

Penguin



Readers

THE EXTRAORDINARY LIFE OF

STEPHEN HAWKING



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CHAPTER ONE

Who is Stephen Hawking?

Soon after his twenty-first birthday, a doctor told Stephen Hawking that he had a dangerous **disease**. “You will only live for a few more years,” the doctor said. But Stephen lived for fifty-five more years and became one of the most famous **scientists** of our time.

Because of Stephen, millions of people understood that **disability** does not stop you doing great things. They also learnt some very important things about our world and the **universe**.

Stephen Hawking was born in Oxford on 8th January 1942. He went to the **University** of Oxford when he was only seventeen, and later went to study and then work at the University of Cambridge. He was a scientist, and he tried to answer difficult questions. One big question was “How did the universe begin?” He thought about this question all his life.

Because he had a disability,
Stephen's body was not
strong, and as he grew older,
it became very **weak**. But
Stephen's **mind** was always
strong, and he kept working
until the end of his life.



After 1985, Stephen's disability got worse. Stephen could not move his mouth or his hands, so he could not speak or use his fingers to write with a computer. Then a computer scientist built a special speaking machine for him. Stephen was not able to speak any more, but he could move some **muscles** in his face. Stephen moved the muscles and the machine helped him to speak.

Stephen was in a wheelchair for most of his life, but he still travelled all across the world for his work. In 2007, he even visited the **Kennedy Space Center** in Florida. He went there to fly in **zero gravity**.

Stephen wrote many books. His most famous book was *A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes*. More than ten million people bought this book. He won many **awards** for his work, and became famous across the world – sometimes in surprising ways.

Let's look closer at the **extraordinary** life of Stephen Hawking.

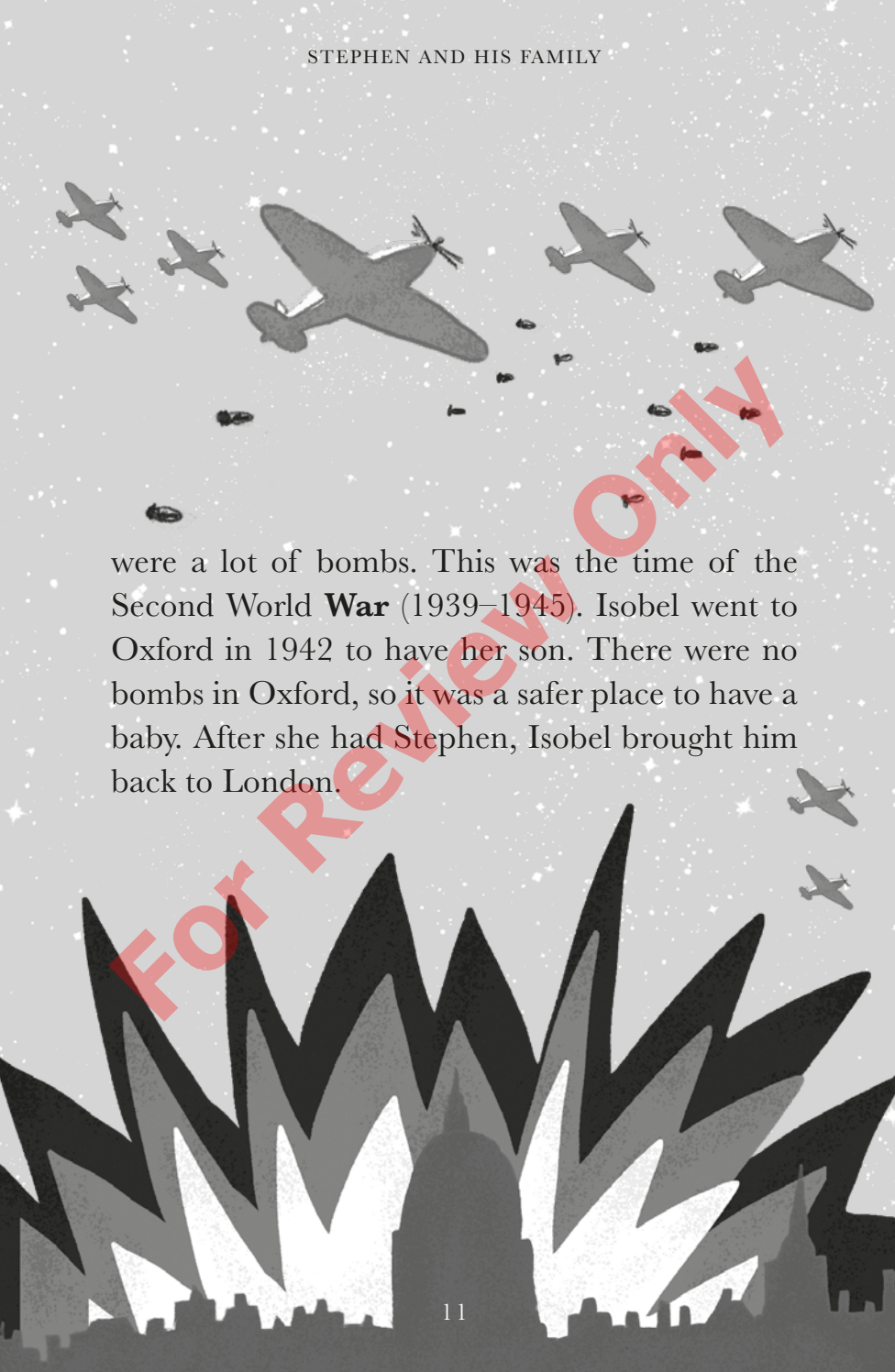
CHAPTER TWO

Stephen and his family

Stephen's father, Frank Hawking, came from Yorkshire, in the north of England. His family were all farmers, but there were problems on many farms in the early 1900s. The family lost a lot of money and Frank decided that he did not want to be a farmer. He went to the University of Oxford and then became a doctor. Later, Stephen's mother, Isobel, studied at the University of Oxford, too.

Stephen's father had an interesting job. He did a lot of important **research** on **tropical** diseases, and he often travelled to Africa and other countries. **Insects** carry many tropical diseases, and Frank studied some of these. Isobel worked in an office, but she did not like her job, so she started to work as a doctor's secretary. She met Frank at work, and they married in 1941.

At first, the family lived in Highgate, in London. In 1941 London was dangerous because there



were a lot of bombs. This was the time of the Second World **War** (1939–1945). Isobel went to Oxford in 1942 to have her son. There were no bombs in Oxford, so it was a safer place to have a baby. After she had Stephen, Isobel brought him back to London.



Stephen was the first child in the family. His sister Mary was born eighteen months later, and Stephen was not happy to have a little sister at first. His other sister, Philippa, was born three years later. When Stephen was fourteen, his parents **adopted** a boy called Edward.