres deep,’ Miss Adderstone announced. ‘Allowing for the amount that has already been *deceitfully* run away, while I was knocking at the door, I calculate that your bath was actually *forty* centimetres deep. You know that baths are only supposed to be *ten* centimetres deep. Your bath was four times that deep, so you have, in effect,

used up your next three baths. So, Molly, you are forbidden to have a bath for the next three weeks. As for a punishment . . .' Miss Adderstone picked up Molly's toothbrush. Molly's heart sank. She knew what was coming next: Miss Adderstone's favourite punishment.

Miss Adderstone glared at Molly with her dull, black eyes. Her face heaved in a monstrous way as her tongue dislodged her teeth and moved them around in her mouth before settling them back down on her gums. She thrust the toothbrush at Molly.

'This week you will be toilet monitor. I want the toilets spotless, Molly, and this is the brush you'll be using. And don't think you can get away with using the toilet brush, because I'll be watching you.'

Miss Adderstone gave one last, satisfied suck on her teeth, and left the room. Molly slumped down on to the side of the bath. So the something that she'd felt was going to happen tonight was simply trouble. She stared at her manky toothbrush, hoping that her friend Rocky would let her share his.

As she picked at a loose thread on her grey, balding, old towel, she wondered what it was like being wrapped up in a fluffy white towel like the ones in TV adverts.

*'Softness is the sign,
Everyone feels fine,
Wash your towels in . . .
Clou-oud Ni-i-n-e.'*

Molly loved adverts. They showed how comfortable life could be, lifting her out of her world into theirs. A lot of the ads were silly, but Molly had her favourites, which weren't. These ones were filled with her friends

– friends who were always happy to see Molly when she visited them in her mind.

‘Wrap yourself in luxury time

Clou-oud Ni-i-n-e.’

Molly was shaken from her towel daydream as the evening assembly bell rang. Molly winced. She was late, as always. Always late, forever in trouble. Other kids called Molly ‘Accident Zone’, or ‘Zono’, because she was clumsy, uncoordinated and accident-prone. Her other nicknames were ‘Drono’, since people said Molly’s voice made them want to fall asleep and ‘Bogey Eyes’, because her eyes were dark green and close together. Only Rocky, her best friend, and some of the younger orphans called her Molly.

‘Molly! Molly!’

Across the corridor, which was now being stampeded by children rushing downstairs, Molly saw Rocky’s dark-brown face, framed with black curls, beckoning her to hurry. Molly grabbed her toothbrush and ran to the bedroom which she shared with two girls called Hazel and Cynthia. As she crossed the corridor, two older boys, Roger Fibbin and Gordon Boils, ran into her and pushed her roughly aside.

‘Get out of the way, Zono.’

‘Move it, Drono.’

‘Quick, Molly!’ said Rocky, who was shoving his feet into his slippers. ‘We can’t be late again! Adderstone will have a fit . . . Mind you, then,’ he added, ‘she might choke on her false teeth.’ He smiled encouragingly at Molly as she searched for her pyjamas. Rocky always knew how to cheer her up. He knew her well.

And this was how.

*

Both Molly and Rocky had arrived at Hardwick House ten summers ago. A white baby and a black baby.

Molly had been found in a cardboard box on the doorstep by Miss Adderstone, whilst Rocky had been found in the top part of a pram in the car park behind Briersville police station. Found, because he'd been heard yelling at the top of his voice.

Miss Adderstone didn't like babies. To her, they were noisy, smelly, squelchy creatures and the idea of changing a nappy filled her with disgust. So Mrs Trinklebury, a shy widow from the town, who had helped with orphanage babies before, had been employed to look after Molly and Rocky. And because Mrs Trinklebury named children after the clothes or the carriers they arrived in – like Moses Wicker, who'd been found in a moses basket, or Satin Knight, who'd come dressed in a nightie with satin ribbons – Molly and Rocky were given exotic names too.

Molly's surname, Moon, had come from 'Moon's Marshmallows', which had been printed in pink and green on the sides of her cardboard box cradle. When Mrs Trinklebury found a lolly stick in the box, she called the baby Lolly Moon. And after Miss Adderstone forbade Lolly as a name, Lolly Moon became Molly Moon.

