

It's a family affair

She may be Sadie Frost's sister, but *Casualty*'s Holly Davidson is determined to make it on her own terms

Actress Holly Davidson doesn't like to be reminded that she is Sadie Frost's younger sister, but if the mention of her celebrity sibling irks her, she certainly does a good job of hiding it.

"I'm not going to deny the fact that Sadie is my sister, but I've never wanted to use her name," she explains patiently. "I've always wanted to succeed because I'm Holly Davidson, not because I'm Sadie Frost's little sister."

"A lot of people have tried to pigeonhole me, but I try to stay away from it. Of course you always copy your older sisters and want to do what they're doing, but Sadie had this extra thing, which was a career in acting, and that was what I wanted to do. To watch her succeed absolutely inspired me."

As an actress, co-owner of the FrostFrench fashion label and former wife of Jude Law, Sadie Frost is rarely out of the headlines. The break up of her marriage to actor heart-throb Jude in 2003 was very public, and though the couple both have new partners, Holly feels an overwhelming sympathy for what her sister went through.

"It's hard enough to break up anyway, without a million other people knowing your business. Like any sister I was there for her," she says.

To further complicate matters, Holly's boyfriend, Ben Jackson, worked as

Jude's personal assistant, but sadly, she and Ben also split up four months ago. Asked how she gets on with Jude now, her head drops as she struggles to find the words. "It's a difficult situation. He's been part of my life for 12 years... I still see him, but it's very complicated."

After making her name first as PC Roz Clarke in *The Bill*, then as admin assistant Tally Harper in *Casualty*, 24-year-old Holly is back on our screens tomorrow night in the hard-hitting ITV1 drama *The Stepfather*.

In a star-studded cast – which includes Philip Glenister (best known as Mack in BBC1's *Cloaking* ▶



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From left: Holly in *Essex Boys* with Sean Bean, who she was romantically linked to; as PC Roz Clarke in *The Bill*; and as Tally Harper in *Casualty*

Off), and Lindsey Coulson (former *EastEnders* Carol Jackson) – Holly plays missing teenage schoolgirl Pippa. The two-part mystery tells the story of Dougie (Glenister), who is devastated by the disappearance of his daughter. Years later, when his stepdaughter also mysteriously vanishes, he finds himself under suspicion.

For Holly, the part meant playing someone eight years her junior. "I was flattered they thought I could pull it off!" she says. "I had to think back to what I was like at that age. Having three older sisters and having experienced my parents' divorce when I was eight, I think I was probably quite a mature 16 year old."

Holly enjoyed an idyllic childhood growing up in Ludlow, Shropshire with her parents Mary, a dancer and actress, and Robert, a photographer turned counsellor, plus sisters Jade, Jessica, Sunshine and Sadie. She set her heart on acting at the age of eight, when visiting Sadie on the set of *Dracula*. When the director, Francis Ford Coppola, asked Holly what she wanted to be, she replied "a star".

Jessica, Sunshine and Sadie shared a different father to Holly and Jade, but such was the close-knit nature of the family that, until the age of 12, Holly assumed her dad was father to all five girls.

When she was 15, she begged Sadie to let her appear alongside her as an extra in the film *Shopping*. After landing bigger roles, including *Food Of Love* with Richard E Grant, she moved to London.

Ben being with Jude all the time put a huge strain on our relationship

In 2000, she starred with Robson Green in the ITV drama *The Last Musketeer*, then the Brit flick *Essex Boys* with Sean Bean, amid rumours of a romance between the pair:

"He was lovely, but he said three words to me, apart from our lines!" she laughs.

She joined *Casualty* in 2002, as Harry Harper's rebellious teenage daughter, Tally. After two years in the role, she left the show last spring and packed her bags for Los Angeles to explore new avenues in her career.

"It was scary," she admits. "I was up against 100 girls for every part. I came back with such confidence, but I'm not quite ready for LA just yet."

After the split with 30-year-old Ben, her boyfriend of five years, Holly now lives alone in the couple's flat in Primrose Hill, north London. "Five years is a long time," she sighs. "I feel like half of myself is missing.

"We could have had an amazing future together, but we never saw each other. Wherever Jude is, he is, and that put a huge strain on our relationship. I don't think we were making each other truly happy and it was easier to be apart than together."

She plans to move out of the flat but, in the meantime, is enjoying living around the corner from Sadie and her children Finlay, 14, Rafferty, eight, Iris, four and Rudy, two. "I'm babysitting tonight," she smiles. "They're gorgeous – I need my fix of children!

I'm very broody and I thank my sisters for having so many, otherwise I'd probably have had them myself when I was 17!"

But with a proven talent and still just 24, her future as an actress seems assured. Who knows? Maybe one day it will be Sadie Frost who is simply known as "Holly Davidson's big sister".

Sue Crawford

The Stepfather is on tomorrow on ITV1 at 9pm and concludes on Monday.

Philip Glenister on *The Stepfather*



"Just before Christmas," says Philip Glenister, who plays Dougie in ITV1's *The Stepfather*, "my two-year-old daughter Millie went missing in Marks & Spencer. It was only for a few seconds but the fear my partner [actress Beth Goddard] and I felt, before we found her, was considerable.

"Magnify that a thousand times and you can understand what a man whose kid has been missing for three years must be going through. Dougie's 15-year-old daughter Pippa went missing after his wife died of cancer, and he spends most of his time driving around looking for her.

"He's a loner but he has found love with Maggie (Lindsey Coulson). The fly in the ointment is Maggie's teenage daughter Scarlett, who loathes Dougie. When she too goes missing, he believes he may be linked to both her disappearance and that of his own daughter. Gradually, and unsurprisingly, he starts to become panicked by what's going on.

"I've never experienced it myself but being a stepdad must be incredibly difficult, especially when the child is a girl who adores her real dad, has raging hormones and is fast turning into a woman. And that's definitely the case, in all those respects, with Scarlett.

"Being a dad to your own kids is difficult enough. I'm about to become a father for the second time – Beth is due to give birth to a little girl in March. So I'll be in a house surrounded by women and that will be quite a challenge!"