Rocky's name came directly from his red pram. On its hood had been written 'The Scarlet Rocker'. Rocky was solid in build, like a rock, and very calm. This calmness came from a dreamy quality he had – but it was different to Molly's. Molly daydreamed to escape, whereas Rocky's dreaminess was a sort of pondering, as he wondered about the odd world he

saw about him. Even as a baby, he could often be found lying happily in his cot, thinking and humming to himself. His deep, husky voice, together with his good looks, made Mrs Trinklebury say that one day he'd be a rock star, singing love songs to the ladies. So, Rocky Scarlet, the name she had given him, turned out to suit him very well.

Mrs Trinklebury wasn't very clever, but her sweet centre made up for her simple nature. And it was very lucky that she *had* nannied Molly and Rocky because, with only bitter Miss Adderstone in charge, perhaps they would have grown up thinking the whole world was bad, and have turned bad themselves. Instead, they were bounced on fat Mrs Trinklebury's knee, and they fell asleep to her singing. From her they learned kindness. She made them laugh and wiped their eyes when they cried. And at night, if ever they asked why they had been doorstep babies, she told them that they were orphans because a naughty cuckoo had knocked them out of their nests. Then she'd sing them a mysterious lullaby. It went like this.

*'Forgive, little birds, that brown cuckoo
For pushing you out of your nests.
It's what mamma cuckoo taught it to do
She taught it that pushing is best.'*

If Molly or Rocky ever felt cross with their parents, whoever they were, for abandoning them, Mrs Trinklebury's song would make them feel better.

But Mrs Trinklebury didn't live at the orphanage any more. As soon as Molly and Rocky were out of nappies, she'd been sent away. Now she only came back once a week to help with the cleaning and laundry. Molly and Rocky wished for more doorstep

babies to arrive, so that Mrs Trinklebury could return, but none ever came. Small children arrived, but walking and talking and, to save money, Miss Adderstone used Molly and Rocky as nannies for them. Now Ruby, the youngest child in the orphanage, was five, and she had stopped wearing nappies ages ago, even at night.

Night was drawing in.

In the distance Molly heard the muffled squawk of the cuckoo clock in Miss Adderstone's rooms striking six.

'We're *really* late,' she said, tearing her dressing gown from a hook on the door.

'She's going to have a tantrum,' Rocky agreed, as they sprinted down the passage. The two children sped expertly along the obstacle course that was the route downstairs; a journey they'd made thousands of times before. They skidded round a corner on the polished linoleum floor and long-jumped down the stairs. Quietly, and out of breath, they tiptoed across the chequered stone floor of the hall past the TV room and towards the oak-panelled assembly room. They slunk in.

Nine children, four of them under seven years old, were lined up along the walls. Molly and Rocky joined the end of a line, near two friendly five-year-olds, Ruby and Jinx, hoping that Miss Adderstone hadn't reached their names on the register yet. Molly glanced at some of the unfriendly, older faces opposite her. Hazel Hackersly, the meanest girl in the orphanage, narrowed her eyes at Molly. Gordon Boils made the motion of cutting his throat with an imaginary knife.

'Ruby Able?' read Miss Adderstone.

‘Yes, Miss Adderstone,’ piped up tiny Ruby beside Molly.

‘Gordon Boils?’

‘Here, Miss Adderstone,’ said Gordon, making a face at Molly.

‘Jinx Eames?’

Ruby prodded Jinx in the ribs. ‘Yes, Miss Adderstone,’ he answered.

‘Roger Fibbin?’

‘Here, Miss Adderstone,’ said the tall, thin boy who stood next to Gordon, eyeing Molly maliciously.

‘Hazel Hackersly?’

‘Here, Miss Adderstone.’

Molly was relieved. Her name was next.

‘Gerry Oakly?’

‘Here, Miss Adderstone,’ said seven-year-old Gerry, thrusting his hand into his pocket where he could feel his pet mouse trying to escape.

‘Cynthia Redmon?’

‘Here, Miss Adderstone,’ said Cynthia, winking at Hazel.

Molly wondered when her own name would pop up.

‘Craig Redmon?’

‘Here, Miss Adderstone,’ grunted Cynthia’s twin. Miss Adderstone seemed to have forgotten Molly. She was relieved.

‘Gemma Patel?’

‘Here, Miss Adderstone.’

‘Rocky Scarlet?’

‘Here,’ Rocky said, his voice wheezing.

Miss Adderstone slammed the register shut. ‘As usual Molly Moon is not here.’

'I am here now, Miss Adderstone.' Molly could hardly believe it. Miss Adderstone must have read her name out first, to intentionally catch her out.

'Now doesn't count,' said Miss Adderstone, her lips twitching. 'You will be on washing-up duty tonight. Edna *will* be pleased to have the night off.'

Molly squeezed her eyes tight shut with regret. The idea that something special might happen to her tonight was fading fast. The evening was obviously going to be just like so many others, full of trouble.

Evening vespers began, as usual. This was when a hymn was sung and prayers were said. Normally, Rocky's voice boomed above everyone else's, but today he sang quietly, trying to get his breath back. Molly hoped he wasn't going to have a bad winter riddled with wheezing asthma attacks. And then the evening proceeded, as it always did, three hundred and sixty-five days a year.

After the last blessing prayer, the dinner gong sounded, and the heavy dining room door swung open. Girls and boys shuffled through it, welcomed tonight by a disgusting smell of old fish. They'd seen the fish often enough, lying in plastic crates in the alley outside the kitchen, scuttling with flies and beetles, smelling as if it had been there a week. And everyone knew that Edna, the orphanage cook, would have baked the fish in a thick, greasy, cheese-and-nut packet sauce to disguise its rotten taste; a trick that she'd learned in the navy.

There Edna stood now, broad and muscly, with her curly grey hair and her flattened nose, ready to make sure every child ate up. With a tattoo of a sailor on her thigh (although this was only a rumour), and her

terrible language, Edna was like a grumpy pirate. Her temper lay like a sleepy dragon inside her, a temper that was fierce and fiery if woken up.

Every single child felt nervous and sick as they stood in a queue and made their excuses, while Edna slopped out smelly helpings.

‘I’m allergic to fish, Edna.’

‘Load a bleedin’ codswallop,’ came Edna’s gruff reply, as she wiped her nose on her overall sleeve.

‘It *is* cod’s wallop,’ Molly whispered to Rocky, looking down at her fish.

The ordinary evening was nearly over. All that was left before bed was Molly’s washing-up punishment. As usual, Rocky offered to help her.

‘We can make up a song about washing-up. Besides, upstairs I’d only have Gordon and Roger trying to bait me.’

‘They’re only jealous of you. Why don’t you just go up and wallop them for once?’ said Molly.

‘Can’t be bothered.’

‘But you hate washing-up.’

‘And so do you. You’ll get it over quicker if I help you.’

So on this ever-so-ordinary night, the pair set off for the basement pantry. But Molly had been right. A strange thing *was* going to happen tonight, and it was about to take place.

It was cold in the basement, with dripping pipes overhead and vents in the wall that let in mouldy-smelling cold air and mice.

Molly turned on the tap, which spluttered lukewarm

water, whilst Rocky went to fetch the washing-up liquid. Molly could hear Edna's grumbling in the passage as she trundled the trolley load of eleven fishy plates down the tunnelled slope towards the pantry.

Molly crossed her fingers that Edna would just leave the crockery trolley and go, although it was more likely that she would come into the pantry and get cross. That was more Edna's style. Rocky arrived with the washing-up liquid. He squirted some into the sink, pretending he was in one of their favourite TV adverts.

'Oh *mamma!*' he said to Molly. 'Why are your hands *so soft?*'

Molly and Rocky often acted out the adverts from the telly, and could do scores of them word for word. Pretending to be the advert people made them laugh.

'So soft?' Molly replied whimsically. 'It's becus I use thus washing-up luquid, darling. Other brands are simply murderous. Only *Bubblealot* is kind.'

Suddenly, Edna's dinosaur hand came down on Molly's, shattering their make-believe world. Molly shied sideways, expecting an earful of insults. But instead a sickly sweet voice said in her ear, 'I'll do that, dearie. Off you go now and play.'

Dearie? Molly didn't think she could have heard Edna right. Edna had never *ever* spoken nicely to her. Normally, Edna was plain horrid and grisly. But now she was smiling an unnatural, snaggly-toothed smile.

'But Miss Adder—'

'Don't worry about that,' said Edna, 'You just go and relax . . . Go and watch the lovely blasted telly or something.'

Molly looked at Rocky, who was looking just as confused. They both looked at Edna. The change in

her was amazing. As amazing as tulips growing out of the top of her head would have been.

And that was the first strange thing that happened that week.